

# CARMARTHENSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

## NEWSLETTER No 18

Spring 2014

Editor: Ian Morgan

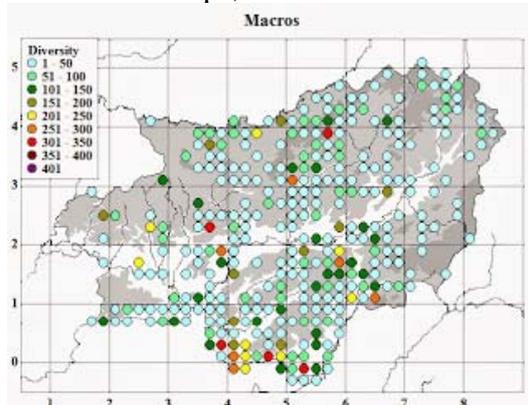
### INTRODUCTION

This is the time of year when I try to re-read various moth books, to `swot up` on identification and also to plan at which sites I'll be trapping at in the coming year. Already, the spell of quite warm weather in early-mid March has produced some butterfly records and I have started moth trapping (see the Carmarthenshire Moth blog for details). I hope that this spring period will not be a repetition of the very cold one that we experienced in April and May 2013, with weather conditions that delayed serious trapping for many of us. Fortunately, last year, the weather started to improve at the very end of May and the rest of summer 2013 was n't too bad. It will be really encouraging to have a good summer and also a migrant year to rival the last really good one, back in 2006. Last year did witness a modest influx of migrants in the early autumn and, of course, there was the spectacular find (see below) by Chris Handoll on Moth Night. For information, the **2014 Moth Night will take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July**, with a theme on woodland moths (though recorders are free to record any habitat, or at home).

Particular thanks must go to Sam Bosanquet, for lots of reasons. Firstly, he continues to serve us well as a `moth mentor`, confirming or identifying moths that are giving identification troubles; he led on Moth Night 2013, urging us all to participate and then took on the onerous task of compiling the data. Finally, he has volunteered to stand in as `interim Moth Recorder` (to use his phrase) for Carmarthenshire, following Jon Baker`s confirmed resignation last autumn. Please note that henceforth all moth records should now be sent to Sam (email: [sambbryo@aol.com](mailto:sambbryo@aol.com)).

Given Sam`s other work responsibilities and other natural history commitments, it is important that we all do as much possible to reduce his workload. We can all help, for example, by entering our own data for Moth Night 2014, so that Sam does not have to repeat last year`s time-consuming duties.

It was Sam too, who organised the successful gathering of Carmarthenshire moth recorders at Llandeilo on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013, and it was nice to `put faces to names`, as many of us, whilst in regular e-mail communication, had not actually met until that date. A short but interesting talk by Sam, with some very provisional distribution maps, added extra interest to the meeting.



*Above: provisional distribution map of moth recording coverage prepared by Sam Bosanquet.*

Perhaps surprisingly, I have managed to shed my antipathy for, or ignorance and fear of, entering data in appropriate spreadsheet format after receiving instruction, help and encouragement from Colin Jones (so, thanks too to Colin!). Recently, I entered my 2011 data (not much) and that for 2012 & 2013 (a lot) and it has now been sent to Sam for checking and incorporation into the county dataset. Colin, it will be also recalled, kindly set up the Carmarthenshire Moth and Butterfly blogsite, which many of us feel was a success in its first year. It certainly enabled us to have a more effective communication tool that others, outside our immediate small group of enthusiasts, can share. It brought dividends in that through it, Steve Clarke has `come to light` (sorry, I could n`'t resist the pun!). Steve has been moth recording for some time at his home, which is located at the very edge of Mynydd Du, and it is a site that has the potential ability to attract upland as well as more general species. His provisional lists from the last decade or so certainly include some good records. So, welcome to our group, Steve. A second new member – Mike Jenkins from near Taliaris – also started trapping in 2013, under the watchful tutelage of Mat Ridley. Mike lives on a smallholding with good habitat all around, so we look forward to his 2014 captures. Another person who potentially has an excellent upland `moth catchment` near her home at Cilycwm is Isabel Macho. Isabel made a good start in 2013 and is certainly preparing for the imminent trapping season. With a bit of luck, Isabel will tempt some upland moths to her trap.

Recently, Melanie Jones, who lives on the coast at Llansteffan, contacted Sam and she has sent a substantial amount of data, including many excellent records relating to scarce or even new Carmarthenshire species. Melanie is in a key position, being able to trap right on the coast, a location with great potential not just for migrants but also for cliff-dwelling species.

We are a small group, so I repeat the plea to try to introduce some others to our fascinating hobby, as we need help to ensure better recording coverage. I have personally `got my eyes` on one or two new people who I feel may be persuaded to start up...we`ll see!

On a mundane matter, I have a spare generator if anyone wishes to have it (collection only!). It`s in excellent condition but will require a `service` to clean out any old oil (it cost me c £30 on the last occasion). Please email me if required.

