

**Birmingham  
Natural History  
Society**

Founded 1858

*Registered Charity No 500819*

President: Ms Kat Clifford

Internet address: <http://bnhsoc.org.uk>

**NEWSLETTER No 107 – December 2015**

**Lecture Programme 2016 – brief reminder**

Friends Meeting House, Selly Oak, starting at 7.30 pm

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 15 January 2016  | <b>Professor Ian Trueman</b> - Using botanical data to understand change and the ecological network in Birmingham & the Black Country and in Shropshire |
| 19 February 2016 | <b>Morgan Bowers</b> – Gung-ho natural history  |
| 18 March 2016    | <b>Dr Peter Jarvis</b> – Grasshoppers, locusts, crickets and people   |
| 15 April 2016    | <b>Presidential lecture: Kat Clifford</b> – Small and medium-sized cats of the world  |

**Butterfly Conservation Report - State of the UK's butterflies 2015**

**Percentage changes in abundance 2005-2014**

|                           |     |                                 |      |
|---------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|------|
| Swallowtail (resident)    | +30 | Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary | +3   |
| Swallowtail (migrant)     | -   | Silver-washed Fritillary        | +6   |
| Dingy Skipper             | +69 | Dark Green Fritillary           | +18  |
| Grizzled Skipper          | 0   | High Brown Fritillary           | 0    |
| Chequered Skipper         | -   | White Admiral                   | -45  |
| Essex Skipper             | -66 | Purple Emperor                  | -35  |
| Small Skipper             | +27 | Red Admiral                     | -40  |
| Lulworth Skipper          | +39 | Painted Lady                    | -84  |
| Silver-spotted Skipper    | +12 | Peacock                         | +21  |
| Large Skipper             | +23 | Small Tortoiseshell             | +146 |
| Wood White                | -18 | Comma                           | -28  |
| Cryptic Wood White        | -   | Marsh Fritillary                | -64  |
| Orange-tip                | +59 | Glanville Fritillary            | -88  |
| Large White               | -28 | Heath Fritillary                | -79  |
| Small White               | +9  | Duke of Burgundy                | +67  |
| Green-veined White        | +72 | Small Copper                    | -19  |
| Clouded Yellow            | -57 | Brown Hairstreak                | -58  |
| Brimstone                 | -1  | Purple Hairstreak               | -10  |
| Wall                      | -25 | Green Hairstreak                | -34  |
| Speckled Wood             | +4  | White-letter Hairstreak         | -77  |
| Large Heath               | -49 | Black Hairstreak                | -87  |
| Small Heath               | +18 | Small Blue                      | -27  |
| Mountain Ringlet          | -   | Holly Blue                      | -61  |
| Scotch Argus              | +24 | Large Blue                      | -20  |
| Ringlet                   | +72 | Silver-studded Blue             | -9   |
| Meadow Brown              | -15 | Brown Argus                     | -11  |
| Gatekeeper                | -44 | Northern Brown Argus            | +6   |
| Marbled White             | +25 | Common Blue                     | +1   |
| Grayling                  | +10 | Adonis Blue                     | -43  |
| Pearl-bordered Fritillary | +45 | Chalk Hill Blue                 | +55  |

### **NATIONAL MOTH RECORDERS' MEETING 2016**

Lyttelton Lecture Theatre, Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham  
Saturday 30th January 2016

#### **PROGRAMME**

- 10.00 am Arrival and coffee; 10.30 am Welcome
- 10.35 am National Moth Recording Scheme Update - Dr Zoë Randle, Butterfly Conservation
- 10.55 am Changing fortunes of moths in Yorkshire - Dr Charles Fletcher, Yorkshire County Macro-moth Recorder
- 11.20 am Conservation of Fisher's Estuarine Moth: helping the species to spread its wings - Dr Zoë Ringwood, Natural England
- 11.45 am The Bordered Grey enigma - a riddle solved - Paul Brooks, Moth Recorder Angus
- 12:10 pm Discussion session
- 12.30 pm Lunch
- 2.15 pm Burnets, cyanide-bombs and colonisation - Dr Mika Zagrobelny, University of Copenhagen
- 2.40 pm The dark side of street lighting: impacts on moth abundance, activity and pollen transport - Callum Macgregor, Newcastle University / Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- 3.05 pm Some like it hot: why species respond differently to climate change - Dr Georgina Palmer, University of York
- 3.30 pm Tea
- 4.20 pm A focus on moths: thoughts from the youth nature network - Simon Phelps, Megan Shersby, Ben Porter and Laura Richardson, A Focus on Nature
- 4.45 pm Discussion session & closing remarks

### **NATIONAL BUTTERFLY RECORDERS' MEETING**

Lyttelton Theatre at The Birmingham and Midland Institute  
19 March 2016

#### **PROGRAMME**

- 10.30am Arrival and Coffee; 11.00am Welcome - Dr Jim Asher (Chair, Butterfly Conservation)
- 11.10am The State of the UK's Butterflies 2015 - Dr Tom Brereton (Butterfly Conservation)
- 11.30am Improving monitoring coverage of Priority Species - Ian Middlebrook (Butterfly Conservation)
- 11.50pm Butterflies of the West Midlands - compiling the book and what we found from our record systems - Peter Seal (Chair, West Midlands Branch Butterfly Conservation)
- 12.10pm Putting Montgomeryshire on the map: encouraging recording in a sparsely populated county - Douglas Boyes (County Recorder for Montgomeryshire)
- 12.20pm The March of the Emperor – Liz Goodyear (Branch Organiser, Hertfordshire & Middlesex Branch Butterfly Conservation)
- 12.30pm Lunch
- 2.00pm Climate change and conservation: lessons learned from Edith's Checkerspot butterfly - Professor Camille Parmesan (Plymouth University). We are honoured that Professor Camille Parmesan, a world authority on butterflies and climate change and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for her work with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, has agreed to give a talk.
- 2.30pm What's wrong with the Wall? - Dirk Maes (Research Institute for Nature and Forest, Belgium)
- 2.50pm Farmland Butterfly and Moth Initiative: your records directing farmland conservation - Dr Katie Cruickshanks (Butterfly Conservation)
- 3.10pm Secret lives of butterflies - Richard Fox (Butterfly Conservation)
- 3.30pm Coffee
- 4.15pm UKBMS butterfly trends for 2015 - Dr Marc Botham (NERC Centre for Ecology & Hydrology)
- 4.35pm Discussion & Closing Comments - Dr Jim Asher (Chair, Butterfly Conservation)

