

CLEE HILL BIG BUTTERFLY SURVEY



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries

Photo: Gareth Thomas

YEAR 2 2013 REPORT

Compiled by Mike Williams

November 2013

Clee Hill Big Butterfly Survey 2013

Introduction

The Clee Hill area had been long recognised by Butterfly Conservation as being important for its butterflies and moths. Regionally important and nationally declining species like Small Pearl-bordered and Dark Green Fritillary were known to occur but their current status outside well visited areas like Cramer Gutter was largely unknown. West Midlands Butterfly Conservation had few active recorders in the Clee Hill area and welcomed the opportunity to work with the newly established Community Wildlife Group to instigate a new and widescale butterfly survey. The aim of the Clee Hill Big Butterfly Survey therefore was:

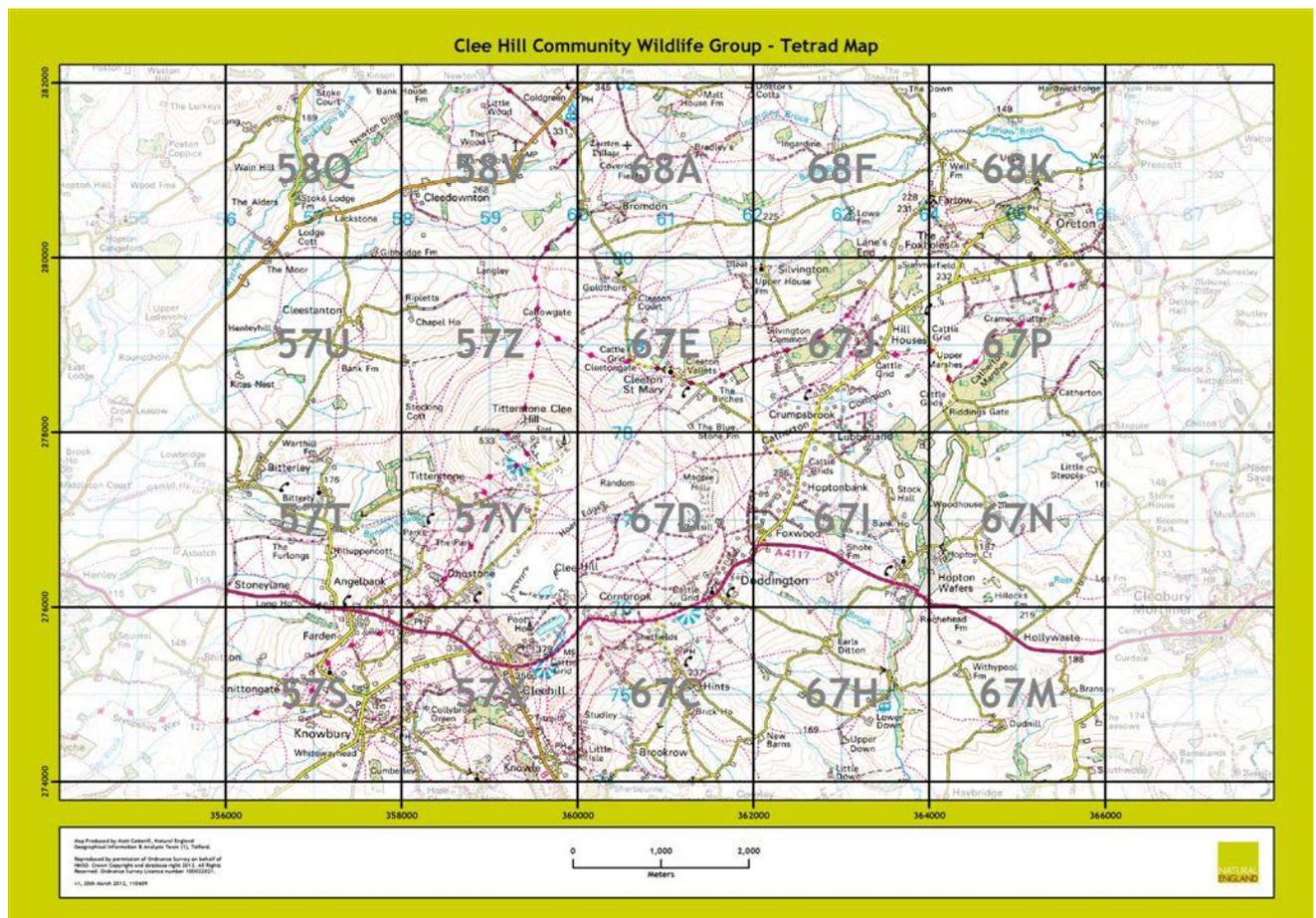
- To increase public awareness and interest in the importance of Clee Hill for its butterflies
- To recruit and train volunteer recorders drawn from the local community
- To encourage wider recording of identified key species during the summer months
- To identify specific areas where key butterfly species occur and determine population strength
- To take appropriate conservation action to protect important populations as and when required

