



MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No 157 October 2019.

A monthly newsletter covering

Gwent and Monmouthshire Vice County 35

Editor: Martin Anthoney

Recent Highlights – October

October was a generally unsettled month with low pressure systems and rain belts moving in from the west at frequent intervals. It was more settled from the 21st to 23rd and again from the 27th onwards, when it also turned colder. The mean temperature for the month was 0.4 °C below the long-term average, rainfall was 117% above average and sunshine only 84% of average.

Butterflies

10 butterfly species were recorded in October 2019, just below the 12 for October 2018 and 11 in 2017. As often happens at this time of year, Red Admiral was the commonest species with 29 individuals, the majority frequenting ivy blossom. Large White (20) and Speckled Wood (12) were next, with 7 Peacock, 6 Comma, 6 Small Tortoiseshell, 4 Small White, 4 Small Copper and only 5 Painted Lady remaining from the summer hordes. Only one Clouded Yellow immigrant was recorded.

Moths

A poor month for moths produced only 65 species of macro moth in Gwent in October 2019, much lower than the 100 of October 2018 and the 99 for 2017. One Convolvulus Hawk, 2 Vestal and one White-point were the only migrant records. Red-green Carpet (37) and Merveille du Jour (30) both had good seasons and the number of Clifden Nonpareil recorded in Gwent this year rose to five.

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| 1 st Oct | The first of five Painted Ladies at Newport Wetlands during October | (Kevin Dupé) |
| 2 nd Oct | Four L-album Wainscots and the first Green-brindled Crescent of the season at Newport Wetlands. Also one Mallow, a known site for this uncommon moth. | (Kevin Dupé) |
| 3 rd Oct | Dusky-lemon Sallow to light at Tintern. An uncommon species in Gwent, this is only the twelfth county record. Also a Brick moth. | (Hazel Mitchell) |
| | The first of ten Merveille du Jour moths to light at Risca during October. | (Martin Anthoney) |
| 4 th Oct | Immigrant Convolvulus Hawk to light at Ilandogo | (Gail Reynolds) |
| 5 th Oct | Brown-spot Pinion and L-album Wainscot at Tintern | (Hazel Mitchell) |
| | Two Vestal immigrants to light at Dingestow | (Sam Bosanquet) |
| 6 th Oct | Clouded Yellow immigrant and seven Red Admiral butterflies flying near Caldicot station | (Martin Anthoney and Roger James) |
| | The first of three Heart and Dart moths at Risca in October. An extra generation? | (Martin Anthoney) |
| | The first of five Satellites during October at Tintern | (Hazel Mitchell) |



Convulvulus Hawk (Gail Reynolds)



Dusky-lemon Sallow (Hazel Mitchell)

- 7th Oct Figure of Eight moth to light at Newport Wetlands, with another on 24th Oct, the only records this year for an increasingly rare species. (Kevin Dupé)
- 8th Oct Small Copper at Penallt, with another late specimen on 24th Oct. (Stephanie Tyler)
- 9th Oct First Grey Shoulder-knot of the autumn at Melbourne Way, Newport (Roger James)
Orange Sallow to light at Penallt (Stephanie Tyler)
- 10th Oct The first of seven Large Wainscots in October at Newport Wetlands (Kevin Dupé)
- 12th Oct Clifden Nonpareil to light at Tintern. The third at this site and the fifth Gwent specimen for 2019. (Hazel Mitchell)
Red Underwing at Llandogo (Gail Reynolds)
- 13th Oct Small Copper at Blackrock Quarry, Clydach (Mike Hoult and Val Deisler)
- 15th Oct First Feathered Thorns and Pink-barred Sallow of the season at Melbourne Way, Newport. (Roger James)
- 20th Oct Brown-spot Pinion to light at Llandogo (Gail Reynolds)
An extra generation of Double-striped Pug at Melbourne Way, Newport (Roger James)
Pinion-streaked Snout to light at Cwmyoy (Christine Knight)
- 23rd Oct White-point immigrant to light at Dingestow (Sam Bosanquet)
- 24th Oct Cypress Carpet to light at Risca, with a second the following night. (Martin Anthony)
Another Cypress Carpet at Haisbro Avenue, Newport (Sheila Dupé)
Satellite moth at Great Crwys, Hendre (Wendy Tyler-Batt)
- 28th Oct Buttoned Snout disturbed from hedgerow at Llandogo (Gail Reynolds)

31st Oct First December Moth of the season at Tintern

(Hazell Mitchell)

Sprawler moth to light at Dingestow

(Sam Bosanquet)



White-point (Sam Bosanquet)



Vestal (Sam Bosanquet)

White Admiral (*Ladoga Camilla*) In Gwent

The following article is an updated amalgamation of sections from Neil Horton's 1994 book *The Butterflies and Moths of Gwent* and my 2008 article in *The Silurian Issue* 51.

