



## **Reports of Officers of Butterfly Conservation Gloucestershire Branch for the AGM by Zoom on Saturday 24 October 2020, 2 pm**

### **5.1 Chairman's Report – Sue Smith**

Because of Covid-19 it could be argued that there is nothing to report. However, that is not the case! A lot less has happened due to the situation but much of the recording has been on-going, apart from a blip at the beginning of the season so thank you to everyone who has been out there counting butterflies and moths.

Inevitably no events were held throughout the summer which was a shame. We are now starting the winter work party season and these are continuing as normal. See website for details.

Our two Duke of Edinburgh students successfully completed their Silver Award – you may have seen Amelia's write up in *Antennae* and Zander has created a blog which will go out soon.

We were also heartened by the 'Minchinhampton Zoom meeting' which was held in July when, again, two young people, Jack and Alasdair, gave a wonderful presentation about Wilding at their school in Cirencester. The whole morning was great with varied speakers talking on a range of subjects. Those who missed it, missed a treat!

Back from the Brink's Limestones Living Legacies programme stalled for a while in the spring but got going again during the summer. The good news is that this has now been extended to end August 2021 (instead of February 2021). Julian Bendle – the Conservation Officer – is leaving the project to take up a permanent role within Butterfly Conservation as Land Resources Officer. We are glad that we're not losing him completely but we will miss his expertise in the Cotswolds! We are hoping that his post from 1 November with BftB will be filled by someone else. We are glad that Jen Gilbert is still with us (and helping to organise this meeting!).

The Butterfly Effect has also been badly affected as Matt Brierley, the Education Officer for the project, was unable to do a lot of the work in schools he had scheduled for this, the final year. He has, however, been busy making the videos which you will see shortly. These will be for use nationally by BC.

You will probably be aware of the detrimental effects Covid-19 has had on the charitable sector and Butterfly Conservation is no exception. A number of high-profile staff have left the organisation, including John Davis who had been very involved in all our reserves in Gloucestershire. Lucy Morton is also due to leave by end March 2021. Jenny Plackett, as Regional Officer will take over in the meantime.

We have managed to continue working in the nectar garden at Prinknash. The wildflower bank below the café which was sown in very wet conditions last autumn came good this summer – thanks Matt. There are plans to increase diversity in a further area in the Park. The Glorious Grasslands project are helping with this. Stroud Valleys Project volunteers are still working but at a reduced capacity.

Funding from the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly Cotswolds AONB) for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary project finishes at the end of this year. We hope that some of the work carried out during the last two years will continue into the future.

Further meetings are taking place regarding all the Gloucestershire reserves in the next few weeks but generally speaking they are all in good shape (see separate reports). We were sad to hear that Ron Hatton does not wish to continue with the transect on the Bill Smyllie



but we thank him for his dedicated service to the Glos Branch over the years and wish him and Irene well. Tricia has taken over as Contact for the Prestbury Reserves.

The Gloucestershire Branch financial situation is still in a healthy position and we will strive to keep it this way. However, we are mindful that this could change due to various external factors.

Probably one of the most exciting things to happen this year was the reintroduction of the Large Blue to Rodborough Common after a gap of 150 years! This was a joint venture between the National Trust, Butterfly Conservation and Habitat Designs. We look forward to seeing the butterflies again in 2021. Other sightings of individual Marsh Fritillaries, Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Purple Emperors and one Large Tortoiseshell were also recorded in the county.

Thank you all for your continued support. Keep safe, keep well and lets all look forward to a brighter and better spring and summer in 2021!

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## **5.2 Treasurer's Report for the financial year 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 and adoption of accounts – Serena Meredith**

Income for the year was greatly reduced, mainly because in 2018/19 2 years worth of Agri-environment support scheme payments were received. Also the value of donations and the volume of walks booklets sold were significantly less in 2019/20.

Expenditure rose due to the use of contractors undertaking work on the Pearl-bordered Fritillary project on the Bathurst Estate. This is grant funded and a claim will be made in the coming months to recoup the majority of this. In March, meetings were cancelled resulting in lower Events costs. The Prestbury Hill Reserve water bill covered 4 years (including the 'Beast from the East' pipe repair period) and should therefore be much less this year. The Branch newsletter expense included postage for one edition relating to 2018/19, and increased print costs for the Autumn 2019 edition which were in part countered by the reduced print run and postage charge due to email copy for the majority of the Spring 2020 one. AGM costs rose as the room hire charge increased for the full day meeting and nomination forms were printed.

