

## Willow

by Willow, 29-May-14 12:51 PM GMT

I've finally decided to take the plunge and join all you other enthusiastic guys & gals with a **Personal Diary** 😊 I probably won't be as upto date or quite as regular with my butterfly adventures as many of you but I've got to start somewhere so I'd better do so now by catching up with a few belated May reports...before the month ends!!!

**Breakheart Quarry, Near Dursley, Gloucestershire.** My first visit to this unusual location was a rather disappointing one with not much happening, my latest visit earlier this month was in complete contrast with at least 50 **Grizzled Skipper** seen, many nectaring on the plentiful bugle that grows on the fringes of the old quarry area, the species is not at all common in south Wales and its always nice to spend time with it and hopefully learn a little more.



*Wherever the bugle grew there were Grizzlies*

Regards bugle I was surprised (and delighted!!!) to discover a rare white variant among the countless usual blueish/purple specimens.



*Lucky find or was I being naturally observant?*

Many of the Grizzlies were recently emerged and make for 'standout' photo material, providing they pose nicely, the intruding grass blade marred this image somewhat though 😞



*Mint fresh Grizzled Skipper*

I cannot remember **Dingy Skipper** having a better year, I've seen them in incredibly good numbers on all my travels and this quarry site was much to their liking.



*I saw several 'in cop' Dingy in the quarry*

**Stinchcombe Hill, Gloucestershire.** Just a mile or so up the road from Breakheart Quarry is Stinchcombe Hill, situated most unusually alongside two different local golf clubs and the road to the generously sized public car park dissects them...so be aware of the off target golf balls 🤪 The views from the hill are superb and on a clear day (which I had 😊) you can see the Quantocks in Somerset and the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire, while the Severn flood plain spreads below with both the Severn bridges visible, then in the far middle distance are the Black Mountains just over the Welsh border...spectacular 😊



*View south-east from Stinchcombe Hill*

Several **Brown Argus** were seen on the steep slopes along with the much overlooked **Small Heath** which I happen to think is a delightful butterfly

especially when fresh!



*This Small Heath was a right poser!!!*



*Small Heath at lunch...*

Among the day-flying Moths seen were literally dozens of Speckled Yellow and I discovered what appeared to be a roost in a small clearing among the scrub with at least a dozen insects settled on the grasses, this provided a leisurely opportunity to take a few photo's, I usually see this moth along woodland rides and it can be a bit flighty and wary, this species is also having a very good year, I make no apologies for liking my day-flying moths 😊



*Dozens of Speckled yellow were seen on the hill*

You cannot fail to be delighted by the wonderful array of wild flowers that May presents for us to feast our eyes upon, the pink variant of Columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris* has a delicacy I feel is distinctly female and I can never resist photographing it yet again... 😊



*Columbine in pink, what a beauty!!!*

This bit ends my first tentative efforts at a belated **Personal Diary** I shall try to complete my May reports over the next day or so, but if it stops raining...I'm outta here folks 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

PS. Thanks David M for your useful bit of help 😊

## Re: Willrow

by MikeOxon, 29-May-14 01:37 PM GMT

A good start, Bill; I look forward to reading more.

Mike

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 29-May-14 03:13 PM GMT

Thanks Mike...you shall go down in **UK Butterflies** history as my first official **Personal Diary** replier 😊😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by David M, 29-May-14 05:17 PM GMT

Welcome aboard, Bill. I'm certain your diary will provide fascinating reading.

## Re: Willrow

by Lee Hurrell, 29-May-14 07:51 PM GMT

I too look forward to further Willrow escapades. You're off to a good start!

Best wishes,

Lee

## Re: Willrow

by Maximus, 29-May-14 08:13 PM GMT

Nice stuff Bill, lovely photos, I look forward to further installments 😊

## Re: Willrow

by Neil Freeman, 29-May-14 09:19 PM GMT

Hi Bill,

Good to see you have taken the plunge with your diary. Great start and looking forward to further instalments 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 29-May-14 09:54 PM GMT

David, Lee, Max and Neil, your all gentlemen of the first order, thank you for the encouraging responses 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 30-May-14 08:59 AM GMT

Great start to your PD Willrow, especially the Dinghy cop shot 🎁 Cracking that is! 😊 Looking forward to the next installment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 30-May-14 09:55 AM GMT

Thanks kindly Wurz, I shall do my best not to disappoint 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Willrow

by Willrow, 30-May-14 05:26 PM GMT

I'm spending so much time reading everyone's superb Personal Diaries that I can't get my own done 😊 but I'll try now 😊

Haugh Woods, Herefordshire – May Bank Holiday Monday. I'd promised myself a visit to this splendid location to search out some **Wood White** and check on the current situation with the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** for a couple of weeks and with our friends at the Met Office promising us a reasonable days weather I ventured forth. I had hardly got out of the car when a welcoming committee of 10,000+ midges descended on me 😊😊 last year I was 'ticked' at this woods and I was well covered up to prevent it happening again, but boy are those midges pesky...still..let's get on. The best **Wood White** spots are to be found on the lower (warmer) areas, especially along the herbage rich rides, it was here that I saw and counted over 80 insects, with several pairs 'in-cop' and reasonably accomodating about having their photo's taken 😊 shameless species!!!