Formerly, this striking woodland butterfly, in flight during July and August, was mainly restricted to the eastern and southern counties of England south of a line running roughly from The Wash to the Severn Estuary, but during the nineteen thirties especially, it extended its range to the north and west. Monmouthshire lay at the western limits of its range and it was unrecorded in the county until 1952 when Neil saw his first White Admiral in the Angidy valley near Tintern. He kept the colony under observation until 1962; by this time it had spread a further two miles up this little valley. Then, however, it completely disappeared from these woods as a result, Neil suspected, of the extremely severe and prolonged winter of 1962-63.

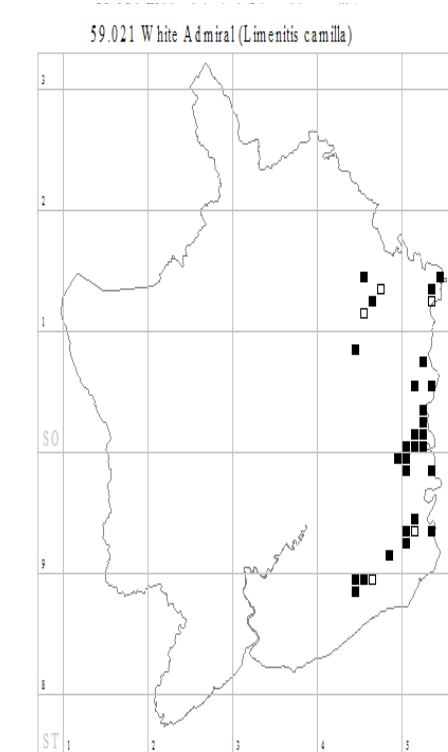
He did not see the butterfly again until 1970 when several appeared in Hendre Woods near Monmouth and annually until 1987. This colony expanded and steadily increased in numbers and flourished. In good years the butterfly was abundant and also spread to several other woods in the neighbourhood. However, this century it has become much scarcer at this site with records only for 2006 (3) and 2017.

In 1977 Neil saw a single White Admiral in St Pierre's Great Woods in the south-east of the county. Ten years later several were to be seen there and in 1988 it was numerous and was also spreading to neighbouring woods in the south, the first record for Slade Wood coming in 1989. Slade Wood is still one of the most reliable sites to see White Admiral, with records for twenty-one of the last thirty years, though it has not been seen in St Pierre's Great Wood since 2013.

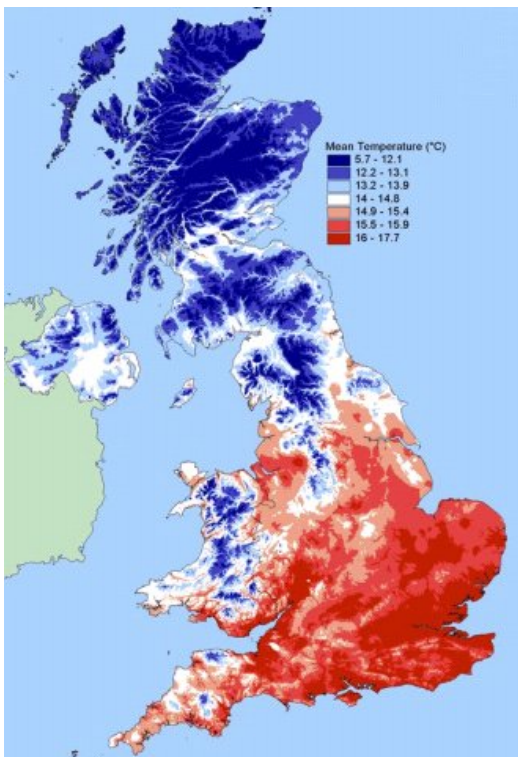
By 1982 it had reached woodlands in the Dingestow area and by 1985 it had also re-appeared in its old haunts along the Angidy Brook. By 1990 the species was found in a number of woods on the Gwent side of the Wye Valley and the White Admiral was firmly established in eastern Gwent, being recorded fourteen years this century in the Angidy Valley, and continuing to extend its range.