As a result of the above, for the year there was a excess of expenditure over income amounting to £1069.79, but there is still a healthy balance going forward. Some of this has already been allocated: the second tranche of funding to the education project has been made (another £3000), and contractors are lined up to do £1500 worth of scrub clearance on the Bill Smyllie section of Prestbury Hill reserve. In the light of the current financial situation faced by Butterfly Conservation, all branches have been asked to consider making some of their funds available to the main society and an undertaking has been made by the committee to provide this, should it be deemed necessary.

Lastly, changes have been made by Head Office to the way branch finances are organised in order to simplify and streamline banking reconciliation and audit at their end. All branch bank accounts were closed on 31st March 2020, and instead replaced by a cashbook value of branch funds calculated by Head Office for Gloucestershire to be £28750.75 at 1st April 2020. This is therefore how our funds will be represented in future. As usual, the figures presented have been included in the main society accounts for audit purposes and signed off by the auditors.

Going forward, there will be no bank reconciliation as the branch account has been closed and all transactions will be done through the main society account. Instead, branch funds will be represented by a cashbook value which at 31 March 2020 stood at £28750.75 as calculated by Head Office

**BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH ACCOUNTS AND BALANCE SHEET**  
For year 2019/20 - 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

<b>INCOME (RECEIPTS)</b>	2018/19	2019/20	<b>EXPENDITURE (PAYMENTS)</b>	2018/19	2019/20
	£	£		£	£
Subscriptions	3591.00	4002.00	Transfers		
Donations - individual (inc. Gift Aid)	1021.10	403.79	Contribution to the Butterfly Effect Education Project		3000.00
Donations - corporate	250.00	315.00	Other expenditure		
Tax refunds - gift aid donations	150.00	62.50	Training - conservation volunteers	912.00	320.00
Postage and packing on walks booklets	93.90	37.60	Consultants - conservation		690.00
Sales - items bought in (ID Charts, plan)	156.00	243.00	Field equipment (tools, materials, fuel, plants)	849.20	750.11
Sales - Walks Booklets	1034.00	576.00	Printing - conservation	393.00	169.43
Events charges	425.60	482.00	Events - conservation (inc workshops)	406.50	284.20
Sales - items donated	135.26	121.20	Reserve maintenance	3140.79	3198.48
Raffle Income		55.00	Reserve Interpretation	365.00	
Fundraising	17.50		Reserve - water		759.63
Grants			Branch newsletter - printing & postage	1465.33	1661.12
Agri- Environment Support Scheme	10866.27	4365.82	Events - fundraising costs (prizes)		10.00
Provision of First Aid Training	261.62		Events - promotional	40.00	40.00
			Cost of sales (calc)	118.95	222.30
			Stationery & other office consumables	22.63	78.40
			Postage (including for walks booklets sales)	256.77	238.82
			Committee expenses (room hire & refreshments)	47.81	14.91
			AGM costs (room hire, photocopying, gifts)	84.04	164.66
			Computer equipment		8.29
			Insurance	174.77	123.35
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>18002.25</b>	<b>10663.91</b>	<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>8276.79</b>	<b>11733.70</b>
<b>Bank balance at 1 April 2019</b>		<b>29775.85</b>	<b>Bank reconciliation</b>		
Add			Payments		11733.70
Receipts		10663.91	VAT thereon		287.21
Payments not yet cleared		977.63	Receipts not yet cleared (Agri-Environment Support Scheme)		4365.82
VAT input control		55.05	Other adjustments		62.51
Duplicated payment refund		40.00	Stock adjustment		4.45
		41512.44			
Account adjustments as aside		16453.69	Account adjustments (total expenditure plus other adjustments shown above)		16453.69
<b>Closing bank balance @ 31 March 2020</b>		<b>25058.75</b>			
<b>Petty Cash balance @ 31 March 2020</b>		<b>12.15</b>			



### 5.3 Membership Report –Trish Atkinson

Membership numbers are about the same this year as last year with the number of household members falling slightly from 736 last year to 730 this year. As there are some joint and family membership, the actual number of individual members in the branch is around 1000.