Because of the poor summer weather, 2012 was an extremely difficult year for butterfly recording but nevertheless some good progress was made and many new records were gathered including new sites for some of the more local and declining species. At the end of the season some key recommendations were made which formed the basis of plans for 2013:

- The Big Butterfly survey should run again in 2013 but aim to start earlier in the year to ensure more complete coverage.
- Coverage should be extended to the area south of the main Cleobury-Ludlow road that was not included in 2012.
- More emphasis should be placed on the importance of recording common and garden species as a means of encouraging greater involvement.
- A Butterfly sub-group meeting would be held in the early Spring to discuss best ways of tackling recording and allocating squares.
- A series of recording days and group activities be arranged over the summer rather than rely on volunteers acting singly.
- Consideration would be given to ways in which members of other sub groups might also be encouraged to record butterflies and examine the possibility of running joint events and activities.

2013 Survey

The plan for 2013 was to build on the encouraging start made last year, hopefully in rather better weather conditions. The initial results had demonstrated that the Clee Hill area remained an extremely important stronghold for butterflies and that there was much more to be discovered regarding the occurrence and distribution of the rarer species found. Further volunteers and recording were needed to ensure that we obtain all the information needed to develop a conservation strategy for Clee Hill to ensure that important butterfly populations are maintained and enhanced. At a well attended meeting held in April 2013, it was agreed to extend the recording area to the whole of the area covered by the Community Wildlife Group (see map below).



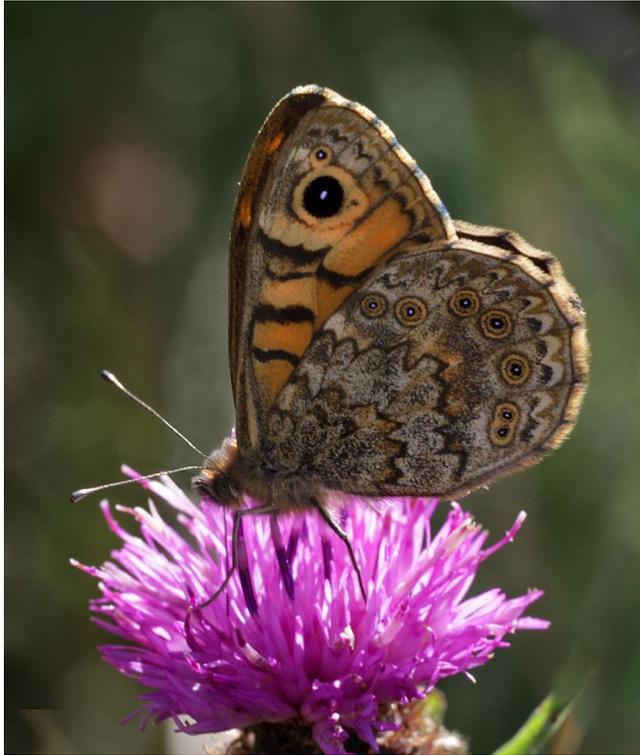
Those present chose a recording area comprising one or more 1km squares. The aim would be to make at least 3 visits over the summer: one around mid-May for Green Hairstreak, one in mid-June for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and one in early July for Dark Green Fritillary. A special recording form was circulated for entering records together with a general casual recording form which could be used for entering garden records which were also encouraged (see Appendix 1 for example forms).