Thanks to Sally Hall for her contribution to this newsletter. Sally reminds us of the beauty of moths, whether common or rare, something that we perhaps sometimes forget about when accruing records. I`m sure that we all have favourites among the species that we frequently encounter, with herald, rosy footman and merveille du jour coming to mind as some of mine. Thanks too to Dave Bannister for his butterfly update for 2013.

I hope to get the next newsletter out sometime in the late summer period to summarise our efforts in the first part of the 2014 season. It will also include an article by Chris Handoll about his moth recording results at his home trap.



Left: *Merveille du jour*, Salem. Vaughn Matthews.

### Some Additional Highlights for the first part of 2013 – to August 1<sup>st</sup>

I have had to include this section, partly to include the interesting Melanie Jones data from Llansteffan, but also to include some other worthwhile data from Huw John at Pembrey, which has only recently been received.

Melanie Jones sent in a comprehensive set of records from two localities: Llansteffan village SN351108 and St Anthony`s Well, near Llansteffan, SN346099. Most of her interesting records fall in the post-1<sup>st</sup> August period and are summarised after the main text below (see: `Highlights of 2013: Part 2), but early season records of note included a privet hawk-moth *Sphinx ligustri* at St Anthony`s Well on 14/7 and, more importantly, a micro-moth new to Carmarthenshire at Llansteffan on 21/7 –

*Argolamprotes micella*, a scarce south-western species otherwise only known from Glamorgan in Wales! It is said to feed on raspberry and bramble. A miller *Acronicta leporina* on 13/7 and a small rufous *Coenobia rufa* on 29/7 (both Llansteffan village) and a four-spotted footman *Lithosia quadra* and a marbled coronet *Hadena confusa*, both on 20/7 at St Anthony`s Well, are all also really worthy records. Well done Melanie!



*Argolamprotes micella*, new to Carmarthenshire. Photo: Melanie Jones

Huw John`s main trapping site is at the small post office at Pembrey SN427013, and the `moth catchment` includes wet pastures and sand dunes to the south, as well as more typical garden, woodland and other habitats. Amongst his early records for 2013 (ie up to the 1<sup>st</sup> August cut-off date summarised in the last newsletter), several were of interest and these include a pale brindled beauty *Phigalia pilosaria* on 4/1 (an under-recorded species due to its early emergence); an orange underwing *Archieris parthenias* at Pembrey Country Park (SS40-99) on 2/4, with a small yellow underwing *Panemeria tenebrata* there on 7/6 and a rustic shoulder-knot *Apamea*

*sordens* at Pembrey Post Office on 9/6. He also had Archer`s dart *Agrotis vestigialis*, white-line dart *Euxoa tricolor* and double lobed *Apamea ophiogramma* at the latter site on 1/8, the first two being coastal/dune species and the last-named is associated with wetland habitats.

### Highlights of 2013 (part 2: August 1<sup>st</sup> onwards)

- Ian Morgan

(Scientific names and grid references are normally only given at the first mention of the species or location. Dates are given as eg 10/8 = 10<sup>th</sup> August. The earlier part of 2013 was summarised in the last newsletter.).

The reasonable summer weather mostly continued in August 2013, allowing ample moth recording by several local enthusiasts to take place. A record that I had omitted from the last newsletter was that of the pyralid *Calamotropha paludella*, caught at Tyrwaun, Pwll SN469013 on 31/7. It was a 4<sup>th</sup> county record, with previous records made by Barry Stewart at WWT Penclacwydd in 2005, myself at Tyrwaun on 9.6.07 and Jon Baker at Cynheidre on 14.6.07; its larvae mine the leaves of *Typha*, and the Tyrwaun examples were probably wanderers from nearby marshes.

A new trapping site this year was at `Kymer`s Canal Pond` SN403062 (as the pond next to Kymer`s Canal, Kidwelly has been dubbed) and wetland moths also provided some interesting records here too, including the 5<sup>th</sup> vcr of *Calamotropha* on 6/8. It was accompanied by bulrush *Nonagria typha* and Webb`s wainscots *Archanara sparganii*, as well as *Donaucaula forcicella*.



Webb`s wainscot at Kymer`s Canal Pond, Kidwelly. Ian Morgan

A nearby site SN398069 on upper saltmarsh habitat, just west of Glan yr Afon LNR was also trapped, resulting in one more bulrush wainscot and seven Webb`s wainscots. This latter site has plenty of branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, one of Webb`s wainscot`s food plants. An actinic placed overnight at Cilymaenllwyd, Pwll SN475017 on 7/8 yielded an indication of some migrant activity in the form of a dark sword-grass *Agrotis ipsilon*, as well as a single magpie moth *Abraxas grossulariata*, which is nowadays a declined, resident species, though several observers had it this year – perhaps it is making a resurgence?

