

David Cullen

It is with great sadness that we have heard of the passing of David Cullen. David was a longstanding BADCOG member who was known for his outstanding knowledge and love of the natural world.

David's interest in nature can be traced all the way back to his time as a pupil at Gresham School, Holt. In 1947, encouraged by a teacher, he submitted an essay on indentifying the Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Black Cap and the Garden Warbler, for which he won an RSPB medal. The essay was reprinted in one of our News Letters (Issue: 199 – Date: Jan 2019).

After attending college in Cirencester, David spent much of his working life in agriculture, a career where he could also pursue his interest in wildlife. David had a particularly good ear for birdsong; quickly identifying a bird well before it came into sight. His knowledge of butterflies, moths and dragonflies was also exceptional, even down to their fascinating life-cycle.

David was also a keen cyclist. He was well known around the local villages, going about his business on his bicycle and was easy to spot with his wonderful crop of white hair. He was also very adventurous and would often set off on his bike to visit family and friends many miles away, stopping overnight at youth hostels. His wife Janice would occasionally accompany him on their specially made tandem.

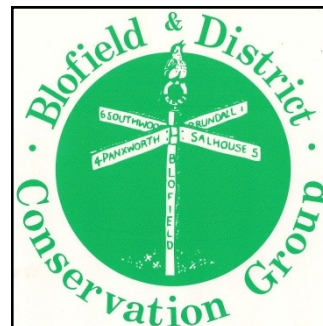
On a personal note, I have very fond memories of David. He loved to attend BADCOG work parties, not just to get his hands dirty, but also for the companionship. David was keen to pass on his knowledge to the younger generation, and it was at these work parties that he built up a wonderful relationship with my son Matthew, whose passion in nature blossomed; particularly his interest in moths and butterflies. I do recall whenever we had the moth-trap out, I would have to ring David who would then cycle round to see what we had caught, just like an excited boy.

Unfortunately David's death has come at an awful time and as I write this, information is scarce about arrangements. For the past few years David has lived in a care home in Acle. The photo was taken some 10 years ago on his eightieth birthday, and David can be seen holding his favourite tipple, a pint of real ale.

Cheers David, we will all miss you.



David, 2nd right, enjoying a pint.



BADCOG NEWS.

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Forward.

While Britain continues in its strange state of uncertainty nature has been doing it's best to continue business as normal. However there is of course no fixed normal and the weather so far this year has meant that some events have been brought forward by early warmth while the lack of rain has had other unfavourable effects. Ernest's weather report details this. As I had hoped there has been the opportunity for more observation this year and Tony's report on his butterfly sightings is a good example.

While it is good to resume a printed format this newsletter will still lack details of our normal activities which have been constrained but there have been some minor activities and I hope that at least a partial return to normal will be recorded in the next newsletter.

Sadly this issue recalls the passing of David Cullen an enthusiastic member whose knowledge and gentle manner of communicating it will be missed.

On behalf of the members I'd like to thank all the contributors for their articles which will appear at some stage but not necessarily in this issue because of space. Do please keep them coming and make this *your* newsletter.

Weather Report Spring 2020

Ernest Hoyos

The end of Winter, such as it was:- Continuing from my last weather report in the March News Letter; the start of 2020 was very mild with January's temperature 2.3c above average, the mildest since 2008 and no sign of snow.

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February turned out the wettest since 2014 and also very mild with an average temperature 2.0c above normal.

The total rainfall for the winter, Dec. '19, Jan, Feb. '20 was 193.9mm, the wettest since Winter 2009, 2010 (our average Winter rainfall is 160mm.) This on top of a wet Autumn meant that we were saturated.

Meteorologically speaking Spring covers the months of March, April and May, and as if a switch was flipped, everything started to dry up and March ended with only 16mm of rain, 35%. Temperatures for the month were again above average.

April turned out 0.7c above average and dry with 30mm of rain, 73%

May has been very dry, although Lingwood, with 8.4mm was less so than many areas in Norfolk and the East and South of the country. Beccles and Gooderstone both recorded only 2.0mm rainfall for the month.