It was also agreed to organise a series of butterfly walks to areas of particular interest open to all:

- Wildlife Taster Day at the Novers on Sat, 4th May
- Fritillary and Orchid Day on Sun, 23rd June
- Butterfly walk on Catherton Marshes on Sun, 7th July

Results

Disappointingly, a delayed Spring meant late emergence for a number of species and it was not until June that the butterfly season began to get into its stride. Nevertheless, we received a number of new 1km square records for three of our target species: Green Hairstreak, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Small Heath and generally improved numbers at some of the locations where these species had been recorded the previous year. The July heatwave produced a real bonanza of butterflies especially in gardens, where Peacock and Small White did particularly well. There were also records of several species that had not been recorded in 2012: Holly Blue, Small Skipper, Common Blue and more surprisingly Marbled White (at Lower Birches), Silver-washed Fritillary (at the Novers) and Wall Brown (at Titterstone, first record since 2006). All were very welcome sightings and evidence of how butterflies can respond when weather conditions are suitable. There were even records of Clouded Yellow, a migrant butterfly to the UK, which this year was present in above-



Wall Brown – seen in 2013 Photo: Gareth Thomas

average numbers. More disappointing was the absence of any records of Dark Green Fritillary after just one sighting in 2012. Overall, records were received from 19 recording areas compared to just 13 in 2012. SO6178 was the most prolific square with 21 species recorded over the year. See Appendix 2 for a summary of all the 2013 butterfly records received.

Our summer programme of events did not enjoy the best of the weather with just 3 species recorded on a well attended walk at the Novers in May and no Fritillaries but plenty of orchids, moths (see appendix 4 for full list) and a splendid tea to enjoy, courtesy of Kay & Harry Downes, in June. Fortunately, our final walk led by Andrew Heideman and Gareth Thomas on 7th July turned up trumps with as many as 20 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries being seen on Catherton Marshes and Cramer Gutter (see cover photo).



Butterfly Group visit the Novers – May 2013

Looking forward to 2014

Plans for next year were discussed at a meeting of the CHCWG Butterfly Group in October. It was agreed that:

- We would continue to focus our recording efforts on the original five target species: Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Green Hairstreak, Small Heath, Dark Green Fritillary and Wall Brown, but pay particular attention to the latter two species.
- Efforts would be especially targeted to areas where some of our target butterflies had been recorded in the past but where there are no recent records.
- Attention would also be paid to those sites to be included in the new heritage bid, in particular: Titterstone and Horseshoe Quarries, the Titterstone Incline, Benson's Brook and Bitterley Yard. The aim would be to gather baseline data to inform the bid.
- The work of the group would be extended to recording moths as well as butterflies and funding would be sought to purchase a moth trap and associated equipment.
- A series of organised events would be held open to all to encourage more interest and awareness of butterflies and moths. These events would include: a moth training day to introduce recording and the use of the new equipment and some butterfly walks/group recording days to target Dark Green Fritillary and Wall Brown.

Acknowledgements

The Butterfly Group would like to thank everyone who helped with the recording of butterflies during 2013 and submitted the records which form the basis of this report. As a result of everyone's efforts we now have a much better idea of where butterflies are found around Clee Hill and have been able to identify where the largest populations of some of the key species occur. With continuing support we look forward to adding to this knowledge base in 2014.

Mike Williams would also like to thank Andrew Heideman and Gareth Thomas for their comments on an earlier draft of this report.



Chimeysweeper moth – Lower Birches

Appendix 1 – Example recording forms

Clee Hill Big Butterfly Survey 2013: Catherton Common 8 (SO6379)

Time to be taken: As required

Times of year to cover for key species: April - August (June key month)

Details: Please mark recording area on map and if possible provide a grid reference

Please return completed form by post to Mike Williams, 2 Dewberry Close, Stourport, Worcs, DY13 8TB or by email to mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk



RECORDER NAME & contact details			
SITE LOCATION (INC. GRID REF IF POSSIBLE)			
Date (Day:Month:Year)		Start time	
Sunshine (mean %)		Mean temp (°c)	
Wind speed (0 {no wind} →6 {very strong})		Wind direction	
Key Species	Numbers seen		
Green Hairstreak			
Small pearl-bordered fritillary			
Dark Green Fritillary			
Small Heath			
Wall Brown			
Other species (please list separately)			



WEST MIDLANDS BUTTERFLY RECORDING FORM

Name:

Address:

	GR	LN										
GR = Grid reference (4 or 6 figure including 100 km letters) LN = Locality name												
Date												
Species	Q	S	Q	S	Q	S	Q	S	Q	S	Q	S
Small Skipper												
Essex Skipper												
Large Skipper												
Dingy Skipper												
Grizzled Skipper												
Wood White												
Clouded Yellow												
Brimstone												
Large White												
Small White												
Green-veined White												
Orange-tip												
Green Hairstreak												
Purple Hairstreak												
White-letter Hairstreak												
Small Copper												
Small Blue												
Silver-studded Blue												
Brown Argus												
Common Blue												
Chalkhill Blue												
Adonis Blue												
Holly Blue												
White Admiral												
Red Admiral												
Painted Lady												
Small Tortoiseshell												
Peacock												
Comma												
Small Pearl-bordered Frit. Pearl-bordered Fritillary												
Dark Green Fritillary												
Silver-washed Fritillary												
Marsh Fritillary												
Speckled Wood												
Wall												
Marbled White												
Grayling												
Gatekeeper												
Meadow Brown												
Small Heath												
Ringlet												
Other species:												

Please send completed forms to Nigel Stone, 8 Grove Lane, Keresley End, Coventry, CV7 8PN.

Species seen: 1km grid square	<u>6277</u>	<u>6376</u>	<u>6379</u>	<u>6479</u>	<u>6579</u>	<u>68A</u>
Small Pearl-bordered Frit		?		20		
Holly Blue				P		
Common Blue						
Green Hairstreak				2		
Wall Brown						
Small Heath	1			P		
Small Tortoiseshell		2		P		2
Red Admiral		2				1
Comma		3		P		
Painted Lady				P		
Peacock		2	2	P		1
Ringlet		2		4		2
Gatekeeper		6		P		
Meadow Brown				6		15
Marbled White						
Speckled Wood		1		P		1
Large Skipper				2		1
Small Skipper						
Small Copper				1		
Orange Tip		4	2	2		
Large White		3				3
Small White		10+				1
Brimstone		2				2
Green-veined White		4	6	10		1
Clouded Yellow						
Silver-washed Fritillary						

NB

P = Present but exact numbers not recorded

NB = Square visited but no butterflies recorded

Records received from: John Cherry, Eric Davies, Sue Dawes, Kay & Harry Downes, Ann Hadfield, Andrew Heideman, Helena Hale, Kate Jones, John Lyden, and Gareth Thomas.

Appendix 3 – Record of CWG Butterfly Group meetings

Clee Hill Butterfly Group – notes of meeting held at Clee Hill Community Room on 10th April, 2013

Present: Kay Downes, Harry Downes, Gareth Thomas, Ann Hadfield, David Faulkner, Jean Faulkner, Ian Loman-Brown, John Lyden, Andrew Heideman, Helena Hale, Sue Dawes, Glynn Barratt, Julia Walling, Jim Martin, Mike Williams

Apologies: Lorraine Munn, John Cherry, Eric Davies, Kate Jones

Welcome: Mike Williams welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Summary of 2012 results: The results of last year's survey had been incorporated into a report which had been previously circulated. Despite some awful weather good progress had been made with 10 recorders submitting records covering 13 1km squares. Out of the five target species identified, four had been recorded: Green Hairstreak, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Heath and Dark Green Fritillary (one record only from Cramer Gutter). No Wall Browns had been seen and may now be extinct in this area but still worth looking out for. There were possible additional records for Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Grayling, neither of which had been previously reported and if confirmed would be very significant finds as both species are now scarce in the region as a whole. Only one square (the one containing Cramer Gutter) recorded all four target species so there was plenty of scope for finding additional species. Small Heath was probably the most widely distributed and should occur in most places. The flight season for Green Hairstreak coincided with the worst of the weather and more locations for this species can be expected. Because of its colour and habit of sitting on top of hawthorn or gorse bushes, it is an easy species to overlook.

Plans for 2013: Target species - the five target species from last year would continue but with additional attention paid to the possibility of Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Grayling occurring. If Wall Brown did still exist it was likely to be found in the more rocky areas like around the old quarries or where there were very thin soils (similar habitats to the Grayling).

