

# The CARLISLE NATURALIST

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Three men in a bog

(Stephen Hewitt)

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## The Carlisle Naturalist

### Footh & Mouth Disease

The summer programme is reprinted as usual from the membership card on the back cover of this issue. However, it seems very unlikely that the scheduled meetings in the next few months will be able to take place due to the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease. None of the scheduled field meetings will take place until access to the countryside is reopened. Leaders of meetings will announce any cancellations at the rendezvous at Carlisle College. Members going direct to the venue of a meeting run the risk that it may have been cancelled from Carlisle.

### Rev. H.A. Macpherson Centenary

The Rev. Hugh Alexander Macpherson was one of the foremost ornithologists of his time and he achieved a great deal in the field of his particular interest – natural history – during his short life, writing several books and publishing innumerable notes and articles in the zoological journals of the time. It is to the great good fortune of this Society, Tullie House Museum and the study of natural history in Cumbria that Macpherson chose to spend the greater part of his adult life in this county.

Macpherson is perhaps best known locally for his book *A Vertebrate Fauna of Lakeland* published in 1892, but he was also the instigator of the natural history department established at Tullie House when the Museum opened in 1893. He gave his own considerable collection of bird specimens to the institution and tirelessly worked to acquire more specimens for display to the public with the stated aim of having a representative of each plumage phase, age and sex of every British bird in the new Carlisle Museum. Macpherson was interested in all aspects of natural history and was very supportive of a group of teenagers who in 1893 had established a local natural history society, which was in danger of foundering for lack of somewhere to meet. He arranged for the new society to meet in a room at the new Museum and became the first President of Carlisle Natural History and Entomological Society.

Macpherson died aged just 43 on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1901 and to commemorate the centenary of his death Tullie House Museum plans an exhibition celebrating his life and work. The show will run from 24<sup>th</sup> November to 13<sup>th</sup> January in the Museum's Art Gallery.

### Discounted publications to Society members

The following publications of the Society are available to members at the discounted prices shown:

*Cumbrian Wildlife in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (1996) £5.00 (retail price £6.50)

*Lakeland Ornithology* (1954) £5.00 (2<sup>nd</sup> hand price £15 – £20)

*Lakeland Molluscs* (1967) £3.00 (2<sup>nd</sup> hand price £10 – £20)

Also:

*Lakeland Birdlife 1920–1970*, R.H. Brown (1974) £5.00 (2<sup>nd</sup> hand price c.£10.00)

## Report on Field Meetings

### Loch Ken and Solway Coast: 3rd February 2001

Leader: Geoff Horne

On a wet morning fifteen members of the Society set off for the annual wild goose chase to the north Solway and Loch Ken.

At our first stop at Newbie, west of Annan, the rain had relented and we all had good views of waders and ducks feeding on the sand flats exposed by the receding tide. These included Redshank, Knot, Oystercatchers and Lapwings as well as Shoveler, Wigeon and Teal.

Moving on along Priestside Flow we had our first Buzzard of the day. (We lost count of final total of Buzzards seen for the day at over 30!). It was near Clarencefield that we came across an uncut field of corn, which had attracted large numbers of Reed Buntings, Yellowhammers, Tree Sparrows, House Sparrows and Chaffinches. It was here that we also found our first big flock of 83 Whooper Swans.

The trip through by Caerlaverock and the Merse proved disappointing except for another flock of over 30 Whooper Swans. However, further along the River Nith at Glencaple we found what we were looking for, a big flock of about 2000 Barnacle Geese feeding on the marsh fields. On the river the usual Goldeneye gave good views, as did a male Stonechat near the car park.

At Auchenreoch Loch, where we had lunch, the first birds we saw were Greylag Geese feeding in the fields. On the loch, the open stretches of water held large numbers of ducks including Teal, Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye and Mallard, as well as a large flock of 30 or more Goosander. Another treat here was a party of up to 10 Long-tailed Tits working their way through the roadside trees.

The walk down to Threave Castle was abandoned due to a shortage of time and we made our way round to Loch Ken where we had good views of Pintail, Wigeon, Teal, Tufted Duck and Pochard, as well as up 250 Greenland White-fronted Geese. The highlight of this section of the outing was an adult male Merlin hunting for a meal.

The day finished at Gretna where we had hoped to see the usual massive flock of Starlings going to roost in a plantation. Unfortunately the numbers were very much down on previous years and the spectacle did not come up to expectations. However this did not spoil what was an exceptionally good day, which all the participating members enjoyed, with 74 different species of birds seen.

Geoff Horne

## Notes and Records

### Bordered Sallow moth (*Pyrria umbra* (Hufnagel)) at Bowness on Solway

I was running a moth trap and an illuminated sheet at a Maryport & District NHS field meeting at Bowness-on-Solway Gravel Pits (NY2061) – a Cumbria Wildlife Trust Reserve – on the night of 21st July 2000. The catch consisted of 30 species of macro-moths, as well as many specimens of the Brown China Mark (*Nymphula nymphaea*) – a ‘Pyralid’ moth which feeds as a larva on pondweed (*Potamogeton* spp.).

One of the ‘macros’ was a new species for me and on consulting ‘Skinner’ (Skinner 1984) it turned out to be a Bordered Sallow, not recorded in VC 70 (Cumberland) since 1960 (Kydd & Hewitt 2000). It was however recorded in VC 69 (Westmorland) in 1998 though it has, apparently, never been recorded in the Cumbrian part of VC 65. It is regarded as Scarce in Cumbria and Regionally Scarce nationally. Its distribution is mostly coastal and on chalk and limestone inland. Restharrow is the usual larval foodplant.

Further trapping is planned on Bowness CWT Reserve and hopefully on the nearby Campfield RSPB reserve in 2001.

### References

Kydd, W. & Hewitt, S.M., (2000). *A Checklist of the Butterflies and larger Moths of Cumbria*.

Skinner, B. (1998). *Moths of the British Isles*. Viking.