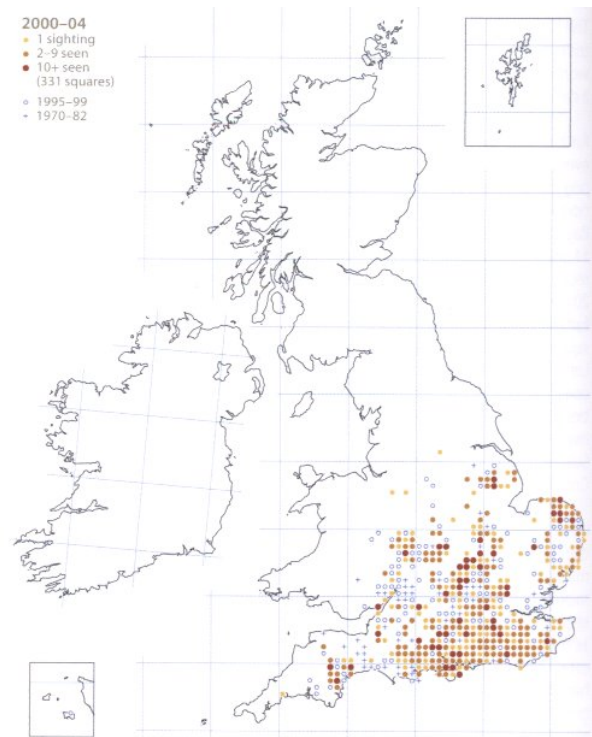
White Admiral



White Admiral distribution in Gwent



Mean Summer Temperatures 1970-2000



White Admiral UK distribution 2000-2004

As can be clearly seen from the two maps, the distribution of White Admiral in the UK seems to show a correlation with climate, though other studies have failed to find a link between abundance and summer weather. Monmouthshire and the Wye Valley are on its western limit, and in such circumstances, it is likely to be more susceptible to variations in abundance. Global warming could help secure its future in the area, and possibly lead to further expansion. The species only colonised Monmouthshire just over sixty years ago, but a series of warm summers since 2000 have helped it spread, culminating in the glorious summer of 2006 when 16 records from 11 localities in the east of the county, representing some 67 individuals, were submitted. Sitting next to my car in the Angiddy Valley with double figure numbers of White Admiral flying above my head was a sight to remember.

In contrast, the poor summers of 2007 and 2016 produced only a single White Admiral record each for the county. All is not lost, though. Though the butterfly is usually seen in sunny weather when it comes down to feed, particularly on bramble flowers, or glide along a ride, it is essentially a butterfly of shady woodlands. Sometimes individuals can be seen flying through dark, dense, woodland. In bad weather I have seen the butterflies retreat to the canopy, particularly sweet chestnut, where they are reputed to feed on honeydew from aphids, but are rarely encountered. The larvae feed on honeysuckle, often straggly shoots in light shade but an open situation such as a ride edge.

In recent years the adult flight period has extended from late June to early August. In southern England, there have been second generations during September in several recent years, but whether we will see this in woods on the edge of its range is open to doubt.

A few questions remain. One individual was reported from the forest near Draethen in east Glamorgan in 1997 and one historical (1906) record exists for the same area, but otherwise Slade Wood remains the most westerly site in south Wales for White Admiral. Slade Wood is only a few kilometres from the large area of Wentwood, yet there have been no sightings of it in Wentwood even though it has been established in Slade Wood for thirty years. Slade Wood and the Angidy Valley remain the two most important areas, each contributing about 25% of the Gwent records, but both have undergone a lot of tree felling in recent years. White Admiral prefers shady woodlands where honeysuckle foodplant grows in a variety of situations, so we hope some suitable habitat remains after the felling.

Numbers fluctuate

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No of White Admirals	11	1	20	19	12

but at low density White Admiral is still present from the Forest of Dean near Monmouth down the lower Wye Valley woodlands to Chepstow and the woods along Mounton Brook to Slade Wood.

Martin Anthony

Dates for your Diary 2019 - 2020

25th November 2019 The much delayed *Atlas of Britain & Ireland's Larger Moths* is finally due for publication (rrp £38.50)

Saturday 18th Jan SEWBReC Recorders Forum

Thursday 23rd January Work task at Hendre Wood - Old Lodge entrance SO462146

Saturday 25 January 10th UK Moth Recorders' Meeting at Birmingham

Sunday 8th March Provisional date for work task at Blackrock Quarry, Clydach
At the Brynmawr roundabout on the A465 Heads of the Valley road, take the new exit after the Abergavenny exit and before the Brynmawr one. Proceed over the new white bridge and then turn right, following signs for Blackrock (access only). Continue along the same road to the tarmac layby before the lime kilns (SO215125)

MMBG – Contact Names and Addresses.

Secretary: Kevin Dupé
120 Roman Way
Caerleon
Newport
NP18 3FS

Phone 01633 547897

e-mail Kevin.Dupe@btinternet.com

Chairman: Roger James
44 Melbourne Way
Newport
NP20 3RF

Phone 01633 215627

e-mail smallranunculus@uwclub.net

or in case of problems juliajames@uwclub.net

Treasurer: Sheila Dupé
18 Haisbro Avenue
Newport
NP19 7HY
Phone 01633 256475

Website / blog <http://gwentmothing.blogspot.co.uk/>

Queries to Richard Clarke

e-mail chykembro2@aol.com

Newsletter Editor & Recorder for
Butterflies & Macro Moths
Martin Anthoney
23 Malvern Close
Risca
Newport
NP11 6QY

Phone 01633 612272

e-mail chemlep@btinternet.com

Recorder for Micro Moths
Sam Bosanquet
c/o Dingestow Court
Monmouth
Monmouthshire
NP25 4DY

e-mail sambbryo@aol.com

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