Target areas – the area to be targeted would be extended to cover the whole area covered by the CHCWG. Andrew Heideman had looked at historic records for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Marsh Violet on the National Biodiversity Network website and as a result had identified locations where Marsh Violets occurred but where Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary had not yet been recorded (SO5975/6379/6380) and also locations where there had been historic records of the butterfly but no records in 2012 (SO6076/6177). Those present were asked to choose a recording area for 2013 (see below). The idea would be to make at least 3 visits over the summer: one around mid-May for Green Hairstreak; one in mid-June for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary; and one in early July for Dark Green Fritillary. Small Heath could occur on any visit. Mike would send round a recording form specific to the individual square like last year. Other recordings could be entered on the casual recording form already circulated. In some cases, recorders were already involved in recording birds which is being organised on the basis of tetrads rather than 1km squares and, in these cases, recorders were encouraged to adopt the same area for their butterfly recording but perhaps focus on individual 1km squares within the tetrad that looked most promising.

6178 (CH5)	Kay & Harry Downes
57T/68A	Gareth Thomas
5978 (CH7)/5979 (CH10)	Ann Hadfield
58V	David & Jean Faulkner
5977 (CH2)	Ian Loman-Brown
5677	John Lyden
5975	Andrew Heideman

6379 (CC8)/6579	Helena Hale
6376 (cc5)	Sue Dawes
5974	Glynn Barratt
5876 (CH13)/5877 (CH1)	Julia Walling
6374	Jim Martin

Mike would approach those who had not been able to attend the meeting and ask them to cover some of the unallocated squares.

Organised events – it was agreed that in addition to individual recording, the group would organise a series of butterfly walks open to all. Three events were agreed which would hopefully cover most of our target species:

WILDLIFE TASTER DAY, SATURDAY 4th MAY – this was the new date for the cancelled Taster Day meeting in The Novers Car Park at 11am. Grid Ref: SO 597739. It was felt that the new later date might increase the chances of more butterflies being seen. Target Species: Green Hairstreak, Orange Tip, Holly Blue. Leaders: Julia Walling/Mike Williams. Advance booking needed to Julia Walling at info@woodsforwellbeing.com or 01584 87463.

FRITILLARY AND ORCHID DAY, SUNDAY 23th JUNE – Kay Downes had obtained permission for us to use the car park at Cleeton St Mary Village Hall Grid Ref: SO 616782 for morning walk starting at 11 am. We may need to pay a small charge (£10?) for use of the car park. Target Species: Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Heath. Leaders: Andrew Heideman/Mike Williams. Afternoon visit to Lower Birches wildflower meadow (courtesy of Kay & Harry Downes). Refreshments available. There would also be an opportunity to examine moths caught the night before. Mike to provide Harry Downes with second moth trap. Advance booking to Mike Williams at mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk or 07802 274552.

AROUND THE GUTTER, SUNDAY 7TH JULY - meeting at 11 am at Riddings Gate parking area Grid Ref: SO 642783 for circular walk around Catherton Marshes and Cramer Gutter. Target Species: Dark Green Fritillary, Small Heath. Leaders: Andrew Heideman/Gareth Thomas. Please bring a packed lunch and a drink. For further information contact Andrew Heideman at a.heideman@hotmail.co.uk or 07807198572.

Garden Records: All garden records would be welcomed as part of the survey as recognised that whole area is under-recorded for butterflies not just the rarer species. The casual recording form could be used.

Publicity: Mike would produce a flyer advertising the summer programme which he would circulate with the notes of this meeting so that members would print out copies and place locally. He would also produce a press release for the Ludlow Advertiser and send information to local newsletters. Three newsletters were identified: Viewpoint, Cleobury Clarion (Jim Reynolds editor@cleoburyclarion.co.uk), and West of the Clee. It was agreed that those present who knew or could find out the appropriate contacts for Viewpoint and West of the Clee would send these through to Mike.

Date of the next meeting: 7.30 pm on Wed, 2nd October (now changed to 9th Oct) – venue to be confirmed.

Meeting closed 8.45 pm.