Richard Little, ‘Haresfield’, Cumwhinton, Carlisle, CA4 8ER

### The White-speck moth (*Mythimna unipuncta* (Haworth)) at High Stand Plantation, new to Cumberland (VC 70)

On the evening of 23rd September 2000 (National Moth Night) I caught at light in High Stand Plantation (NY4849) twelve species of macro-moth including a specimen which at first sight I took to be a Clay, though it was late in the season for this moth. However the diagnostic feature was the pointed forewing with a dark oblique apical streak which identified this Noctuid as the White-speck (*Mythimna unipuncta*). This species is a migrant in Britain occurring only rarely in Cumbria (Kydd & Hewitt 2000). It had been recorded in VC 69 as recently as 1996 but has never been in VC 70 before the present record (Kydd & Hewitt *op. cit.*).

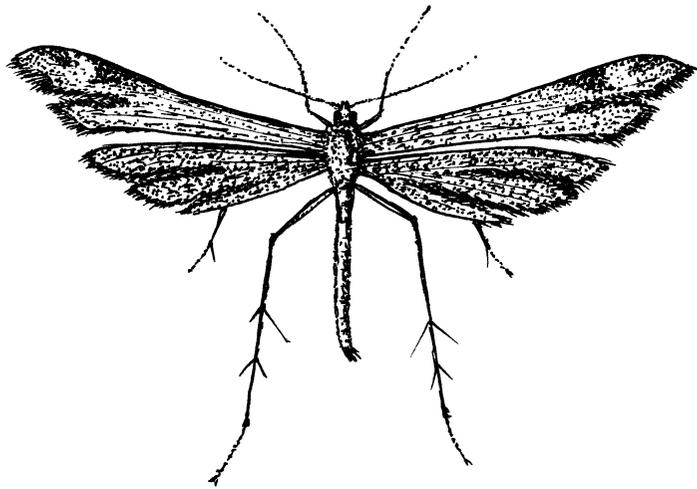
**NB:** Other sightings have been made in Cumbria in 2000 and there appears to have been an invasion of this migrant throughout Britain in the past year. Reports in the

January edition of the journal *Atropos* of observations from relatively local coastal stations show records of 19 trapped on Walney Island between 8 September-15 October and 139 trapped between 28th June-31st October on the Isle of Man; a huge increase in reports of this migrant where before there had been few records.

#### Reference

Kydd, W. & Hewitt, S.M., (2000). *A Checklist of the Butterflies and larger Moths of Cumbria*. Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

Richard Little, 'Haresfield', Cumwhinton, Carlisle, CA4 8ER



Plume moth

(David Clarke)

#### The plume moth *Stenoptilia millieridactyla* (Braund) in VC69 (Westmorland)

I took a single male specimen of this attractive plume moth in the mercury vapour (mv) trap operated in my garden at Grange-over-Sands (SD4076) on 24th July 2000. It is one of a number of species of lepidoptera apparently spreading, mainly northwards, in England at the present time.

First noted in the British Isles in the Dublin area of Ireland, it was described in great detail, under the trivial name *saxifragae* by T. Bainbridge Fletcher (1940). Later research revealed that the species had already been described by Braund in 1859 under the name by which it is known today.

In Fletcher's day the species was known only from Ireland – where it was a quite

common species in gardens and where apparently it is still common. Notes in recent literature indicate that the range and frequency of the species are expanding, especially in northern England.

#### Reference

Fletcher, T. Bainbridge (1940), *Entomologists Record* Vol. LII. pp 25 et seq.

Neville L. Birkett, Beardwood, Carter Road, Grange-over-Sands

#### The rediscovery of the silverfly *Acrometopia wahlbergi* (Diptera, Chamaemyiidae) at Cliburn Moss

The RDB 2 (Vulnerable) silverfly *Acrometopia wahlbergi* (Zetterstedt) was first recorded in the UK at Cliburn Moss in Westmorland (VC69) by C.H. Andrewes on 26 July 1967, when he took five males and one female from boggy ground with abundant Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*) among grasses and sedges (Andrewes, 1967). It has since been recorded from a handful of wetlands on Anglesey (VC52) and the Llyn peninsula, Caernarvonshire (VC49) in north-west Wales (Ismay *et al.*, 1978; M.A. Howe, pers. obs.), and from a single site in the New Forest (VC11; I. Perry, pers. comm.). A distinctive and readily recognised fly despite its small size, being completely bluish-grey apart from its yellow legs and having a triangular head, recent personal observations at the Welsh localities suggest that its occurrence on a site is strictly limited to the presence of the Slender Sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*). A visit to the New Forest locality in 1996 by the authors has confirmed this link.

The biology of *A. wahlbergi* is unknown, although it is thought that larvae are likely to be predators of scale insects associated with Gramineae or Cyperaceae (Ismay, in prep.). However, searches at the Welsh localities have failed to locate any scale insects on *C. lasiocarpa*.

In the Insect Red Data Book (Shirt, 1987) and the JNCC Acalyptrate review (Falk & Ismay, in prep.), it is speculated that *A. wahlbergi* may no longer occur at Cliburn Moss due to afforestation with conifers. It is therefore pleasing to report that 20 to 30 adults were recorded during a brief visit on 4 August 1996 in two or three small stands of open fen dominated by *C. lasiocarpa* within the National Nature Reserve (NY578256). A wider search may reveal further populations but it appears that suitable habitat on the site is small and fragmented. A visit to the nearby Newton Reigny Moss SSSI on the same day (NY478309) failed to find *A. wahlbergi* despite the presence of several small stands of Slender Sedge, perhaps because these tended to occur in more shaded conditions under a willow canopy.

Five specimens collected at Cliburn Moss have been donated to the insect collections at Tullie House Museum in Carlisle.

## References

- Andrewes, C. (1967), *Acrometopia wahlbergi* (Zett.) (Diptera, Chamaemyiidae), a genus and species of fly new to Britain. *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine*, **103**: 208.
- Falk, S.J. Revised and updated by Ismay, J.W. (in prep.), *A review of the scarce and threatened flies of Great Britain: Acalyptata*. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.
- Ismay, (in prep.).
- Ismay, J., Michaelis, H., Morgan, J., Stubbs, A.E., & Warne, A.C. (1978), *The fens of north Wales: an invertebrate survey, July 1976*. Bangor, Nature Conservancy Council.
- Shirt, D.B., Ed. (1987), *British Red Data Books: 2. Insects*. Peterborough, Nature Conservancy Council.
- M.A. Howe & E.A. Howe, Countryside Council for Wales, Plas Penrhos, Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2LQ*

**Parasitic 'micro-fungi' growing on pyrenomycete fungi on cow dung**

Following the short announcement in the last issue of the Newsletter, I have been practising what I preached and collecting dung to incubate in the search for microscopic ascomycetes, especially the undescribed *Unguiculariopsis* that occurs as a parasite on coprophilous pyrenomycetes. This species has been found in many locations in the UK on Rabbit and Hare dung. Two collections of cow dung from Cumwhitton have produced several of these parasitic discomycetes infecting different species of pyrenomycete from those that have been recorded for the rabbit dung records. These are probably the first records from other than rabbit dung. So, keep looking please!