**Each day costs £7.50 per person (payable on the day), including lunch and refreshments, but you must book your place in advance via [info@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:info@butterfly-conservation.org) or 01929 400209.**

## Can BNHS members contribute to a book about ancient woodland?

Email to the Hon Secretary from Derek Niemann

Dear Peter

You may well know that during the decades after WW2, Britain managed to destroy more than a third of its ancient woodlands. But do you have any direct memories from this period? Did you know a wood that was grubbed up for farming, or cut down and replanted with conifers? Were you a farmer or forester? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, I would love to hear from you.

I'm writing a book on the postwar loss of ancient woodland, explaining how and why it happened, that features contributions from George Peterken, Richard Mabey and many other woodland experts. But I'd also like to hear from naturalists throughout Britain to capture their experiences too. If you, your committee or your members have any recollections, then please do get in touch – by Christmas if possible.

You can reach me at [derek@niemann.plus.com](mailto:derek@niemann.plus.com) or ring me on 01767 692603.

### Who is the author?

I'm a writer and editor, doing – among other work – a fortnightly nature diary column for the Guardian and features for BBC Wildlife. My last wildlife book was called *Birds in a Cage* – the true story of POW birdwatchers. Prior to going freelance, I spent 25 years with the RSPB and before that, I had five working for the Cheshire and Beds & Hunts Wildlife Trusts.

## A strange request re C.K. Shepherd – Hon Sec BNHS 1921

An email correspondence between Brian Mehosky (Senior Intellectual Property Attorney | The Timken Company 4500 Mount Pleasant Street NW, North Canton, Ohio, USA 44720-5450) and the current Hon Sec.

**10 July 2015:** Dear Dr Jarvis, I am contacting you with an unusual request. I am trying to gather some information about C. K. Shepherd, Captain RAF, who was a member of your organization in 1921. Capt. Shepherd wrote a book entitled "Across America by Motor-Cycle" about his motorcycle ride from New York City to San Francisco in 1919. It is a wonderful book. His writing style has been described (quite accurately, I think) as a cross between P. G. Wodehouse and Mark Twain – which is high praise in my opinion. His book is available (for free, on-line) at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/44505/44505-h/44505-h.htm>. I was wondering if you, or any other member of the Birmingham Natural History Society, know anything about Capt. Shepherd's later life? Are any of his descendants still in the area? Are there any other records of his trip or his military service?

**16 August 2015:** Dear Brian, I have been able to find out a little about Capt. Shepherd in Birmingham, though much may already be known to you.

Charles Kenilworth Shepherd is recorded as having been in the Royal Flying Corps from 1914 to 1922 (<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1119570>). He had been promoted to sergeant by July 1916, then received a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant, initially provisional then confirmed in September of that year (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29769/page/9479/data.pdf>). He appears to have still been a Lieutenant when he left in 1922. [Note that he was assigned a patent on an improved spark plug in May 1919.]

Remember that the RFC changed to the Royal Air Force in 1918, and the new Service adopted a different ranking terminology to the RFC, which was Army, so the rank of Lieutenant rather than the equivalent Flying Officer is puzzling.

His (subsequently) declared rank of Captain (rather than the equivalent Squadron Leader) has the same query. He may have called himself Captain by self-promotion! However, it might have been the case that he was indeed given the rank of Captain immediately before leaving the RAF - this was a scheme sometimes adopted in order to boost an ex-officer's pension, based on the salary of his final rank, even if he had held that rank for just a few days.

So Capt. Shepherd left the RAF in the same year he was recorded as being the Secretary of the Birmingham Natural History Society. He was Secretary from the AGM in 1922 until the following year, when the post was taken over by F.W. Grove, who had shared the secretariat from 1913 to 1920, and who became the sole Secretary from 1923 to 1936. Why Grove had withdrawn over the period 1921-22 is not known, but Shepherd clearly filled in for the second of these years of hiatus. What Shepherd's natural history interests were are unknown, and as far as I can tell he certainly wrote nothing in this field. Shepherd's home addresses in Birmingham were, initially, 'Windrush', Stonehouse Road, Sutton Coldfield (then part of the county of Warwickshire abutting on to NE Birmingham), then at some point moving to 12 Yew Tree Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. He worked, rather than lived, in the centre of Birmingham on Colmore Row as an architect (for example, see [http://blackcountryhistory.org/collections/getrecord/GB149\\_WP\\_22-34/](http://blackcountryhistory.org/collections/getrecord/GB149_WP_22-34/) and [http://ukmoho.co.uk/html/architect/C\\_K\\_Shepherd.html](http://ukmoho.co.uk/html/architect/C_K_Shepherd.html)) at 109, and subsequently further along at Kings Court, 115-117 Colmore Row. The only other information I have on him is regarding his bankruptcy in 1932 (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/Edinburgh/issue/14838/page/178/data.pdf>).

That's it, I'm afraid. Best wishes, Peter. (Further email from Brian expressed thanks: it was all new to him.)