Clee Hill Butterfly Group – notes of meeting held at Clee Hill Community Room on 9th October, 2013

Present: Harry Downes, Gareth Thomas, Ann Hadfield, John Lyden, Andrew Heideman, Sue Dawes, Glynn Barratt, Julia Walling, John Smith, Liz Smith, Lorraine Munn, Eric Davies, John Cherry, Mike Williams

Apologies: Kay Downes, Helena Hale

Welcome: Mike Williams welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Summary of 2013 results: A much better summer had meant a big improvement in butterfly numbers especially in the second half of the season and everyone was thanked for their recording efforts. We had been able to add several new squares to the distribution of key target species like Small Heath, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Green Hairstreak. Several species had been recorded which had not been reported at all in 2012 such as Small Skipper and Holly Blue. Particularly notable additions had been several Clouded Yellows (a migrant species to the UK), Silver-washed Fritillary at the Novers, Marbled White at Lower Birches and the rediscovery of Wall Brown, a species which it was feared had already been lost to Clee Hill. A disappointment was an absence of records for Dark Green Fritillary after only one sighting last year. An annual report needed to be produced by the end of October and **Mike** appealed for all additional records to be sent to him (Annesbrook, 2 Dewberry Close, Stourport, Worcs, DY13 8TB or mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk) as soon as possible so that the report would be as comprehensive as possible. Provisional distribution maps would be produced for the target species. **Mike** would contact separately those recorders not present at this meeting who were yet to send in any completed recording forms.

Events and publicity: Three events had been held over the summer which had all proved enjoyable, although the first two had been affected by poor weather and the target species had not been found. However, the third event led by **Gareth** and **Andrew** had produced good numbers of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and a range of other species. Publicity for the summer programme had been obtained in local newsletters and via the CHCWG website and Facebook page.

Plans for 2014: **Target butterfly species** – it was agreed that we would continue to focus on the five original species but pay particular attention to Wall Brown and Dark Green Fritillary.

Moths – there was interest in starting moth recording in 2014 and funding had been sought as part of a wider bid submitted by the CWG to purchase a moth trap, together with other equipment. The idea was to have a central kit including GPS (**Glynn** pointed out that some smart phones now have this facility), pots, books, butterfly nets etc that could be borrowed. **Sue** reported that we did not yet know how much money we would be awarded but it was unlikely that we would receive all that we had applied for. However, she was hopeful that there would be enough to purchase some of the basic equipment required. **Ann** and **Mike** would try to set up a training day on moth identification and would seek out someone to run the day. **Glynn** agreed to seek permission from Richard Huffer to run a trap at Benson's Brook which it was thought would be a good venue. **Mike** was asked to circulate details of a good website that included images of moths (www.ukmoths.org.uk).

Target areas – **Andrew** offered to look at old National Biodiversity Network (NBN) records to help us target those areas where some of our target butterflies had previously occurred but where we had no recent records. In addition, it was agreed that we would pay particular attention to sites included in the new heritage bid that was being submitted by the Clee Hill Partnership. These included Titterstone and Horseshoe Quarries, the Incline, Benson's Brook and Bitterley Yard. It would be good to gather baseline data for these sites to inform the bid.

Organised events – it was agreed that in addition to individual recording, the group would again organise a series of butterfly walks open to all. A number of suggestions were made:

- A day around Titterstone and the quarries targeting Wall Brown

- A visit to Catherton Marshes targeting Dark Green Fritillary
- a return visit to Lower Birches (**Harry** to ask Kay)

It was agreed that **Andrew, Gareth** and **Mike** would work on these ideas and come up with dates and a programme.

Any other business: **Mike** drew attention to the new West Midlands Butterfly Conservation calendar which was based on entries to this year's photographic competition. The overall winner and the photo featured on the front of the calendar were taken by **Gareth** and he was congratulated on his achievement. The calendar is on sale priced £8 or £15 for two (copies can be ordered post free from 8 Working Lane, Gretton, Cheltenham, Glos GL54 5YU. **Eric** ordered and paid for a copy at the meeting which would be sent through the post.

Harry passed round a moth he had found at Lower Birches and **Mike** agreed to check its ID and confirm – a Herald.

Lorraine asked about the cost of room hire. **Mike** thought that this would now be paid through the CWG but would check on this.

Date of the next meeting: To be arranged

Meeting closed 8.45 pm.

Appendix 4 – Moths recorded at Lower Birches SO61857858 on the night of 22nd June, 2013

Poplar Hawk
 Spruce Carpet
 Brimstone moth
 Clouded Border
 Ingrailed Clay
 Common White Wave
 Heart & Dart
 Flame Shoulder
 Clouded-bordered Brindle
 Pale-shouldered Brocade
 Green Carpet
 Silver ground Carpet
 Beautiful Golden Y
 Common Carpet
 Clouded Silver
 Scalloped Hazel
 Brown Silverlines

23/6/13 during field visit:

Brown Chinamark
 Chimneysweeper