A correction: the home country of the mycologist Seppo Huhtinen was given as Estonia: this should have been shown as Finland, my apologies.

*Peter Wilberforce, 'Morley Hill', Cumwhitton, Tel. 01228 562525;  
Email: pete@blackcrofts.demon.co.uk*

**Some records of immigrant lepidoptera in Westmorland, VC69**

The year 2000 was not notable for numbers of insects in this part of north-west England. However, to some extent, lack of quality was compensated by a few insects of quality among the migrant species taken in my garden Mercury vapour (mv) trap in Grange-over-Sands. It is hoped that a few notes on these migrant

species may be of general interest.

Nomenclature and order are those in Bradley (1998). The numbering of the species is taken from this list which also, for the macro-lepidoptera, correspond to those in the checklist of Cumbria species (Kydd & Hewitt 2000). Unless otherwise stated all dates refer to AD2000.

464 *Plutella xylostella* (L.) First taken on 19th June and a few on subsequent nights. Not many noted in the year but in some years the species occurs in vast numbers and is the notorious Diamond-back Moth which can be a great pest on Brassicas and Nasturtiums.

1331 *Acentria ephemerella* (D&S) Only a few specimens taken on 4th August. This is another species which breeds locally but in some years appears in great numbers, the population being reinforced by immigrants, apparently.

1395 *Udea ferrugalis* (Hubn.) Normally a frequent immigrant but was scarce in 2000. First taken on 29th August and occasional odd ones after that date.

1398 *Nomophila noctuella* (D&S) First taken on 20th June and was common thereafter until well into September.

1545 *Colias croceus* (Fourc.) Only one Clouded Yellow seen by me in my garden on 27th July. I understand that the species was quite common in some parts of the county.

1591 *Cynthia cardui* (L.) The Painted Lady is usually quite a common visitor – but this year it was scarce. I had a sighting of only one specimen on 22nd August, sunning itself on the house wall in early morning sunshine. This general scarcity contrasted very markedly with the great abundance of the species throughout Great Britain in 1996.

1716 *Rhodometra sacraria* (L.) The Vestal is an occasional immigrant to this northern district. One specimen in my trap on 30th September.

1987 *Hyles gallii* (Rott.) A female specimen of the Bedstraw Hawk-moth a well-known, but uncommon, migrant was taken in my trap on 18th July. The specimen was rather worn, having damaged itself in the trap. (*vide Entomologists Record* (2000) 112:252).

2091 *Euxoa ipsilon* (Hufn.) Only one specimen of the generally common Dark Sword-grass was taken on 7th October.

2203 *Mythimna unipuncta* (Haw.) The White-speck is a very unusual visitor this far north. The year 2000 saw a big invasion apparently to many parts of the country. Three specimens came to my trap – one each night 29th and 30th September and 4th October. These were my first records of the species in the UK in over 50 years of operating a moth trap!

2432 *Trichoplusia ni* (Hubn.) This was my rarest capture of the year. I obtained one

specimen of the Ni Moth on 7th July. So far as I know this is only the third specimen of this rare migrant to be recorded from Cumbria (*vide* reference given for species 1987 *supra*.)

2441 *Autographa gamma* (L.) A well-known and normally common migrant, the Silver Y was first taken here on 22nd June. Then it occurred commonly until quite the end of September. On 30th September I took a fine fresh specimen of the small form *gammina* Stgr.. This form is reputed to result from under-feeding of the larva. This I think is unlikely, especially in view of the fact that the larvae are widely polyphagous. Whether or not this specimen was an immigrant or locally bred is a matter for conjecture. The frequent occurrence of the *gammina* form is, in my opinion, owing to genetic factors rather than dietetic. Here is a good subject for research by some younger member.

### References

- Bradley, J.D. (1998), *Checklist of Lepidoptera recorded from the British Isles*, D.J. & M.J. Bailey.
- Kydd, W. & Hewitt, S.M. (2000) *A checklist of the butterflies and larger moths of Cumbria*, Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

Neville L. Birkett, Beardwood, Carter Road, Grange-over-Sands

### Recent Bird Records

These notes are compiled from record cards submitted by members at indoor meetings, plus a few gathered from other sources. They are not, therefore, fully authenticated records. They cover the period 1.1.01 to approx. 7.3.01.

Waxwings were an exciting feature of the early part of 2001. 11 were near Cargo on Jan.3 and other flocks were reported in at least 3 places around Carlisle with as many as 40 in one in the Harraby area. Three of these were said to have met their death by flying into windows. 20 were on Penrith golf course on Feb.13 and a week later one was feeding on cherries in a tree a few feet from the window of my house in Milton. It stayed until Feb.25.

Jan.16 was they day of the annual county bird race. Our local team of Roy and Jane Atkins, Pete Dawson and Helen Orme did not win, but their successes included Green Sandpiper and Jack Snipe at Carr Beds, Rockcliffe and a Water Rail near Dalston.

In January also, there were several reports of Barn Owl, Nuthatch and Siskin, plus the odd Blackcap. Crossbills were active in Kershope Forest, where Bramblings were also seen. There were a few Bramblings at Talkin Tarn but they were elusive. Also at Talkin Tarn, Goosanders reached a peak of 111 and three Smew paid a brief visit on Jan.12.

A Snow Bunting was seen on Cross Fell on Jan.16. More unusual was a nearby Lapland Bunting, which was heard but not seen.

Fewer cards were received in February (perhaps there are some still to come). Crossbills were singing at Kershope on 12th and on 23rd were seen with newly fledged young. On the same day a pair of Goshawks was displaying in the same area.

There was little of interest at Talkin Tarn all month, until it was eventually closed, as were many other places, with the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease.