*The shameless pair!!!*

I became aware of the generally good condition of the **Wood White** as I suppose they are rather amiable insects, not given to beating each other up...shameless but sensible then 😊



*Pretty on pink...*

Venturing off track to investigate some likely moth habitat I came across a nice fresh Angle Shades which always draws attention to itself unless it's hidden among partially dead or dying thistles, different story then.



*Angle Shades a standout macro moth*

Heading towards prime **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** territory I was fairly optimistic about seeing reasonable numbers, the Ewyas Harold site for the species is not too far away and I had seen healthy numbers there recently – worrying to spend a few hours and only count six individuals at Haugh 😲 could I be too late I wondered, don't think so, noticeably the bugle was in short supply compared to recent years and the favoured ride verges looked too overgrown and the coppiced areas nearby were completely smothered in Wood Spurge much to the disadvantage of violets, I think it needs looking

at pronto 📷



*One of just six P-b Frits seen during the entire day*

Referring to Wood Spurge, I was very pleased to see several Nb category (rare) Drab Looper moths nectaring on it, this is the moths larval food plant and I had hoped to see one on the spurge – nice 😊



*Drab Looper is a rare UK moth*

**Speckled Wood** is having a very iffy year, it could just be me, but I have not seen them in anything like good numbers, my total in this prime woodland site was just eight for the day 😲



My **Wood White** count and observations continued at a leisurely pace until lunchtime and a well deserved break sat on a log, have you noticed that as soon as you settle the insects start posing...so I put my lunch to one side and took a few more shots 😊



*Looks like a date is being arranged!!!*

Whenever I'm searching woodland rides at this time of year I'm aware that Scarlet Tiger larvae is likely and I was not to be denied on this fine day discovering a nice specimen among the herbage.



*One of my favourite moth caterpillars*

Apart from the midges the whole day was a good one, the sun shone 😊 for most of the time and apart from the concern about the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** I saw and photographed lots of **Wood White** and a goodly assortment of moth species, Speckled Yellow were again in tremendous numbers throughout the woods, to the extent that I admit taking them rather for granted, something I have never done before. Several lovely specimens of Greater Butterfly Orchid were seen in the same place as usual, perhaps fewer than in years past, they can prove an enigmatic plant though, but that's orchids 😊



*Lovely on yellow...*

When I got back to the car I had used about 200 hazel switches to defend myself against the bl\*\*d\* midges which were now organised into squadrons and attacking from on high, ignoring them I had a cup of cold coffee, my last Kit-Kat – and then I headed home a happy midge-bitten butterflyer 😊😊

Bill 😊

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 02-Jun-14 04:55 PM GMT

Trying to make the most of these long early summer evenings and with the regular showers making things a bit frustrating, I still decided to risk the showers one evening last week and try out my Nikon D700 and Nikkor 105mm Micro lens for a change on the **Marsh Fritillary** at the **Aberbargoed Grasslands NNR, Monmouthshire (Gwent)** leaving my regular use Panasonic Lumix FZ150 at home, however, I'd forgotten that my Nikon kit comes with a free weightlifting course 😊 and I also missed the excellent vari-angle LCD screen of the FZ150, the alternative for getting some uncomfortably low level shots was a Giotto's tripod and cable release. The D700 is reknown for it's good low light capabilities and so it proved on this occasion.

My direct route to the core pasture that hosts the **Marsh Fritillary** was blocked by cattle and in particular Triton the bull, usually he's quite a placid fellow but on this occasion he was with his harem and many of the cows had calves, so discretion replaced valour and I did a ten minute diversion to avoid any mayhem...cos' its difficult trying to leg it at speed with a housebrick and tripod attached to your person 😊 but its an ill wind etc, and my little detour took me directly to several Marshies nectaring their supper on Bluebells and even allowing for poor light I managed a few reasonably nice shots 😊



*Tripod and cable release was used to counter my natural camera shake!!!*



*The light levels were very iffy the D700/105lens did okay.*



*Nikon D700 coupled with Nikkor 105mm Micro lens*

Fortunately the reserve is close to my home, I can't say I intend lugging the Nikon kit around for a day at any location I might visit, I've been more than satisfied with the results obtained with the Lumix FZ150 and it's super light portability, I've recommended this bridge camera to loads of DSLR users in the field and although they seem skeptical I've met a few who have tried them and won't return to having one shoulder lower than the other (you can have therapy for that though 😊) here are a few images taken at the reserve earlier on in May with the FZ150, and their typical record shots from this fine Leica lensed camera.