We did expect to lose some members during lockdown for financial reasons but are pleased that overall membership numbers have kept pretty stable so we thank you all for your continued support.

Head Office is installing a new database for membership contact details but this has been having a few teething problems. At the time of writing, I hadn't received the details of new members which have joined as a result of taking part in the Big Butterfly Count. As the number of people taking part this year was at a record high, it could mean that we get quite a few new members this way.

One advantage of the new database is that members should be able to access and change their contact details which could be very convenient and also save time for staff at Head Office.

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### 5.4 Butterfly Recorder's Report: 2020 Butterfly Season – Chris Wiltshire

Following what has been one of the warmest and wettest winters since butterfly monitoring began it all changed in the last week of March becoming warmer still with lots of sunny, dry weather just as lockdown began due to coronavirus. Butterflies responded to the unseasonably warm conditions and duly started to emerge early. Although data is limited due to the lockdown it soon became apparent that some species were between two and three weeks early. As the season progressed it seems that some of the scarcer or key species were doing reasonably well but conversely some of the common species were not. The Small and Large Whites were rather few in number and most gardeners will have noticed that their brassicas were free from their larvae. Green-veined and Small Whites really appreciated the good weather and the latter were abundant late July and throughout August much to the detriment of our brassicas! Speckled Woods were also rather scarce in the first half of the year with a slight improvement by late Summer. However, those butterflies that overwintered as adults did reasonably well with good numbers of Peacocks. Small Tortoiseshell offspring were on the wing in early June and even got a "third brood" in by mid-August.

Dingy Skippers were abundant in the Spring and even produced quite a few second generation adults which were flying from the last week of July on several sites in the Cotswolds. The Duke of Burgundy did well with a record timed count of 72 on Selsley Common. Although numerous searches were made for second generation Dukes none were reported.

The Marsh Fritillary did better than expected at Strawberry Banks and some possible wanderers cropped up in various places some possibly within flying distance and others more likely helped by misguided persons unknown. Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were reasonably abundant and early too as were Dark Green Fritillaries on some sites. Silver-washed Fritillaries were relatively common around the major woodlands. White Admiral was "rediscovered" at Bushy Grove after an absence of several years but it generally had a poor season.

Some species did not emerge much earlier than usual such as the Ringlet and Gatekeeper which were in lower numbers than their close relatives – Marbled Whites and Meadow Browns. Moving later into the season second brood Holly Blues were around in reasonable



numbers, Chalk Hill Blues were out by the second week of July and second generation Adonis were on the wing at the end of July but very few of this generation were seen due to the drought causing the foodplant to wilt at the time the first generation were trying to find turgid plants on which to lay their eggs. There was a good emergence of the second brood Small Blues.

Common Blues and Brown Argus had a terrible year with poor numbers in the Spring and even fewer in the Summer- more drought effects. I suspect that Purple, White-letter and Brown Hairstreaks had a poor year too; having received few reports of the first two species and none of the latter.

Migrants have been rather thin on the ground with a few Painted Ladies from mid-May and from 22<sup>nd</sup> July a handful of Clouded Yellows have been seen. Perhaps the star of the show was a Large Tortoiseshell photographed by Andrew Bullock near Ozleworth. Was it a migrant or a release? Large Tortoiseshell was reported from several southern counties and so perhaps a genuine migrant. Purple Emperors have been seen in the county again this year with at least ten records of adults; of those eight have photographic evidence and nine are in the north of the county while one was seen down at Lower Woods in South Gloucestershire. Matthew Oates has recorded three larvae on the Bathurst estate and one at Westonbirt so now we have confirmation that it is breeding in the county.

Overall the numbers are well down on the record year of 2019, despite the good summer weather and it seems that the season faded out as early as the first week in September with few butterflies seen after this. I have used the Stinchcombe Hill A transect data to show the changes in peak weekly counts (see next page) and over the last ten years it seems to be over two weeks earlier now.

One of the highlights of 2020 was the reintroduction of the Large Blue to Rodborough Common, after an absence of 150 years! The National Trust who own the Common did this in conjunction with Butterfly Conservation, Back from the Brink, and Habitat Designs. The species did very well on Daneway Banks but Rodborough Common is possibly the most successful reintroduction to date.