Roy Atkins had an interesting day at Bowness on Solway on Feb.11, with 120 Kittiwakes flying up the estuary. Also 6 Brent Geese, a Hen Harrier and, perhaps most unusual of all, 4 Ravens.

Finally, a Long-eared Owl has been calling near Castle Carrock (recently reported by John Miles).

March records to date (there are only 2) were 2 Kingfishers by the R.Eden in Carlisle on 4th and a report of a Great Grey Shrike at Thornthwaite, Keswick on 7th.

Geoff Naylor

with thanks to Roy Atkins for assistance

### Book review

#### *In Search of Nature* by D.A. Ratcliffe

*In Search of Nature* is the type of book that once you have started to read it you cannot put it down. It vividly tells the story of how a young boy's interest in wildlife developed over many years to a stage where it took over his life and culminated in him becoming the Deputy Director of the Nature Conservancy Council.

Derek's fascination with wildlife, including birds, butterflies and moths, started before the Second World War when he went from his home in London to his grandfather's farm in Norfolk for his holidays. Here he was able to roam the heaths and marshes of the area and marvel at the wealth and beauty of its wildlife and learn about the many and varied species of birds, insects and plants that he found.

Derek moved to Carlisle with his parents when still a boy and a large part of this book is devoted to his explorations of the landscape and natural history of Carlisle and its surrounds. He gives an evocative account of the countryside of the Lakes, Solway and Borders before the huge post-war changes had really begun to bite.

He gives significant space to memories of Tullie House Museum, where he was

enthralled by the wonderful natural history collections, and to the Carlisle Natural History Society of which he soon became a member. Members of the Society introduced him to the birds and wildlife of the Lake District hills, the Solway marshes and mosses, as well as the quiet corners of the Pennines and Bewcastle Fells. Ernest Blezard, the Curator of Tullie House Museum, saw the depth of interest Derek took in natural history and became his mentor. Derek takes great pains to acknowledge the debt he owes Ernest for all the information and guidance he gave him over many years.

It was the Peregrines and Ravens in the Lake District hills that really captivated Derek and he gives fascinating accounts of his tireless searches of the high crags for the nests of these wonderful birds.

Later chapters deal with other districts of the British Isles. During his time at Sheffield University he was able to savour the attractions of the Peak District and later, as a research student with the Nature Conservancy Council, the flora of Snowdonia together with the Peregrines and Ravens of north Wales. His work with the NCC eventually gave him the opportunity to visit all the attractive wildlife areas of the United Kingdom. This book vividly takes you through all wonderful experiences he had and perfectly illustrates the wonders of nature in Britain.

A final chapter gives a fascinating account of his studies into the effects of pesticides on the Peregrine population in the 1950s and 60s.

The book does not go beyond 1970 when Derek took on an administrative role within the Nature Conservancy Council and field studies became a cherished out of work activity. Perhaps we can hope that Derek will someday publish what must be the equally fascinating, if less enjoyable, story of the second half of his career – fighting political battles for nature conservation.

In the meantime, this is a delightful book that should grace any true naturalist's bookshelf and will particularly interest those who know and love this part of the country.

*Geoff Horne*

*In Search of Nature* is published by Peregrine Books at £27.00; copies are available from the shop at Tullie House Museum and other local bookshops.

## In Lighter Vein

*F.H. Day*

*[Editor's note: Last year I had the pleasure of visiting Mrs Pam Wilson, Secretary of Grange Natural History Society and the grand-daughter of Frank Henry Day – founding member of this Society. She was kind enough to allow me to copy some of the photographs and papers of F.H. Day in her possession and gave her permission to reproduce some of that material here in the Carlisle Naturalist. Among the various papers was the following light-hearted account of a trip through Borrowdale 100 years ago this summer and it seemed appropriate to publish it for the first time this year. H.B. and T.J. referred to in the text are Harry Britten and Tom Little Johnson, two very active local naturalists and Society members in their time.]*

Though the specific object that H.B., T.J. and myself had in view when we spent the first Tuesday and Wednesday of July 1901 in the Lake district was the collection of natural objects. more particularly insects—

*“Beetles, sawflies, wasps and earwigs,*

*“All the nasty crawling clan*

*“That are carefully avoided*

*“By a well-conducted man,*

It is not my intention to compile a catalogue or write a scientific account of the results of the expedition, but rather to sketch in a light and airy way some account of the secondary things of interest which came under our observation. Suffice it to say that entomologically the outing was a great success, extending as it did, in no small degree, the knowledge of insect life indigenous to the valleys and mountain passes of Lakeland. With this brief prologue permit me to ring up the curtain and bring on the *dramatis personae*. First there was H.B., hereinafter known as B., a tough son of the fresh air and the patriarch of the party, being a married man. Then there was T.J., commonly called Tommy, an ornithologist, who took with him a bounteous supply of oranges, apples and chocolate, which the other two generously assisted him to consume. Finally there was the writer of this history who hopes the reader will not vote him a bore before reaching the last page.

The night before starting was gloomy in the extreme. A howling northeaster blew. Ominous banks of black cloud scudded across the sky. The dust was blinding. But there was no rain. According to arrangement a start had to be made whatever the weather was. On Tuesday morning I was up betimes and packed my bag with a curious mixture of paraphernalia, among which stockings, oil boxes and maps may be cited. The rain was now steadily coming down, so a macintosh was added to the baggage. At

the station Tommy was discovered blessing the weather in biblical language, but prepared for a start. We took tickets for Keswick. We had not gone far on our journey before we found that the rain was quite local, and in places there had been none at all. At Penrith B. joined us. There had been no rain there, he said. This was cheering information, and when, a few minutes after eight, we reached Keswick and were told there had been no rain, either, the mercury of our spirits rose another degree or two, though a glance at Skiddaw, or where Skiddaw ought to have been, was not conducive to a further rise of the thermometer which indicates the feelings in the human breast. In the direction of Skiddaw, great, misty, white clouds hung, quite hiding the mountain from sight. Westwards, across Derwent Water, the clouds were thinner, Causey Pike being clear save for a band of mist thrown shawl-like around its shoulders. But southwards, where we bent our steps, it was all black and gloomy, and as we looked in that direction a feeling akin to despair came over us. But as we walked along the Borrowdale Road the wind got up in the east and gradually the mist wreathes began to unfold and the clouds to lift, though it was night before all was cleared away.