In 2013, `Moth Night` (the new name for National Moth Night) was held on 10/8 and Carmarthenshire moth-ers made a concerted effort. Mat Ridley at Bryn Llinos, Carmel SN589164 had another dark sword-grass and a feathered gothic *Tholera decimalis*. I trapped at three sites: an edge-of-coast site, just east of Burry Port SN454003 where I had orange swifts *Hepialus sylvina* and the pyralid *Catopria pinella*; Dyfatty Marsh (reedbed/fen/carr) SN457009 produced silky *Chilodes*

*maritimus*, southern *Mythimna straminea* and small wainscots *Chortodes pygmina*, as well as the pyralid *Chilo phragmitella*.



*The Dyfatty Marsh trapping site near Burry Port. Ian Morgan*

Sam Bosanquet trapped at Cnwc y Llwyn, SN515311 and also helped with the determinations of the catch made by Fay Sharpley *et al* at Keeper`s Lodge SN522319, Brechfa. They had a worthy list of moths on Moth Night that included Devon carpet *Lampropteryx otregiata*, slender pug *Eupithecia tenuiata*, golden-rod pug *E. virgaureata*, Welsh wave *Venusia cambrica*, bordered beauty *Epione repandaria* and slender brindle *Apamea scolopacina*. Sam also had the following micros: *Coleophora argentula*, *Mompha rashkiella*, *Lozotaenia forsterana*, *Epinotia brunichana* and *Archips xylostearia*.

According to the data currently available to me, some ten people or so (or groups of people) took part in Moth Night– Sam Bosanquet at Cnwc, Brechfa; Chris Handoll at Maenol; Sally Hall at Nant y Garreg, Saron; Colin Jones at Troserch Farm, Llangennech; Steve Lucas at Betws, Isabel Macho at Cilycwm, Vaughn Matthew at Salem, Ian Morgan at three sites between Pwll and Burry Port; Mat Ridley at Carmel; Fay Sharpley at Keeper`s Lodge (and others, including Dave Bannister) at Brechfa. If there were others of whom I`m unaware, then my apologies are due.

It was previously announced in the last newsletter, that the `star moth` of Moth Night (and perhaps the year), was the rare migratory pyralid *Diasemia reticularis*, a fantastic find, caught by Chris Handoll at Maenol SN449382. Other records from Moth Night 2013 include a yellow-barred brindle *Acasis viretata* at Troserch SN552033 (Colin Jones); scalloped *Falcaria lacertinaria* and oak hook-tips at Hafan, Cilycwm SN753400 (Isabel Macho); nine magpie moths at Salem SN608280 (Vaughn Matthews); poplar grey *Acronicta megacephala* and scalloped hook-tip at Betws SN641119 (Steve Lucas).



*Scalloped hook-tip at Cnwc y Llwyn, Brechfa. Photo: Sam Bosanquet*

A hummingbird hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum* was spotted on red valerian at Penygroes SN599137 on 11/8 (Carol Jones), and another was recorded as it fed at *Buddleja* in a garden at Priory St, Kidwelly SN416071 (Vic & Valery Buffery) on 14/8. Gardens are a favourite haunt of this migrant and chances are increased if the garden is well stocked with nectar-rich plants. An inland record of a bulrush wainscot at Salem SN608280 on 16/8 added variety to Vaughan Matthew`s catch; as its name implies, the caterpillar feeds on bulrushes and, as they grow more commonly along the coast, the moth itself is correspondingly scarcer inland, though it is known to disperse and wander. The next night, the birch-feeding scalloped hook-tip was caught and photographed by SB at Cnwc y Llwyn, Brechfa by SB.

A new trapping site for me in 2013 was the rather extensive bog at Llwyn-teg, Llannon SN552078 and I certainly intend to trap there throughout 2014. A local couple have kindly allowed me to place an actinic at the edge of their garden that overlooks the bog, which mostly comprises rank heather and much bog myrtle, amidst other calcifuge vegetation. A heath rustic *Xestia agathina agathina* was caught there on 20/8 and, as I was trapping in the general area, I left another trap at `Gweunydd Cochion` SN543113, an extensive area of bog and acidic vegetation just south of Tumble, but only a northern spinach *Eulithes populata* and a few common species greeted me the next morning. Sam Bosanquet had kindly identified a leaf mine that I`d collected on bog myrtle as *Bucculatrix cidarella* at Cors Goch Llanllwch SN363189, and it was no surprise to also find it on that plant at the Llwyn-teg site too. Some late August records of interest were the four 4-spotted footmen (all males) at Tyrwaun on 28/8, when they were accompanied by the pyralid *Dioryctia sylvestrella* (the `new pine knot-horn`), a second county record, with the previous capture being at Pembrey Forest by Jon Baker in early July 2006. It is associated with pine woodland and was first recorded in Britain from Dorset in 2001 (though some older specimens have since been found in collections).



*Dioryctia sylvestrella*, Tyrwaun, Pwll. Ian Morgan

Pembrey Burrows (28/8, on the southern dune `arm` SS413993), yielded Archer`s darts, a tissue *Triphosa dubitata*, oblique-striped *Phibalapteryx virgata* and the pyralid *Anerastia lotella*. Sand darts *Agrotis ripae* were caught the next night (29/8), just east of Burry Port, at one of my regular 2013 trapping stations and that night also brought dividends for CH with a heath rustic at Maenol. A new county record this summer was the Australian micro-moth species *Tachystola acroxantha*, caught `near St Clears` SN21 (exact location not received at time of writing) by Richard Lawrence;

it feeds on Eucalyptus trees and is already known from Swansea and elsewhere in SE Wales.