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## 5.5 Moth Officer's Report – Peter Hugo

### Thanks to Steve French for providing much of the following information

The weather overall seems to have been better than last year but there was no noticeable increase in moth numbers. Steve has reported a slight fall in the species numbers from his garden trap in the north-west of the county, down to 418 from 429 last year, which itself was lower than the previous year, so a slow decline has been occurring. Conversely, numbers in the Westonbirt Arboretum trap, in the south-east of the county have increased for the past three years in a row. Steve has been recording moths on the Bromsberrow Estate, using an LED trap and has reported over 100 moths in one night in February. LED traps seem to be the future, especially for remote recording as they produce very little light pollution and use small amounts of electricity. He also has a colony of the very rare Barred Tooth-striped moth (Na) in the vicinity of his house and has discovered an additional colony in a nearby garden but despite several further attempts has yet to locate any further colonies. The larvae feed on Wild Privet and Ash so if Ash were to prove to be their preferred food source then we can expect a further decline. Talking of declines, the Dusky Thorn moth suffered a catastrophic decline a few years ago, with numbers dropping by 98% in the 35 years up to 2002. It subsequently made a dramatic recovery. Its only food source is native Ash so with Ash die-back now ongoing we can expect a further massive decline in this species and this could also affect a further 19 species of moth which feed exclusively on Ash.





Gloucestershire has a wide variety of habitats and the moth fauna reflect this well. As Steve is such a prolific moth recorder I can compare species from Steve's lowland garden trap with my semi woodland site surrounded by calcareous grassland. Steve reports catching over 200 Common Wainscot moths in one night whereas I have caught just three this autumn. Steve mentions Magpie moths being more common this year. I have not seen one for several years, though I do get the woodland Clouded Magpie. One thing that everyone agrees on though is the distinct lack of Britain's most common Noctuid moth, the Large Yellow Underwing. This normally appears in our traps in huge numbers every August and September; I have been known to catch over 500 in one night, but have heard of as many as 800 being recorded in a single night. This year it was notable by its absence. The larvae feed on low growing plants and so the moth is more common in wet seasons when these plants are growing more vigorously. However, even this assumption is challenged by the county moth recorder for VC33 who reports no overall change in numbers. I could go on and on with comparisons but these two sites alone serve to illustrate that we need to take a wide view of the county's moth distribution before forming any conclusions. A first class view of the East Gloucestershire moth scene can be found in the annual "Gloucestershire Naturalist" published by Gloucestershire Naturalists Society and supplied free to members. Written by Robert Homan, the moth recorder for VC 33 the report covers about one third of the county.

Migrant moths do not appear to have been so common this year, though the Beautiful Marbled moth, a first for Gloucestershire turned up in Steve's trap (of course!). See Steve's excellent article in the latest edition of "Antennae." Meanwhile, the stunning migrant Clifden Nonpareil moth has been making the headlines this year. Formerly resident in Kent and Norfolk it became extinct in 1964 but reappeared in southern England during 2007. Since then it has begun to breed in this country, on Aspen, and is now widely reported from many southern counties. Many Gloucestershire recorders have found one in their trap this year with my first one appearing on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

Steve has been experimenting further with pheromone lures and this has probably encouraged others to do so, myself included. This year saw the launch of an additional lure for the Lunar Hornet and many people managed to see this species for the first time.

Steve's Gloucestershire Moths Facebook site has continued to grow almost exponentially with just under 260 members as I write. Everyone, with even the slightest interest in moths needs to join this site in order to communicate with like-minded individuals, share experiences, arrange events (once we are allowed to) and get difficult species identified by a number of resident experts.

Most recorders either run a moth trap in their garden and/or occasionally visit a remote site for recording. Steve has organised a couple of group events at Hartpury Orchard Centre (within the current rules regarding Covid 19) and this has added several new species to this developing site. The centre, in normal non-Covid times is the perfect site for group events having plenty of parking, an electricity supply and indoor facilities for refreshments and toilets, so the sooner a vaccine can be discovered the sooner more people can be encouraged to join Steve at this centre. Apart from this, one person, as usual, stands out for his contribution to our moth fauna. On just about every suitable moth night Guy Meredith is out somewhere in the county in search of a species which he has targeted. Guy travels from one end of the county to the other, regularly adding (mainly micro) species to the county list. These species will not be noted here as a long list of scientific names will not mean much to many people!