I can't measure sunshine hours but unsurprisingly April and May were record breakers with day after day of clear blue skies. Despite easterly breezes keeping us cooler than much of the country our maximum daytime temperatures were 1.3c above average, however with clear skies, our night time temperatures were 0.8c below average with ground frosts on 11th, 12th, 13, and 14th, which was the coldest at -4.1c, the frost that damaged potatoes, runner beans and courgettes if they weren't protected.

The total Spring rainfall amounted to 54mm, 41% of average. It's only when you look back at records that you get a surprise:- Spring 2011 was much drier, only 23.5mm fell in the same three months and that year continued dry finishing with a total of 422mm or 16.6 inches, the driest year I've recorded in over 50 years.

Our long term annual average rainfall is 641mm or 25.24 inches.

Climate change at the gates.

When the city of Norwich was surrounded defensively by the river and by walls a series of 13 towers, each enclosing a gateway in the wall, stood at each city entrance. Each gate had a room over the archway occupied by a gate-keeper who, in pre-reformation times, was often a hermit. The room could also be used as a prison cell.

Magdalen Gate's hermit room lead out onto a raised walkway. This walkway can still be seen at the top of the wall ruins.

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14 February 2020 -

BADCOG hosted Patrick Barkham who discussed his book *Islander: A Journey Around Our Archipelago* Lee Coby

When one of the nation's foremost natural history writers dropped by to a BADCOG evening, armed with slides and stories chronicling his wildlife journey around Britain's archipelago he could be sure of an attentive audience. Patrick Barkham, who lives locally (in Norfolk) and writes nationally (for The Guardian), gave an excellent talk on his book *Islander*, a work documenting his sojourns to a dozen different British islands. The talk was fascinating both for its wildlife observations as well as the insight Barkham offered into life as an islander. We conservationists concern ourselves with the relationship between nature and humans all the time and this talk was full of weird tales about island life, the movement of people and the movement of wildlife. It considered a paradox: how life on an island can be seen as a trap but how it also offers a type of freedom unavailable to the landlocked. The description of the mysterious origins of the Orkney vole and its, at one time totemic, relationship to the Orcadian people and their Norse heritage being an excellent example of the idiosyncrasies of life as an islander.

The talk, which lasted approximately 60 minutes, and which touched on the geology of our islands as well as their unusual ecologies, included lots more stories about wildlife. From wallabies on the Isle of Man to the complex challenge of one rare bird (the great skua) that predated on another (the storm petrel) on St Kilda, Barkham told of the British Isle's natural history in a creative way that had a discernible concern for both the scientific and the political side of the issues he covered.

Islander: A Journey Around Our Archipelago is available now.

BADCOG Facebook page

BADCOG now has a Facebook page where you can keep in touch with members and upload your photos. Why not have a look and share with your friends and family.



So this spring I've recorded 18 species of butterflies within my local area around Lingwood, which I think is amazing. Looking back at my records, I would have normally seen the Small Heath, the Green Hairstreak and the Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, all of which require a unique environment not found locally. The only other butterfly still missing from my spring list which should be around is the Small Copper, but I'm still looking!

Next are the summer butterflies and hopefully warm weather and the further lifting of restrictions will enable me to go further afield!



No main work parties have been carried out since March but some additional work has been taken place.

Apr 24 – Blofield X roads – Commemorative Hornbeam – BADCOG sign removed, refurbished, replaced.

May 12 – Lingwood Footpath 9 – Vegetation at sides of path cut down using scythe.

Jun 04 – Lingwood Footpaths – FP3 from Peters Wood permissive path to Lingwood Community Wood and FP4 mown.

Jun 08 – Lingwood – Peters Wood Permissive Path and FP3 – New hedge scythed alongside and between plants where possible. FP3 N towards Lingwood Community Wood only.

Jun 16. Lingwood Footpath 3. Some additional mowing along FP3.