Above: *Tachystola acroxantha*, caught near St Clears. Richard Lawrence

September (2/9) saw a long-distance foray onto Mynydd Du to set out two actinic traps for the night – quite a journey there-and-back, and repeated to collect the traps the next day. A trap left amongst the heather at Banc Crucorford SN67-16- had 52 large ears *Amphipoea lucens* (Jon Baker had previously dissected and determined the `ears` from this locality), 2 heath rustics, 8 neglected rustics *Xestia castanea*, a clouded bordered brindle *Apamea crenata* and others. The other trap, left on the limestone at Palycwrt SN678182 had plenty of feathered gothics, hedge rustics *Tholera cespitis* and antler moths *Cerapteryx graminis*. Now that Steve Clarke, who lives not too far away at Cwm-llwyd SN705202, Mynydd Du, has joined our moth group, perhaps I will not have to venture too far in this direction in the future!



Sunset at Palycwrt, Mynydd Du. Photo: Ian Morgan



Antlers, hedge rustics and feathered gothic at Palycwrt. Photo: Ian Morgan

A new sampling site on 4/9, at Gwelfro SN363078 on the small area of dunes south of St Ishmael, resulted in two yellow bellies *Semiaspilates ochrearia* amongst some commoner moths. This locality certainly has some potential for coastal moths as well as migrants, and it is a locality to where I will probably also return in 2014.



Looking west towards the Llansteffan area from Gwelfro trapping site, St Ishmael, Ferryside. Ian Morgan.

Later in September, there was evidence of immigration at many of our Carmarthenshire traps with, for example a rusty-dot pearl *Udea ferrugalis* on 6/9 (at Tyrwaun); 10 dark-sword grasses and c 70 silver y`s *Plusia gamma* on 25/9 (Tyrwaun); a vestal *Rhodometra sacraria* at day at Sandy Water Park, Llanelli SN493005 on 26/9 and with other examples from inland Carmarthenshire. The latter include two vestals at Saron, Llandysul SN372365 (27/9, Sally Hall); a vestal, a turnip moth *Agrotis segetum*, a pearly underwing *Peridroma saucia*, several silver y`s and five dark sword-grasses at Cnwc, Brechfa on 6/10 (Sam Bosanquet); another vestal at Salem, Llandeilo (Vaughn Matthews) on 5/10, and one at Felinfach, Cwmgwili SN5740101 on 8/10 (George Tordoff). There were also some additional sightings of vestals at Tyrwaun and Cilymaenllwyd, Pwll in this period. SB additionally recorded two uncommon moths - a red sword-grass *Xylena vetusta*, a grey shoulder-knot *Lithophane ornitopus lactipennis* and 26 red-green carpets *Chloroclysta siterata* at Cnwc on 6/10, on a good trapping night, when he noted `160 individuals of 36 species`. On 14/9, again at Cnwc, he netted a specimen of the micro *Mompha langiella*, which has few Carmarthenshire records.

The birch-feeding tortricid *Epinota ramella* was also caught by SB at Cnwc on 24/9 and constitutes a new county record. At Tyrwaun, there were the usual autumn captures of l-album *Mythimnia l-album* and large wainscots *Rhizedra lutosa*, large ranunculus *Polymixis flavicincta* and Blair`s shoulder-knot *Lithophane leautieri hesperica*, but a single red underwing was a nice surprise on 25/9.



*Red underwing at Tyrwaun, Pwll. Ian Morgan*

A mothing foray on 26/9 to the dunes at Pembrey Burrows produced feathered ranunculus *Polymixis lichenea lichenea*, with five caught on the southern SS49 dune `arm` and a singleton on the northern part SN418002.



*View from the Pembrey Burrows trap site; Gower in distance. Ian Morgan*



*Feathered ranunculus at Pembrey Burrows. Ian Morgan*

Also on 26/9, George Tordoff found larvae of the small chocolate-tip *Clostera pigra* at nearby Pembrey Forest SN397016 & SN393010, confirming the continued presence of this very local moth at this site. The larvae feed on various willows and aspen.



*Small chocolate-tip caterpillar at Pembrey Forest. Photo: George Tordoff*

Chris Handoll had a noteworthy capture at Maenol on 4/10 – a tawny pinion *Lithophane semibrunnea*, an uncommon species that feeds on ash. Also caught on that date was the micro *Ypsolopha sequella*, (a new county record), caught in mixed woodland at Cilymaenllwyd, Pwll.



*Ypsolopha sequella, new to Carmarthen at Cilymaenllwyd, Pwll. Ian Morgan*

A brown-spot pinion *Agrochola litura* was caught by CH at Maenol on 7/10 to add to the five caught earlier at Saron, (4/10, SH): this moth currently seems to be confined to the northern part of Carmarthenshire. CH had a red sword-grass at Maenol on 5/10 and signs of winter perhaps were provided by two `fresh-looking` satellites *Eupsilia transversa*, caught by him on 8/10.