The Borrowdale Road, as it runs along the side of Derwentwater passes through some of the best timbered ground in English Lakeland. Here are some of the finest specimens of that noble tree—the larch—one could wish to see. Straight and clean the trunks rise and hang their feathery boughs high over the heads of oak and elm, beech and chestnut, looking, on a small scale, like the giant redwoods of California. Passing Walla and Falcon Crags, we struck up the rough cart track which leads ultimately to the high-lying Watendlath valley. Behind Barrow House are some curious coniferous trees which none of us was botanist enough to recognise. The cones grew on the trunk, right out of the bark.

Across Ashness Bridge we went and into the wood beyond, also called Ashness. The trees were in full leaf and the bracken fronds were fast attaining their ultimate height. The bloom of the hawthorn no longer covered the hedges with a robe of white, but the rose bushes hung thick with bloom of white and red and loveliest pink. Simply beautiful is the wild rose. It may not have the magnificence of its cultivated compeer, but nevertheless it has beauty—simple, unadulterated beauty. A wind-tossed spray of wild rose carrying a score of blossoms possesses a beauty purely its own. The garden rose is stately, possessing a grandeur all other flowers lack, but its beauties have been acquired through human agency. No human hand has vested the wild flower in its beauty. Nature alone has produced it. The one is natural—the other artificial. The one has the beauty of the ballroom belle with her powder and her paint, her feathers and her fan; while the other has the comeliness of the simple village maid, whom the artificialness of society life has not spoiled and in whose rosy cheeks the colour is maintained by the continual breath of the fresh air and healthy outdoor exercise.

Ashness Wood lies at a considerable elevation above Derwent Water and in one place one can stand on the verge of a precipice and look down 700 feet on the lake

below, with the dusty Borrowdale Road winding in and out among the trees, with the coaches crawling along it like flies on a wall.

There is a garden seat here from which unparalleled views may be had of the surrounding country—Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite, Catbells and Skiddaw. But as often as not this seat cannot be used for the purpose for which it is intended for the reason that Ashness Wood is a mighty stronghold of the wood ant (*Formica rufa*)\* which is nowhere else found in Cumberland. This formidable-looking ant erects a large, dome-shaped nest on the ground of bits of stick and bracken and inhabits its domicile in tens of thousands. All day long the ant armies range the wood and surrounding country on foraging expeditions and climb up trees and everything else with the utmost facility in their search for food. The seat in question always seems to have a dozen or two on it racing from end to end, and I doubt not that many a spooning couple have jumped up with a start when *Formica rufa* has put in an appearance. An interesting little animal is the wood ant, a very giant among its fellows.

A charming scrap of woodland is this Ashness, with the air full of the fragrance of honeysuckle and tiny rivulets murmuring at every side. It has always been a wonder to me why so few people go through it, but perhaps the ants have something to do with it.

After a while we emerged into the Watendlath valley, and turning to the right between Shepherd and Cowder Crags, scrambled down the steep and stony descent into the Borrowdale Road. Between these two crags are the famous Falls of Lodore, immortalized by Southey—

*“Here it comes sparkling,*

*“And there It lies darkling,*

*“Now smoking and frothing*

*“Its tumult and wrath in.*

*The cataract strong,*

*“Then plunges along,*

*“Striking and raging,*

*“As if a war waging*

*“Its caverns and rocks among.*

though the Yankee parody, is equally humorous and certainly more truly descriptive—

*“Down steep precipices and awful abysses*

*“Ten feet or fifteen the water is seen*

*“To drip, skip, trip, slip, dip,*

*“A gallon a minute in great agitation.*

(\* The nomenclature of the Wood ants was confused at this time and the Wood Ants of Ashness Woods are now recognised as *Formica lugubris*. – Ed.)

As a waterfall Lodore is a fraud, except in the rainy season, but the rocky bed down which the water runs is wildly pretty.

It was mid-day when we reached the road and the next few miles were covered rapidly, for we wished to reach Seathwaite Farm, the base from which we intended working, in time to allow us to get up to Sty Head and Sprinkling Tarns before evening.

The vale of Borrowdale is one of the prettiest in the whole of English lakeland, and, in strange contrast to the rugged mountains which rise up on both sides of it, is very fertile. There are several villages in the valley. Grange is an old-world looking place, where, in years gone by, the monks were reported to have much treasure stored. Further on is Rothwaite, a pretty place, where a good many visitors stay. The River Derwent, which drains the valley, is famous for the purity and clearness of its water, and moreover, runs through some lovely bits of scenery. Every turn of the stream reveals new beauties. The conical, tree-clad Castle Crag is very striking.

It was two o'clock 'ere Seathwaite was reached and our appetites were keen. Ham and eggs was our fare, which B. served out. Tommy cut the bread—a huge loaf of the cottage variety—and good, thick, satisfying slices he carved. I poured out the tea and instructed the other two in their duties. All being ready we fell to it and ate in silence. B. said afterwards that his stomach seemed to have no bottom. It was nine hours since we had had a meal and there is nothing like mountain air for whetting one's appetite. On and on we went, with our feeding and only stopped when the dish was empty, the loaf consumed and the teapot dry. Then we went out and turned up the stony path which leads to Sty Head Pass. The path crosses the river by a bridge—Stockley Bridge—and the direction it then takes is at right angles to that previously followed. The climb now begins and though a bit steep and stony is simple enough. The path goes between Green Gable on the right and Seathwaite Fell on the left. At the top of the Pass is Sty Head Tarn, a sheet of beautifully sweet water lying at an elevation of 1489 feet above sea level. Our time was spent round the shores of this tarn and of Sprinkling Tarn which lies 500 feet higher, right under the shadow of Great End—one of the main buttresses of Scaw Fell.