**Westonbirt:** A moth trap has continued to operate on every night of the year since 1973 at Westonbirt Arboretum. This long-term study has produced invaluable information about moth populations which has been used widely by a number of organisations including Butterfly Conservation, to produce trends in our moth populations. Much of the data from the Rothamsted light trap survey was incorporated into the recent Moth Atlas. Interestingly, the



trap at Westonbirt seems to be attracting increasing numbers of species, bucking the national trend and this despite the fact that starting off in an overgrown area the trap though only having been moved a few metres now finds itself situated in the middle of a car park with all night security lights competing with the trap light source.

During the recent lockdown many things ceased to operate in the normal way. The network of moth traps in the Rothamsted Insect survey has been running without a break on every night of the year since 1964. Many of these ceased to operate during the recent pandemic as, often being operated in remote areas, there was nobody available to attend to the catch. At Westonbirt, despite there being, at times, just a single member of staff on site for security reasons, they took it in turns to attend to the catch, thus ensuring the continuation of the long run of results.

**Moth Trap Loan Scheme:** We now have just three moth traps available for loan, all of which are currently in us over the coming winter period. The traps will be available to new loanees from next spring so please let myself, or Steve, know if you are interested in borrowing a trap.

**Moth Officer:** After fourteen years this will be my last offering as Moth Officer. Steve French has very kindly offered to take on the role, albeit on a temporary basis. He has in fact already been performing the role for some time, with his encouragement to many new recorders, very successful Moths Facebook site and events at Hartpury Orchard Centre, etc. All he needs now is a title and this is willingly passed on. I will continue as Branch Contact and we all wish Steve every success in his future moth career.

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## 5.6 Bill Smyllie/The Masts Report – Tricia Atkinson and John Coates

Butterflies did well again this summer with a peak count of over 900 on the transect on Bill Smyllie and over 400 on The Masts transect. As on other sites, the warm early spring led to butterflies flying earlier this year and the peak counts occurred at the end of June rather than at the beginning of July. This was mainly due to very high numbers of Marbled White and Meadow Brown in flight at that time. There were also good numbers of Chalk Hill Blue and Dark Green Fritillary. A few Adonis Blue were recorded for the first time on The Masts transect both in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. A Marsh Fritillary was spotted several times in May but we don't know if it was the same one or whether there were more than one. Unfortunately no Wall Browns were recorded on either the transect on The Masts or Bill Smyllie, but hopefully there may have been some casual sightings.

Duke of Burgundy butterflies did well again on The Masts section but were poor on Bill Smyllie section. Happy Valley on Bill Smyllie used to be the best area for Dukes but since major clearing of the slopes in the last few years, this butterfly has only been seen there in ones or twos. Hopefully we may now get more Cowslips back on the slopes and it will again become a suitable habitat for this butterfly.

18 Belted Galloway cattle were put on The Masts section on 15 Sept and will spend four weeks there and then at least four weeks on Bill Smyllie section. There are fewer cattle available this year but we may be able to negotiate for them to stay on longer in order to get the same grazing effect.

Natural England want to increase the heather on The Masts section as this a rare feature on the mainly limestone Cotswolds. The numerous rabbits there were grazing any Heather that was growing so rabbit fencing was installed a few years ago to make an enclosure to allow the heather to regenerate. However the rabbits just dug their burrows deeper to get under the fencing so are still impacting on the regeneration. Seed from the original small enclosure was collected and sowed by volunteers in the enclosure in the spring. Unfortunately we haven't seen any signs of the seed germinating, probably because of the dry spring. It is planned that seed will be collected again this autumn but sown straight away this time. We



are also growing on some of the Heather seed at home so that we'll be able to plant out small Heather plants which we hope will have a better chance of getting established.

Ron Hatton has carried out the transect recording on Bill Smyllie section single-handed for many years. However this year he has passed it over to others to carry on the recording. The recording is now shared between four other recorders. Ron also helped clear away the considerable amount of litter which was left there which we all very much appreciated. We thank Ron for his time and dedication on the reserve.