New member Steve Clarke caught a blue-bordered carpet *Plemyria rubiginata rubiginata* at Cwm Llwyd in September and, even more interestingly, an autumn green carpet *Chloroclysta miata* on 5/10 – good records Steve! I am sure that Steve will be providing many records of note in coming seasons.

As the valued data received from Huw John (Pembrey) and Melanie Jones (Llansteffan) was only received after the writing of the above account, to save time they are both dealt with separately below, rather than being incorporated in the text. It has already been noted that Huw John's main trapping station at Pembrey Post Office abuts good habitat and this was reflected in the numbers of wetland and coastal species that he caught. These included silky wainscot on 6/8, a doubled lobed and a male four-spotted footman on 7/8, crescents on about half-a-dozen dates from 19/8, bulrush wainscot on 20/8. Trapping by Huw at Ffrwd Fen, Pembrey SN417028 yielded southern wainscot, small rivulet *Perizoma affinitata* and the pyralid *Chilo phragmitella* on 3/8 and a poplar grey on 19/8. A hummingbird hawk-moth was at

Pembrey Post Office on 21/8 and, two days later the `hemp agrimony plume moth` *Adaina microdactyla* was caught there.

Amongst the haul of good records supplied by Melanie Jones were the following caught at Llansteffan village: oblique carpet *Orthonama vittata* on 13/8, 13 individuals of four-spotted footmen on four different July-August dates, several large ranunculus in late September, feathered ranunculus on 22/9, and large wainscots on 6/10. Nearby, at St Anthony`s Well, Melanie recorded four-spotted footmen on 1/9 and l-album wainscot (x2) on 20/7.



*Above: l-album wainscot. Photo: Ian Morgan*

*Thanks to all who have contributed records.*

**Footnote:** I would welcome any reasonably decent photographs of noteworthy moths for future newsletters. Obviously for confirmation purposes, it does not matter what the backdrop to the specimen is, but for any subsequent photos, ideally try to avoid `hand photos`, specimen tubes etc, though sometimes this is unavoidable if the moth is `flighty`. Putting the moth in a container that is placed in the fridge for an hour or so will cool it down into inactivity, but often geometrids then unfortunately fold their wings (noctuids etc `behave` better!). Place your moth on a rock, piece of wood etc of sufficient size before taking your photo and take quite a few shots, so that the best can then be used.

### **Moth trapping at Saron, Llandysul SN372365**

- Sally Hall

I started moth trapping in 2011, after attending a Butterfly Conservation Wales open day at the West Wales Museum of Childhood, Llangeler (incidentally, an excellent site for the brown hairstreak butterfly). The event continued into the evening, culminating in several people setting up their moth traps. Some were hung in the trees and others were free standing on the ground, but I was amazed at how well they performed, as I visited each in turn, watching the many moths flying around and into the traps. Early the next morning, I went back and helped empty the traps and I was well and truly `hooked`. When Richard Smith, renowned for all his hard work in running butterfly projects here in West Wales, kindly offered to lend me his moth trap, I was absolutely delighted, and I will be forever indebted to him. It is a Skinner style trap he made himself - an excellent simple and effective design that he later kindly agreed to sell to me.

I have to say that moth trapping is one of the best hobbies I have ever encountered. Despite the initial difficulties and frustrations regarding identification - and it can be

very hard at times- it is always enjoyable. The very first moth I caught and identified in the trap was a Hebrew Character. Such a common moth, yet it took me over an hour to identify! However, once I got to know the various groups and where to find them in the guidebook, it became much easier - and faster. In the main, I use the 'Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland' by Paul Waring and Martin Townsend. I also consult the Carmarthenshire Moth and Butterfly Group experts, who are always happy to help with identification. To have experts who are willing to share their knowledge is vital, particularly regarding moth identification, as I send my records in for the Garden Moth Scheme, to the Carmarthenshire County Moth Recorder and West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre.

I continue to be amazed at the beauty and diversity of my catches and the only disappointment is when visiting the trap on some - thankfully very rare - occasions to find no or very few moths. In the first year I trapped several times a week, mainly to speed up my ID skills. It was not a particularly good year for mothing - which was excellent for a novice like me as it meant I did not get overwhelmed and spend too long on identification. Last year was a much better year for moths, and on some very notable nights, I was picking hundreds of moths up from the ground several metres around the trap. Being more confident with identification meant I could manage such a quantity, which I think, would have been really difficult during my first year. On most occasions, emptying the trap is almost like opening the best present one could ever have and knowing this spurs me into action before dawn. I have learnt that emptying the trap using a torch about 30 minutes prior to dawn gets the best results, as the moths are still around and in the box and predators, such as birds, are not yet up. I find it easy to get up so early in the Spring and Summer - probably because I am also a keen bird watcher and have been doing this for years.