The weather still remained dull and cloudy, and the wind blew strongly from the east. We hoped the next day would be brighter and as we rested awhile on a rock we ruminated much on the weather prospects. The weather is the main topic of conversation among visitors to the Lake District. Being so capricious it offers an endless subject for discussion. One never knows what it is going to do next. If your barometer, upon which you place the utmost reliance, stands at Set Fair and you start off for a holiday in the Lake District, in all probability when you get there you will find it raining cheerfully. Or if you consult the weather forecasts in the Daily Mail, based upon readings from Negretti & Zamba's best instruments, and for the north west of England are told that fine weather is expected, it is more than likely that a second deluge is in progress. It isn't the barometer or the newspaper that is wrong. Far from it,

it ought to be fine—only it isn't. It rains when there is no cause for it. The weather in the English Lake district takes a bloodthirsty delight in doing just the opposite to what it is expected to do. After raining for a week on end, it as likely as not sets to work and rains for another seven days and so on *ad infinitum*, or perhaps *ad indefinitum* is nearer the mark. The fact is the weather here absolutely declines to acknowledge the laws of meteorological science. It is independent, untameable, following the bent of its own free will and rejoicing in it. But if a fine day does come along, it is fine and no mistake. It is worth waiting a week or two for, and when it does turn up one forgets the wettings and disappointments.

This was how we talked as we sat on the rock, and we must have yarned on a long time for the light began to go, so we turned down into Grain Gill and trekked for our supper and the bed that was to follow.

By five o'clock next morning we were drawing the blind aside to look at the weather. The Fates had favoured us and a perfect day was in prospect. The sky was a dome of blue, with a few flecks of fleecy Cumulus floating lazily to the north. The air was clear and we could see for miles where mountains did not block the view. We had an early breakfast and went out. It was a glorious morning.

So glorious was it that one felt that one could just sit and look at the weather and admire the scenery. But as we were bug-hunters and not poets we pushed on. The climb to Sty Head was a warm one and more than once we felt inclined to strip and have a dip in the stream which carries off the superfluous waters of the tarn. In one place this stream forms a pretty waterfall known as Taylor's Ghyll Force, which would have provided us with an admirable shower bath. The water falls over the precipice white and foaming, making a delightfully cool sound in its descent. We soon came to be afflicted with thirst and on reaching the tarn we lay down on our stomachs to it and sucked up the water like cattle. We drunk such a lot that Tommy said the level of the tarn was visibly reduced and declared that, for a minute, the stream which drains the tarn stopped flowing.

Very sweet and clear are the waters of this wild tarn. No matter how dry a season it is, there is always abundance of water here. Streams bubble out of the ground every few yards. The patch of grassy ground contiguous to the tarn is loaded with water, which oozes through boots as one plods along. Entomologically we had a happy time on this piece of sloppy ground, for a certain beetle, a great desideratum of ours was swarming. A very pretty and variable beetle it was too, the colours embracing various shades of bronze, green, black blue, and red. It lived mainly on the reeds and other aquatic plants, and as British beetles go, was of large size.

After standing for a few minutes in one place, we would become conscious of a cool feeling just below the calves of our legs, and on looking down, would find that our feet had disappeared in the bog and the water forced out by the pressure of our boots would have formed a circle round each leg. We didn't mind. We merely pulled our feet out,

walked on a few yards and began again. There is nothing like the excitement attendant upon insect hunting for making one forget petty annoyances. As a matter of fact your enthusiastic bug-hunter never sees where the annoyance comes in. He rather likes getting wet through, going without his dinner and such trivialities, for

*'The pleasure of snaring a beetle,  
'To catch with delirious joy  
'The lively old flea  
'Or the staid humble bee,  
'Is a pleasure quite free from alloy.  
'Oh! you shout with delight when you capture  
'A lepidop. lovely and fat,  
'And you dance a wild jig,  
'When the wiggly earwig  
'Is securely pinned in your hat.*

We could not leave that beetle alone. B. had bottled about 150 specimens and I was not far behind.

No matter how ugly many of the beetle race may be in the eyes of the ordinary individual, the professed beetle-student thinks them all pretty, but when he comes across a species, which, like the present one, is conspicuously pretty he simply cannot get enough, more especially if it is a good one. We stayed so long at the tarn that our intention of pushing on into Wastdale had to be abandoned. So we contented ourselves with climbing Great Gable which rises, pyramid-like, from the very shores of Sty Head Tarn. A pretty steep climb we found it, and we had not time to reach the top. The sun burnt down upon us furiously, but one never seems to tire in these regions, and up and up we went until, reaching a grassy spot among the rocks, we decided we had gone as far as our time would allow. We sat down to admire the extensive view our lofty eminence commanded. but first the irrepressible Tommy excavated from the recesses of his capacious pockets his last half dozen oranges and never did oranges taste sweeter or more refreshing. Then we lit our pipes and looked around. It was beautifully clear.

Mountains, mountains rugged and rough were on every hand, with here and there a grassy valley showing between, and to the southwest, between Lingmell and Yewbarrow, the corner of Wastwater was to be seen, while beyond were the blue waters of the Atlantic.

Right in front was Scawfell Pike, the highest point in England, with the clustering heights of Great End, Lingmell and Angle Crag all around it.

To the left of these and due east of our point of vantage was Glaramara, a tumultuous

rocky mass built upon an immense base. Barren and grey it stood out in the bright sunlight, the embodiment of picturesque wildness. A great bird of prey wheeled around its summit—a buzzard in all probability. For some minutes we watched it and then it went off rapidly to the mountain chain to the Northeast, of which Helvellyn is the culminating point. Very grand did Helvellyn look from where we stood, and in fancy we could see its reflected image in the sleeping Thirlmere at its feet.

Further to the north, Saddleback with its twin summits stood out clearly and shut out all further view in that direction. Dotted about on the mountain-sides were Herdwick ewes, happy in the possession of frisking lambkins. A curious animal is the Herdwick whose ragged coat and cat-like face are quite in harmony with its surroundings. A few dark butterflies flitted about on the grassy ground where we stood, common-looking enough to ordinary eyes but in reality a rarity, being the Mountain Ringlet, the only Alpine butterfly found in the British Isles. Time was going fast and we knew our brief holiday was nearly over. Reluctantly we tore ourselves away dropped down to Seathwaite to swallow a hasty tea and take the dusty Borrowdale Road for Keswick. It was a hot hurried nine miles walk for we had lingered too long. Blue butterflies toyed with the flower heads on the hedge banks: meadow browns and heaths sported in the fields and great brown fritillaries— black green and silver spotted— rushed across the road over our heads from one hillside to another. We could only sigh and let them go. Our collecting was done, our holiday over. Once more we were back in the regions of humanity—the cheap tripper, and the wild beauties of Nature seemed to have gone. For two days we had drunk deep from Nature's cup, had seen her in her wildest moods, had breathed her purest air and had shared her loneliest solitudes. The next day we had to face the office, the desk and the ledger and take our part in the struggle for existence. After what we had gone through the prospect seemed gloomy. We felt sad.