Due to a reorganisation of Head Office staff, Jenny Plackett, the South West regional conservation officer is now in charge of the reserve, aided by Lucy Morton until easter 2021. We will be having a meeting with her and Lucy on the reserve in early November.

We have work parties planned on Bil Smyllie on 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> Nov and on The Masts on 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. As we need to know numbers attending, please contact Serena to book a place.

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## 5.7 Rough Bank Report – Sue Smith

**Ash die-back** continues to affect the reserve, although not as much as the facing woodland to Rough Bank. This has been ravaged by the disease, with a few trees falling onto our land. Fortunately, this has not caused too much of a problem so far but it is still one with which we are having to deal. Lucy Morton and Chris Wiltshire completed a survey of all the ash trees on BC land at this reserve.

**Duke of Edinburgh/Video:** We were joined by two Silver Duke of Edinburgh students from Thomas Keble School on some of our work parties. We were very impressed with their energy and interest. Matt Brierley (*The Butterfly Effect*) also produced a video on volunteering during one of the events which he will be showing at the AGM as part of his presentation.

**Fencing:** The fence along the bottom of the south slope has now been replaced with chestnut posts and three strands of barbed wire making it cattle proof once again. This completes the refencing work on Rough Bank.

**Grazing:** There was no grazing on the bank during the summer but the cattle were frequently in the two Myers fields keeping the grass down rather than taking a hay cut. Now that the fencing is complete on the bank the Belted Galloways should be back on by the end of the first week in October.

**Gate in Access Strip:** The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens made such a good job of putting in the pedestrian gate to the Access strip that it proved impossible to re-site it. The changes in this area were being made to avoid cattle to cattle contact from adjoining land. Alternative arrangements are in-hand.

**Habitat:** The Bank and Myers fields have all looked good this year, with the grazing about right. We held the usual Ragwort party but the thistles didn't get topped this year.

**Personnel:** Matt Watts has replaced Kate Jones as the ranger for the National Trust.

Sadly John Davis, BC Head of Reserves, left BC at the end of July 2020. We have been very grateful for all the help John has given us over the years, especially since the purchase of Rough Bank. Lucy Morton ends her contract at the end of March 2021. We are also very grateful to Lucy for all her help on the reserve.





Julian Bendle, who has been the Conservation Officer for the Back from the Brink Project (BftB) with us for the last three and a half years has been appointed as Senior Land Use Officer to Butterfly Conservation. We also thank him for all his help on the reserve and wish him well in his new job which takes effect from 1 November 2020. We look forward to continued contact with him but in a different capacity. We are hoping that his role within BftB will be filled by someone else.

Jenny Plackett, as BC South West Regional Officer, will be our contact during the changeover period.

**Butterfly Numbers:** The season began very early in 2020 with mainly good weather throughout the Summer. On the transect week zero was done but unfortunately due to Covid-19 weeks one to six were not able to be walked but weeks seven to 26 were. Several species counts were affected by the missing weeks but the peak Spring generation of the Adonis Blue was picked up, it was very early this year but reasonably good numbers. The drought effects in May and early June caused the larval foodplant to wilt and reduced the egg laying from the adults and the larval survival which in turn resulted in a very poor Summer generation. Similarly, Common Blues and Brown Argus did not do very well. Marbled Whites and Meadow Browns put on a good show. In late summer there was a great increase in Small and Green-veined Whites although the former does not breed on the bank. Few butterflies were seen after August.

**Moth Numbers:** As for the butterflies, lockdown prevented some early season recording but as a result of later daytime recording visits and night-time light-trapping sessions the reserve's species list continues to grow. Since 2012 a total of 689 moth species have been recorded. Highlights this year included finding a fourth national rarity for the site, *Phalonia gilvicomana* (a tortrix moth) flying over its larval foodplant Wall Lettuce in a shady spot. Also a Kent Black Arches which came to light on the bank; prior to 2020 it had only been recorded twice in the county, though this year there were a few other records.

**Notice Boards:** Two of the original notice boards have cracked and need attention. A new notice board for temporary notices, such as species on the wing, work parties, etc, has been installed by the CVWs in the car park.

**Robo mowing:** Cutting down bramble and blackthorn in various areas on Rough Bank was carried out on 5<sup>th</sup> October but some of the work could not be done due to the steepness and uneven nature of the now wet ground.