I tend to trap once a week but this does increase if the conditions are particularly good. I do not trap during the winter months. This is mainly because we rely solely on renewable power so, as I use such a high wattage mercury bulb, it uses up too much power during a time of decreased energy availability. When we do have spare power available and during the rest of the year, I tend to leave the porch light on for most of the evening and have been surprised at what has turned up. I also look out for daytime moths when I am out walking and I also go out 'dusking' on some evenings when conditions are favourable for moths. My best experience was an evening spent watching hundreds of moths (all common species) lit up by my torch on a large clump of very tall ragwort. It is a shame that this plant species is so detested by some. We compromise and let it flower, removing most of the flowers before they turn to seed and immersing them in water to rot. In this way we can control this 'noxious' weed in accordance with the required legislation.

I am very fortunate to live on a farm (Nant y Garreg, Saron) of around 160 acres and as we manage the land for wildlife we have some really diverse habitats. These include new woodland, ancient woodland, an old quarry, 'rhos pasture', wildflower meadows, lakes, river, streams, scrapes, rough ground and a conifer plantation (although I am in the process of changing this to mainly deciduous, using the 'continuous cover' process - leaving some conifer species). As my moth trap needs mains power I am currently restricted to trapping near to the farm buildings. In the future I hope to get a portable trap that I can then move to other areas of the farm. I have found the trap I have to be very effective. I needed to replace the bulb last year and I also bought a spare, as the mercury bulbs are not so easily obtainable these days and I had to also add an adapter as the bulb connection I previously had was discontinued.

I have so far caught around 236 species. Several of these are local to our area and specific to some of the habitats we have here. Photographs and information is put up on the `Carmarthenshire Moth and Butterfly blog`. It is difficult to specify highlights for me as I find every species incredible, particularly when studying the wing details under a hand lens. The more unusual/local moths include Vestal, Oblique Carpet, Sharp-angled Carpet, Golden-rod Pug, White-spotted Pug, Yellow-barred Brindle, Clouded Magpie, August Thorn, Rosy Footman, Dark Sword-grass, Gothic, Triple-spotted Clay, Double-line, Striped Wainscot, Brown-spot Pinion and Scarce Silver-lines.



*Sally Hall's vestals, September 2013*

In 2012 there was some confusion when I caught a Brown-spot Pinion. As it was cited as 'resident/common' in my ID book and I was confident regarding identification, I did not take a photo, so when I sent in the record it was provisionally rejected. I had not realized that there were some species that are described as common but are actually not common in some areas and so photographic evidence is needed. However, after another moth`er, local to me, confirmed he had also caught this species it was eventually accepted. This year I caught this species several times and have taken photos. I now have the list of all species that need photographic evidence for Carmarthenshire.

**A Quick Note:** Sharp-eyed readers will note that, depending on the author, sometimes the vernacular name is given in higher case eg Striped Wainscot, as in Sally`s article above, whereas my renditions are in lower case eg striped wainscot (unless a proper noun forms part of the name eg Blair`s shoulder-knot). Back in the 1980s, we were instructed in the Nature Conservancy Council to use the lower case whilst writing papers or citations for SSSIs and the habit has remained with me. The choice is with the writer and I notice that it varies in the conservation literature, with most now using capital letters for names but there are logical arguments for and against. The scientific name is normally italicised, without the need to put it in parenthesis (unless it is not in italics).

## STEVE CLARKE'S MOTH RECORDS FROM CWM-LLWYD (SN705202)

There are many very interesting records in the list provided by Steve, in terms of potentially new county records, as well as those of a `distribution gap filling` nature. Those that are **underlined and emboldened** are the most interesting, with those marked with an asterisk (\*) logical in habitat terms for the location and plausible, as upland areas are relatively poorly recorded in Carmarthenshire, particularly the western continuum of the Brecon Beacons onto Mynydd Du (Cwm-llwyd immediately abuts this area).

The problem is that several records, whilst as noted above are quite creditable and logical in nearby habitat terms, will be new county records and therefore will really need verification in the form of a photo or specimen. This is certainly not the same as a rejection of these records and, pending further evidence or recording elsewhere suggesting increased validity, they may be best put into one of Jon Baker's `pending categories`, albeit one of the more `accepted` ones such as his `A2 Green` category. Jon's categories are fully explained in his 2006 Carmarthenshire Moth Report. Dates are given after each record. Hopefully Steve can re-trap some in due course.

However, those records marked with a question mark (?), are perhaps *best presently disregarded*, unless evidence is provided to the contrary.

Records that are otherwise just listed below with only dates (and not underlined or in bold) are given for interest and should be acceptable without the need for further validation.

Quotations in inverted commas (“ ”) are from the draft of the forthcoming book on Glamorgan moths, perhaps the most relevant source of information to this particular area. (Its publication is imminent and all Carmarthenshire moth`ers should obtain a copy – I will alert all when it appears).



Above: autumn green carpe at Cwm-llwyd. Photo: Steve Clarke

**\*Northern egger** *Lasiocampa quercus f. callunae* 9.7.05, 3.8.11 “scarce resident” in Glamorgan. Would be new to Carmarthenshire, so photographic confirmation needed.