But we can return to these scenes we love and sweeter far will they seem after the separation.

*F. H. Day*

F.H. Day

CARLISLE, 21st July, 1901

## Pyrenomycete fungi on burnt ground

Peter Wilberforce, 'Morley Hill', Cumwhitton

Burnt ground does not immediately spring to mind as a location to look for fungi, but many species are totally adapted to this unpromising substrate. The well-known ones are a few small basidiomycetes and a number of species in several genera of discomycetes. This paper describes the fairly common, but often totally overlooked, species of minute pyrenomycetes that occur regularly on old fire sites. They occur nowhere else but on thoroughly burnt and sterilised soil and sometimes on burnt ends of sticks.

The stage of development of a fire site is important: it is no good looking on very recent fire sites; nor on lightly burnt sites which are useless since buried seeds are not killed and rapidly germinate to dominate the area. The best sites are about 9-12 months old and will have been thoroughly scorched leaving no viable seeds. These sites will be characterised by the early development of the moss *Funaria hygrometrica* and the appearance of a feint tinge of green from algae. The appearance of the lovely *Peziza*, *Anthracobia* and *Plicaria* species that regularly occur on fire sites is a sure sign that it is worth collecting a little of the burnt soil for examination under the stereo microscope. With a penknife carefully cut out a small area of soil and place it in a suitable dish (Petri types are ideal)

Back at home, keep the soil moist and warm and examine daily. The pyrenomycetes all appear as minute raised dots. When much comminuted charcoal is present it can be quite difficult to separate fungus from bits of carbon. The 'real thing', when gently dug out of the burnt soil, will reveal the black, pear-shaped body of the fungus, often with rhizoids ('rootlets') ( Fig.1.)

There are four known species in three genera that are likely to be encountered. If you have a microscope, the following key will help distinguish these species. All the species have black or dark brown septate spores with one cell at least completely hyaline.

Key to the pyrenomycetes on burnt soil

- 1: Spores with a large, elongated, hyaline cell, many time longer than the dark cell; dark cell often septate. (Fig. 2A) .. .. . *Cercophora arenicola*  
 Spores with a minute hyaline cell, sometimes very difficult to observe; at most ¼ length of the dark cell .. .. . 2
- 2: Brown part of the spore mottled in appearance; spores broadly ovate; hyaline cell very insignificant (Fig. 2B) .. .. . *Jugulospora rotula*  
 Brown part of the spore uniformly dark coloured; spores narrowly ovate to fusiform; hyaline cell usually easily observed (Fig. 2C and D) .. .. . 3

3: Brown part of the spore 12-18 × 6-8 µm .. .. . *Strattonia minor*

Brown part of the spore 18-23 × 8-11 µm .. .. . *Strattonia carbonaria*

Experience suggests that *Jugulospora* and *Strattonia minor* are common whilst the other two species are encountered only occasionally.

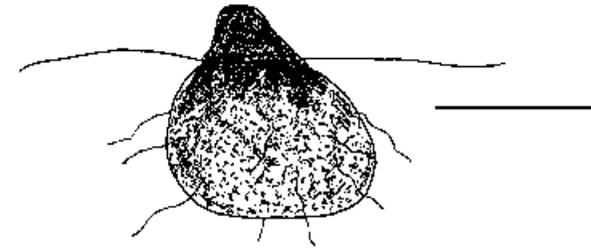


Fig. 1: Perithecium of *Jugulospora rotula* in situ. Scale bar = 1 mm

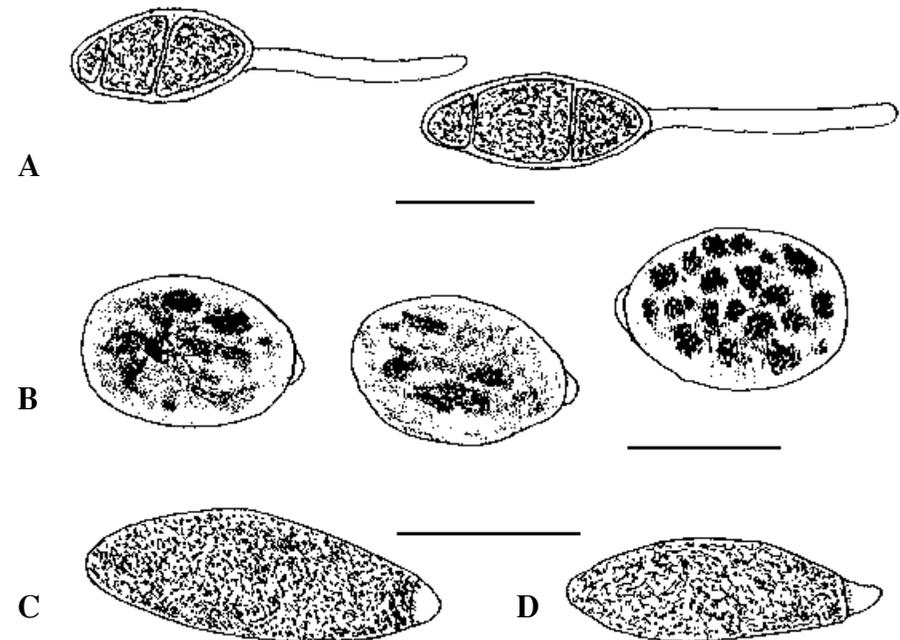


Fig. 2: Spores of the known species of pyrenomycete from burnt soil.

A. *Cercophora arenicola*; B. *Jugulospora rotula* (spore on right is immature);

C. *Strattonia carbonaria*; D. *Strattonia minor*.

Scale bars: A: 20 µm; B,C,D: 10 µm. Drawings from material in the author's herbarium.

## Barry Marrs 1950 – 2001

Barry died in a motorcycle accident on 23rd January.