House builders to help Cirl Buntings

A colony of 5 pairs of rare Cirl Buntings is to be provided with a 2.5 hectare area of open land as an alternative breeding ground. Barratt Homes will pay £437, 500 to create the habitat and must contribute towards monitoring the land for 25 years.

When Torbay council planners approved a proposed 187 home estate on the edge of Paignton this was the condition.

Cirl Buntings weren't even known until 1800, when Lord Montagu (who also named the Montagu's Harrier) first discovered them in Kingsbridge, Devon.

By the 1930s they were widespread across 39 British counties, reaching as far as north Wales and Yorkshire. They also bred in the Channel Islands. By the second half of the nineteenth century they were even breeding in London suburbs.

However, in the 1970s, it was increasingly obvious they were in serious trouble. By 1989, all that was left was a small population based almost entirely in south Devon.

Cirl buntings are real home-birds, rarely moving very far from their breeding sites or from where they hatched. Males declare their territories with a simple, metallic trilling song. The nest will be well-hidden in a hedge or scrub, and the pair may have up to three broods of three or four babies each year.

Climatic changes prompted important alterations to the hermit rooms. In the 1200s and 1300s there had been frequent storms with high rainfall and mild winters. One hundred years later, by which time all the gates had been built, it was even warmer with inns and grand houses keeping their upper floor galleries open for most of the year. After another 100 years, in Elizabethan times, the climate was colder and those inns enclosed their galleries.

It may have been at this time that the first fireplaces were added to some hermit rooms with fully functioning chimney stacks being added rather later.

Magdalen Street is thought to have been part of a major Roman road, one of two which formed a crossroads at Tombland (Tombland means open space). The gate here was completed in 1339 and was originally known as Fyebrigge Gate or Leper Gate.

Nearby is the site of a medieval Rush Fair where poultry, piglets and rushes were bought, the rushes to act as carpets. A building there served as a 15th century leper house, an almshouse and a workhouse until it became a pub in around 1832. The Artichoke pub was built in 1932 on the same site. A little further out on the Sprowston Road is the Lazar House which was founded before 1119 as a hospital for male lepers and poor sick. *Later it became an almshouse and is now a library.* Bull Close is so named as the cattle were let out through the city wall to graze on Magdalen hill.

Cuckoo clocked up a record time.

On its migration from central Africa to the UK a cuckoo named Carlton II was helped by strong winds to fly 4,677 miles in 7 days. It normally takes 2 - 3 weeks to fly from Gabon with a stop in Liberia and Ivory Coast in West Africa to reach British shores.

Carlton II was the fastest tagged bird to make the journey when it reached Carlton Marshes in Suffolk. The hazardous journey often includes high winds, ferocious hail and thunder storms with lengthy sea crossings.

Like many migrant birds, the Cuckoo is in long-term decline as a breeding bird in Britain, and has been on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern since 2009. Until recently, knowledge of this species' migratory and wintering behaviour was very limited.

In 2011, a BTO team set out to change this, using satellite-tags to track the movements of male Cuckoos breeding in East Anglia. This study has since been extended to track males from several other sites across Britain. This work has revealed details of Cuckoos' migration timings and wintering grounds.

Butterflies during 'Lockdown'

Tony McKie

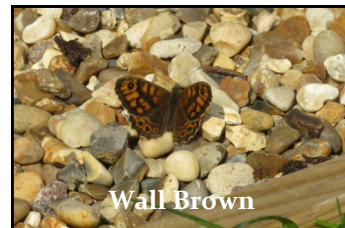
Since 2010, I've kept a record of my first butterfly sighting of the year for each species. This project would normally involve car journeys to visit sites where some of our more elusive species are found, such as the Dingy and Grizzled Skippers at Foulden Common.

This year, due to the Government's Covid-19 travel restrictions, my recordings have been very local, either in my garden or whilst out on a Government approved daily walk for exercise. As it turned out, when the whole of the UK was under 'Lockdown' conditions, the spring of 2020 was exceptional. The month of May broke two records, first it was the sunniest ever recorded and it also had the lowest ever rainfall, which for anyone who likes to get out and about is wonderful!