**Sustainable Urban Drainage System – Stroud District Council:** As the previous bunds had not been working as well as anticipated, the bunds were enhanced together with a new one being made, in Little Myers. Further work was done on drainage below the bunds. Electric fencing will be used to prevent the cattle damaging the bunds. Depending on the success or otherwise, the fencing may become permanent. There has been no major flooding in Stroud since 2007 and since the system has been implemented at this and other sites around the area.

**Work Parties and meetings:** We lost a couple of these due to Covid-19 in the spring. The winter 2020/21 programme is now set up. Dates are in Antennae and on the website. There is a new system in place whereby people wishing to come along need to notify Serena. We are still able to hold work parties outside but with the rules changing it was felt better to have a central organiser.



By the time of the AGM we will have held two Rough Bank committee meetings during the year, looking at the management and making arrangements for various works to be carried out.

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## **5.8 Forest Conservation Officer's Report - Simon Glover**

Foresters Forest (FF) has now managed to obtain local grazing which is a big plus for Linear Park as the fenced areas had been without any grassland management for over a year. The intention is to gradually heft the sheep so eventually they can be free ranging and not travel too far. The 'butterfly banks' on a previous Corsican Pine plantation created by Kate Wollen under FF funding 3 years or so ago are developing well. The soils are so poor and clayey on the man made banks, the grasses and other dominant plants are kept in check. All four target species were seen this year on the banks.

The flight season for spbf was the best in recent years with a rough count of 10 to 15 individuals seen across both sites. Still worryingly low but encouraging that they seem to be able to survive. Getting sheep back on the Linear park should be a great help to increasing numbers next year. The Herdwick sheep have now moved to the main field and will stay until the site gets too wet and then will move over to the butterfly bank area. It is useful to have a number of compounds so grazing can be controlled.

The Wild Towns European structure fund grant is now being used by GWT to thin the poplar trees in the ponds area in the south Linear Park and to put meanders in the Cinderford Brook. We are keeping a close eye on this as it is close to the main spbf breeding area.

Nearby is the Foxes Bridge Colliery tip. A fantastic Wood White site with over 90 recorded in Mid May. The butterflies in the Forest seem to be going the right way as numbers increase.

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## **6. Butterfly Monitoring in Gloucestershire – Tricia Atkinson**

Butterfly monitoring has continued again this year in various forms. We have about 26 transects operating on mainly managed sites, 43 Wider Countryside Butterfly Surveys recording butterflies in the wider countryside, recorders visiting various butterfly key sites in the county, a few recorders targeting previously unrecorded 1km squares (which we call white squares as there are white spaces on the county distribution map) and of course many casual records obtained throughout the county.

For the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey, I'm pleased to report that all recorders managed to record their 1km square despite the weather being quite cool and changeable at times in July and August when the recording takes place.

Key sites records have started to come in but I'm expecting quite a few more so I can't yet report on how this has gone. I don't yet know the effect of the lockdown earlier in the year due to the various restrictions. Some recorders may not have been able to get out to sites if they were shielding or when there were travel restrictions.

Some of the highlights from records received so far this year are 116 Dark Green Fritillaries being recorded on one of the sites on Cleeve Common, 6 Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Buckholt Wood and a new site discovered near to Withington with 30 Duke of Burgundy and 2 Pearl-bordered Fritillary being recorded.

Last year, the branch recorded butterflies on 146 key sites. This has been the highest number of key sites recorded in one year since the project started over 10 years ago.

We have always had quite good coverage of our key sites in the Cotswolds around Stroud and Dursley etc, reasonably coverage in the area north of that but poor coverage in the