Barry was very well known and liked by just about everybody, particularly in his home village of Dalston and within this Society. So well liked in fact that hundreds attended his funeral. His contribution to the local natural history scene was considerable. Not that Barry would have approved any adulation – he was too straightforward and modest to have considered himself anything out of the ordinary.

But he was out of the ordinary. Who else would have been equally at home on the viaduct identifying skuas, or raptors in Tunisia, or plants and butterflies in the Pyrenees? And that's just natural history. Add above average ability at football, cricket, volleyball and darts and a strong interest in fishing – both on his beloved Caldew and sea fishing in general. Then add the ability to talk to all sorts of people at all levels.

The natural world in all its variety meant a great deal to Barry: he loved to watch birds or butterflies or dragonflies: wild plants, especially orchids, were yet another interest. He had the precious gift of enjoying all these things and liked nothing more than to be out in the field – whether around Dalston, or the Solway, or on a foreign holiday with friends, looking for new and more exotic wildlife.

Everyone will have their own stories of Barry in the field but perhaps the Bonelli's Eagles in Tunisia would take some beating. How he could spot an eagle on its nest several hundred metres away was unbelievable, so tangled and broken was the hillside. When everyone had been shown the site through the telescope Barry said "It's mate is sitting 20 yards to the left". We thought he had mistaken a prickly pear (an introduced species), then the prickly pear moved and became a male Bonelli's Eagle.

In Majorca above the Formentor Peninsula, bird-watchers were on the lookout for spring migrants. There were some keen birders about, but Barry was separating both species of kite from Marsh Harriers without using binoculars before the others could even get their instruments trained on the birds. The rest of us could just about make out that there was something overhead!

Barry's occupation of the Bowness viaduct was almost permanent some years ago when he had an ankle injury and spent about 10 hours a day looking for skuas and other seabirds. Experiences on holiday with him in the Mediterranean demonstrated that he could easily concentrate for this length of time and still be alert to something new. Hence the Audouin's Gull sighted from a pavement café in Porto Pollensa, after a 12 hour day!

This all-consuming passion naturally brought him to Carlisle Natural History Society and he became a central and unanimously liked figure in the Society. As a Society member he was friendly, welcoming and completely unaffected. New members found him easy to get to know, and in this helped to strengthen our organisation. He was a Council member for very many years: he was always happy to join in – and was

equally at home with organising a Quiz Night or leading a Field Meeting. Barry was a familiar figure at our outdoor meetings where his amazingly sharp senses and powers of observation were widely appreciated. Tales abound of the times when he was the first to see, and correctly identify, some distant creature. Indeed, sometimes it had just disappeared over the horizon, but you knew that it really was what he claimed and that, once again, **you** had missed it!

It is typical of him that he laughed more than anyone else at one of his few errors of judgement – the occasion when a flock of birds in a distant field turned out to be a crop of turnips!

He was actually a very good naturalist: he kept careful notes of what he saw and always passed them on to our Society: he has added much to our knowledge of local wildlife over many years. He also liked to take photographs, and some of his slides duly appeared at our Members Nights. From time to time he would show some *challenging* images: such as the Night Heron that he photographed silhouetted against a black sky! He knew it was there, and could laugh at himself for showing it, and enjoy the amusement of the audience too!

That was how he was: Barry was Barry was Barry: in his own unassuming way he was a cornerstone of the Society: he gave much more than he took. We thank him for it and feel his loss deeply. Our deepest sympathies go out to his mother and family, and his fiancée Maureen.

*Mike Tulloch and David Clarke with contributions from several other members*

## Carlisle Natural History Society Officers

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Membership application forms are available from the Secretary.

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## The Carlisle Naturalist

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**Copy deadline for the next issue is 1st September.**

## Information for Authors

The Carlisle Naturalist publishes material on all aspects of the natural history of Cumbria. General articles, results of personal research, news items, records and letters of relevance to Cumbrian naturalists are welcomed. Material accepted for publication must not be submitted in a similar form to any other journal.

Material should be clearly legible – ideally type-written double-spaced on one side of white A4 paper, or submitted on DOS-formatted 3.5 inch computer disc in ASCII or RTF format and accompanied by a paper copy. Only species and genera should be underlined. Authority names should be given in full. Illustrations should be in black ink; they must be originals and not photocopies. Whilst every care will be taken of original artwork, the editor can not be held responsible for any loss or damage. References should be given in full at the end of the article or note.

Authors of papers two or more pages in length will be provided with 10 reprints. Papers may be submitted to a referee.

Opinions expressed in the *Carlisle Naturalist* are not necessarily shared by the Council of Carlisle Natural History Society nor the Editorial Panel.

## Summer Programme 2001

**NB: See comments by the Editor on inside front cover.**

Meetings start from Carlisle College, Victoria Place, Carlisle. (Leaders may cancel meetings at this rendezvous if they consider circumstances unsuitable.)

Members' own transport; places available for those without.

Bring packed lunches for all meetings beginning before midday.

**21st April (Saturday): Birds in Borrowdale** Leader Geoff Horne.

Depart 9.30 am. Meet Great Wood Car Park (NY272213) at 10.30 pm.

**16th June (Saturday): Great Asby Scar and Crosby Gill** Leader Jeremy Roberts.

Depart 9.30 am. Meet at lay-by on Orton-Raisbeck road (NY639079) at 10.15 am

**7th July (Saturday): Roudsea Wood NNR** Leader Rob Petley-Jones (David Clarke).

Depart 9.00 am. Meet at the start of the track by the river west of Low Wood (SD345836).

**28th July (Saturday): Scaleby Moss** Leader David Clarke.

Depart 9.30 am. Meet at the lay-by on the A689 (NY402602) at 10.00 am.

**10th August (Friday evening): Moth trapping – Wan Fell** Leaders: Mike

Clementson/Richard Little.

Depart 8.30 pm. Meet Wan Fell NY523374 at 9.00 pm.

**15th September (Saturday): Fungus foray – Middle Gelt** Leaders: Geoff Naylor,

David Clarke

Depart 12.30 pm. Meet at Middle Gelt Viaduct (NY531572) 1.00 pm.

**20th October (Saturday): Red Deer Rut – Martindale** Leader: Geoff Horne.

Depart 12.30 pm. Meet Martindale Church (NY434183) 1.30 pm.