Scalloped hook-tip *Falcaria lacertinaria* - 1.8.10.

Common lutestring *Ochropacha duplaris* - 12.6.10.

Little emerald *Jodis lactearia* - 3.6.11.

**?Dwarf cream wave** *Idaea seriata* 10.8.00 “very rare” Glamorgan. **JB Category C.** will need full verification. Interestingly though, it has been recorded at a similar upland site (Yspyty Ystwyth) in Ceredigion.

Vestal *Rhodometra sacraria* - 23.9.00.

Galium carpet *Epirrhoe galiata* - 10.8.00.

Devon carpet *Lampropteryx otregiata* - 19.5.00.

**Autumn green carpet** *Chloroclysta miata* 23.9.00, 23.9.13 “scarce, 25 records” Glamorgan. **JB Category B.** *Photographic verification has since been provided.* In Ceredigion it is said to frequent wet woodland (eg alder carr or willow scrub) which matches habitat near Cwm-llwyd.

Mottled grey *Colostygia multistriata* - 1.4.97.

Pale November moth *Epirrita chrystyi* ... apparently this species needs dissection to be firmly i/d.

**?Peacock** *Macraria notata* - 14.6.99. **JB Category C.** All peacock records, given i/d issues will need to be verified.

**?Great oak beauty** *Hypomecis roboraria* - 26.7.08 - nearest population is in Gloucestershire/Midlands. Will need full verification to be accepted as very rare/absent in Wales.

Convolvulus hawk-moth *Agrius convolvuli* - 23.9.06.

Lime hawk-moth *Mimas tiliae* - 3.6.11.

Hummingbird hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum* - 25.10.00.

Small elephant hawk-moth *Deilephila porcellus* - 30.6.00.

Alder kitten *Furcula bicuspis* - 15.6.11.

Great prominent *Peridea anceps* - 22.5.10.

Four-dotted footman *Cybosia mesomella* - 14.6.06.

Scarlet tiger *Callimorpha dominula* - 1.7.06.

**\*Beautiful brocade** *Lacanobia contigua*- 13.6.99. Given as “scarce, 47 records, moorland/heath” in Glamorgan. Habitat at or near Cwm-llwyd is correct, so certainly a very plausible/logical record, but as not yet fully documented for Carmarthenshire will need verification ie photo or specimen.

**\*Marbled coronet** *Hadena confusa* - 22.5.10 “scarce, has been recorded away from coast”. There has been some doubt regarding the SN74 Rothamsted records, but I personally consider those SN74 records viable, given the large population of *Silene maritima* at nearby Nantmwyn lead mines. *Silene* occurs on ORS cliffs in BBNP too, so not implausible. Has been recorded on the Carboniferous limestone at Carmel Woods and Cwm-llwyd is close (as the moth flies!) to Carreg Cennen.

Double-line - 30.6.00.

Shark - 7.7.01

**\*Northern deep-brown dart** *Aporophyla lueneburgensis*- 2.9.11 “rare and localised” in Glamorgan and found at several upland or bog sites in Ceredigion. Presumably based on the more well-marked northern form, but again really needing a photo.

Grey shoulder-knot *Lithophane ornitopus lactipennis*- 23.3.11.

Red sword grass *Xyleta vetusta* - 1.3.97

Dark brocade *Blepharita adusta* - 13.6.99 “scarce, upland Glamorgan”

**\*Haworth`s minor** *Celaena haworthii* - 10.10.09 “rare and localised, upland sites” in Glamorgan, and on bog sites in Ceredigion. Again, the habitat is correct in the Cwm-llwyd area with cotton-grass flushes upslope, but as it would be new species for Carmarthenshire, a photo/specimen is needed for full confirmation.

Small yellow underwing *Panemeria tenebrata* - 5.6.10.



*Above: blue-bordered carpet at Cwm-Ilwyd. Steve Clarke.*

### **BUTTERFLY NOTES (1<sup>st</sup> August onwards, 2013)**

- Dave Bannister

Late summer produced a number of sightings of Clouded Yellows. They were seen at Brechfa (1/9 by Dave Bannister), Ffos Las Racecourse near Trimsaran (Maggie James 19/9/13), Troserch Woods (Colin Jones 3 and 11/8) and Mynydd Mawr Woodland Park Tumble (Rowan Flindell 18/8). Painted Ladies were not seen in great numbers but records were received from all over the county in August and September.

Brown Hairstreak egg surveys, led by Richard Smith have continued during the winter with numbers holding up well and increases seen on managed sights. I have not seen Richard's final results but believe eggs have been found in a number of new 1km squares. Only one record of an adult has been received with Dave Redhead having good views at the Museum of Childhood, Llangeler on the 28/8.

I have only had records for White-letter Hairstreak from one site (Ian Pritchard, Drefelin) who had a maximum count of 10 on the 11/8, with adults seen from the 18/7 to 10/8. He has also had good numbers of Purple Hairstreaks with a maximum of 15 seen on the 12/8 with adults seen from the 20/7 to 17/8. Dave Redhead also recorded two at the 'Museum of Childhood', Llangeler on the 11/8.