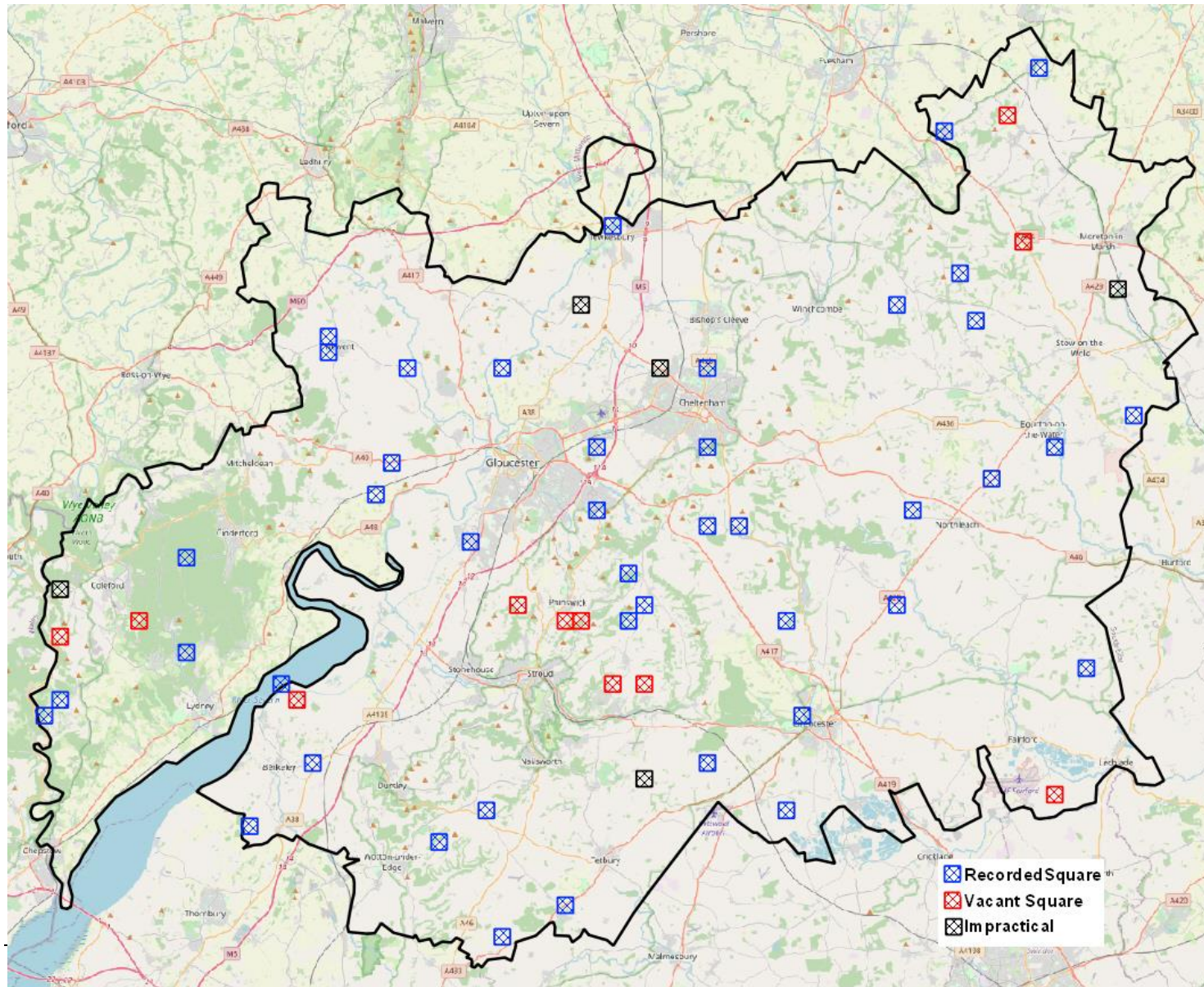
North Cotswolds area and the Forest of Dean. In the spring last year, about 100 members living in the North Cotswolds were emailed to ask if they could do some recording. About 10 members replied and said that they would like to help and most sent in records. We will have to wait and see how many of these recorders have recorded again this year. We would still like to get more recorders for the Forest of Dean area.

All key sites records go into the county butterfly records' database operated by Chris and Vic. Distribution maps of each species can then be produced. All our key sites records are very useful to Head Office staff like Julian and Jen for the Back from the Brink project and Jenny Plackett, our regional conservation officer. We also send records from National Trust sites to the appropriate NT wardens to help them plan conservation work on their sites.

The sites are mapped using QGIS, a graphical information system. Using this system maps showing individual sites or groups of sites can be produced to send out to recorders. It can also save details of key species recorded each year and a brief note of the habitat.

Thanks to all recorders for their time and efforts not just doing the recording but also filling in the forms afterwards.





Branch AGM Saturday 24 October 2020, 2 pm, by zoom