My first sighting of the year was on the 25th March when doing some raking at Walsham Fen. As you would expect, it was the usual suspect, the wonderful bright yellow *Brimstone*, flashing fast across the fen looking for a mate. This was followed by the *Peacock*, a few of them basking on the boardwalk. This was quickly followed by a *Small Tortoiseshell* on the 26th (garden) and a *Comma* on the 27th (Strumpshaw Hill). Amazingly, all of these butterflies would have hibernated over winter in their adult form, reappearing on the first warm spring day. We always get them in our garage which I have to rescue before the spiders get them!

Next was the fast flying *Holly Blue*, seen on the 7th April (garden). This small, lilac-blue butterfly would have overwintered as a chrysalis, emerging into its adult form as the days warmed up. On the 9th April I recorded one of my favourite butterflies, the *Orange-tip* (Strumpshaw Hill) and this was followed by a *Speckled Wood* (Strumpshaw Landfill). Again the *Orange-tip* would have overwintered as a chrysalis but uniquely among butterflies, the *Speckled Wood* can overwinter as either a caterpillar or as a chrysalis.

Next to come along were the whites. First the *Small White* on the 11th April (Church Road hedge), then the *Green-veined White* on the 21st and then the *Large White* the next day, both in Railway Wood. Again, all of these butterflies would have overwintered as chrysalises either on a wall, or tucked up in a hollow tree, or in someone's shed!



Wall Brown

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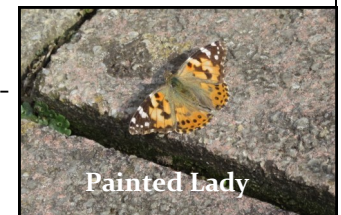
On the same day (22nd April) as well as seeing the *Large White*, I sighted my first *Red Admiral* of the year in Buckenham Woods. Now was this an early immigrant or had it overwintered? With the warm weather from the south we were having at the time, it could have come in from the Continent, but who knows? This was what fooled me into believing I'd caught the briefest sightings of a very tatty *Painted lady* in the same location. However, the very next day Hans Watson got a photo of a *Large Tortoiseshell* in Buckenham Woods, which is what I must have seen. Hans checked this sighting with the county recorder who confirmed a number of these UK rare butterflies have been seen this year!

My next sighting wasn't until the 4th May when I had a *Wall Brown* in the garden. Over the next few weeks I got a few more local sightings of this lovely brown butterfly, one along Pack Lane and a couple of sightings close to High Noon Farm, Braydestone. This is really the first time I can say I've seen this butterfly away from the coast or away from the broads system.

There would be a two week gap until I recorded my next first species sighting of the year, a *Common Blue* on the 17th May in Lingwood Churchyard. This violet-blue (male) butterfly is always slightly larger than the *Holly Blue* and would have spent the winter as a caterpillar before developing into a chrysalis, emerging as an adult 3 weeks later. Then, on the 20th May at the Doctor's Cottage, Strumpshaw Fen, I thought I'd spotted a female *Common Blue*, but after downloading the photos, it turned out to be another first of the year, a *Brown Argus*, which has a lifecycle very similar to that of a *Common Blue*.

Returning to the same site the next day (21st May), I saw a few more of these quick, low flying butterflies and at the same time I also caught sight of my first *Swallowtail*, flying fast across the vegetation, most likely looking for a mate. It wasn't until the 1st June that I was able to see them up close feeding and a bit more chilled out.

Next to come along on the 27th May was a *Painted Lady*, feeding on the *Valerian* in my garden. The life-cycle of this butterfly is fascinating and too long to explain here, but it would be interesting to know where this individual had come from! Also feeding on the same plant on the 31st May was a *Meadow Brown*, the first real summer butterfly I think. This would have overwintered as a caterpillar in the long grass somewhere, possibly along the roadside verges, before changing into a chrysalis. Four weeks later, if it's lucky and avoids the grass cutters, it will emerge as an adult.



Painted Lady

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