In September, Marsh Fritillary web searches were carried out by Richard Smith. Over 100 webs were found at Caeau Ffos Fach (compared to 1 last year), Median Farm (both sites near Cross Hands) and Cwmgors. I myself found 8 webs in a 20-minute search at the Plantlife reserve at Cae Blaen-dyffryn.

The notes by Ian Morgan in the last newsletter mentioned the lack of sightings of both Graylings and Wall Browns. Grayling records were again thin on the ground with only 2 records, both from Colin Jones at Pembrey Burrows (10 on the 19/7 and 8 on the 4/8). Wall Browns did better, with a number of records received from Maggie James at Ffos Las from mid-August to early September with the maximum count being 14 on the 24/8.

### **Sugaring and wine ropes – some alternative trapping techniques to light.**

Apart from some daytime records that most of us make of moths, I am sure that 99% of our records result from those attracted to light, whether passive (such as the kitchen/porch light), or deliberate (actinic or MV traps). Certainly the early moth enthusiasts mostly did not have the use of light and, apart from looking for caterpillars to rear on, relied very much on 'sugaring'. Moths like sugar and indeed they can be

sought out at natural sources of nectar such as the prolific seasonal flowering of ivy blossom.

A recipe to make the mix known to lepidopterists as `sugar` – filched from Roy Leverton`s excellent book `Enjoying Moths` (Poyser Natural History, 2001) is as follows:

a tin (454g) of black treacle,  
1 kg of muscovado sugar  
and 500ml of brown ale

(I`m sure that the amounts given above can be proportionately reduced for any lesser quantities that are required).

The ale is slowly brought to the boil (importantly getting rid of the carbon dioxide and alcohol first, before adding other ingredients, or it will boil over). The sugar is added first, then the treacle. It is stored in tins (glass may explode with fermentation). It is applied to tree trunks, fence posts etc using a paintbrush. The site should be sheltered but open; warm and humid nights with a very light breeze are best and it is best to be patient. Moths will tend to come in the early part of the night, after dusk.

Wine ropes are those made of natural fibre and impregnated in a vat of cheap wine and sugar and hung over vegetation etc.

### **Starting early: Mat Ridley in the Carmel caves**



Proving that you can record moths in the winter months, Mat Ridley again ventured in to the caves at Carmel on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and monitored the hibernating herald *Scoliopteryx libatrix* and tissue *Triphosa dubitata* moths. The herald is common but the tissue is a county rarity and probably limited by the scarcity of its larval food plants buckthorn *Rhamnus carthartica* and alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and the availability of caves or appropriate ruined buildings in which to overwinter. The marvellous photo of these moths hibernating at Carmel was taken in 2013.

### **Some Historic Photos taken by Barry Stewart**

Barry Stewart has kindly posted on our moth blog the following photographs (see next page) of two rare Carmarthenshire moths. The first is of a v-moth *Macaria wauaria*, a currant-feeder that has declined some 99% in the last decade or so. This photo was taken of one caught at Tycroes near Ammanford on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1995.



Left: v-moth.

The second photo was of a yellow-legged clearwing *Synanthedon vespiformis* at Stradey Woods, Llanelli in June 1992, where I had found a thriving colony of many individuals, on an old sweet chestnut in the parkland in front of Stradey Castle; I then informed Barry who took this photo. A photograph of a specimen from this site also appeared in the *Carmarthenshire Moth Group Newsletter* for Winter 2012, **15**: 19. Unfortunately, the tree was felled the next year and no clearwings have been seen since.



Left: yellow-legged clearwing

This is what I wrote at the time. *`A visit to a venerable and almost dead, solitary sweet chestnut in parkland SW of Stradey Castle (SN489014) on 8<sup>th</sup> June [1992] to check for `deadwood` hoverflies and beetles, provided perhaps the most exhilarating record of the year – a colony of the yellow-legged clearwing *Synanthedon vespiformis*. On that date, a female was caught about a metre up the trunk, and later another female was, for a while, watched as she oviposited under loose bark or in crevices, mostly between 0.5 and 2.5m off the ground. She would lay an egg, then move on rapidly to oviposit in other areas with the eggs being sometimes quite close to each other ie perhaps only 1cm apart. Six empty golden-brown pupal cases were also found at the base of the tree. Egg-laying females were frequently seen on subsequent dates to 22<sup>nd</sup> June. This species is new to the vice-county of Carmarthenshire and only the third Welsh record (with an old one for Glamorgan and another 1992 record from Ceredigion)`*

In the late 1980s and early 1990s I had some luck finding clearwings as, at the time, I was mostly interested in hoverflies and some other dipteran groups. Surveying techniques such as sweeping, checking old trees and generally being sharp-eyed all helped in the quest for clearwings.

**Good luck with moth trapping in 2014!**....and please remember to try to also carry out daytime recording of diurnal moths. I am hoping to carry out some marsh fritillary survey work in the Llanelli area this summer, so I'll be looking for such moths.