*One of the Panasonic Lumix FZ150 record shots*



*Straight forward shot for FZ150 in lowish light*



*The FZ150 handled this Marshie/background shot okay*

On my return back along the path I noticed that Triton had led his harem to shelter under the trees out from the heavy showers (the wimp 🥺) and my path was now open without another wet detour, by now it was getting decidedly dark and the time was heading towards 9pm, a productive couple of hours methinks...no bull 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Willrow

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jun-14 08:26 PM GMT

Hi Bill, more great reports and photos 😊

All the photos in my diary are with my trusty FZ150, I absolutely agree about the usefulness of the screen, saves the knees a bit but also extremely useful for those high up shots at full stretch.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Willrow

by Maximus, 02-Jun-14 09:04 PM GMT

Great reports and photos in your last couple of posts Bill, lovely Wood White and Marsh Fritillary images. Both cameras have their plus points as your pictures illustrate, DLSR, heavy but gives superb image quality, but not great depth of field. Lumix gives portability, great image quality in good light and brilliant depth of field!

Mike

### Re: Willrow

by David M, 02-Jun-14 09:44 PM GMT

You are filling your boots with Marshies this year, Bill.

Nice images once again.

### Re: Willrow

by Lee Hurrell, 02-Jun-14 11:05 PM GMT

I love the first Marsh with the D700 and the last one with the FZ150, Bill. Brilliant!

Lee

### Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-14 11:43 PM GMT

Great shots Willrow 😊 I get a bit confused with all the Lumix numbers – is the FZ150 an older version of the FZ200 and a newer version of the FZ38, and do you need a special lens? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 03-Jun-14 08:04 AM GMT

Thanks so much Neil, Mike, David, Lee and Wurz, those are really nice comments 😊

### "Wurzel" wrote:

Great shots Willow 😊 I get a bit confused with all the Lumix numbers – is the FZ150 an older version of the FZ200 and a newer version of the FZ38, and do you need a special lens? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

The FZ150 was the model before the current FZ200, the FZ series has evolved in model sequences of fifty; FZ100, FZ150, FZ200 and the FZ250 cannot be too far off now, the FZ150 model is getting a bit dated now, but still a 'humdinger' among bridge camera's, probably down to the superb Leica Vario-Elmarit lens. The latest FZ200 has a f2.8 aperture throughout its range, making it probably unique amongst it's brand competing peers...so perhaps its time to start saving ready for a new FZ250 now Wurz 😊😊

Supplementary lenses are available by Panasonic, Raynox etc and there are many other brand alternatives for the FZ series, though I think the macro is more than good enough in camera without hard earned cash going on such extras – that's unless you enjoy playing with such bits and bobs 😊...its your call!!!

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-14 11:14 PM GMT

Cheers for the info Willow 😊 I'm still able to carry my Nikon without any problems but I like the sound of the FZ150 so I'll have to start saving for it once the house is renovated – mind you by then they'll have probably brought out the FZ950 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 04-Jun-14 12:40 PM GMT

### "Wurzel" wrote:

Cheers for the info Willow 😊 I'm still able to carry my Nikon without any problems but I like the sound of the FZ150 so I'll have to start saving for it once the house is renovated – mind you by then they'll have probably brought out the FZ950 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

😊😊 Love it...but yeah, we've got to get our priorities right Wurz 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willow

by MikeOxon, 04-Jun-14 03:27 PM GMT

### "Willrow" wrote:

The FZ150 handled this Marshie/background shot okay

I think that type of shot is where the compact/bridge cameras really come in to their own 😊 I've been finding that the depth of field offered by my FZ200 is far more often an advantage than a disadvantage, when compared with my DSLR.

On the other hand, the DSLR allows much more scope for adjusting exposure in post-processing, when I got it wrong in the first place 😊 or where extreme contrasts of light and shade are encountered.

You seem to be making the most of both cameras at present!

Mike

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 04-Jun-14 07:45 PM GMT

Thanks for the feedback Mike, like you I 'emigrated' from a Nikon D300 to the Panasonic Lumix FZ camera and find the simplicity of using it with a monopod and ballhead an ideal combination for butterflies/dragonflies etc, as I previously mentioned the vari-angle LCD is an absolute must, if my DSLR's had 'vari-angle' I'd be a mightily pleased user (I know Nikon now have a model available!) even allowing for the Nikon kits hefty weight. I even struggled with my Canon S95 pocket camera yesterday to get a good low level shot, I will probably not buy another digicam unless it has a 'vari-angle'...great invention 😊

Here is the image I finally managed to get with the Canon S95 – finally having to sit on the damp ground in the process 😊



*Taken with Canon S95 pocket camera at almost ground level and no 'vari-angle' LCD...*

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by Pauline, 05-Jun-14 09:34 PM GMT

It was definitely worth sitting on the damp ground Bill – nice crisp shot with a lovely composition 😊

## Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-14 12:03 PM GMT

Great shot Willrow 😊 I tend to find that the greater the personal discomfort the better the shot in the end, my wife is stunned how muddy, wet, bruised, stung, cut and torn I end up after a really good days butterflying 😊😊 Always worth it though 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 07-Jun-14 08:09 PM GMT

Thanks kindly Wurz 😊 ...'no pain no gain eh! 😊

And many thanks also Pauline 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

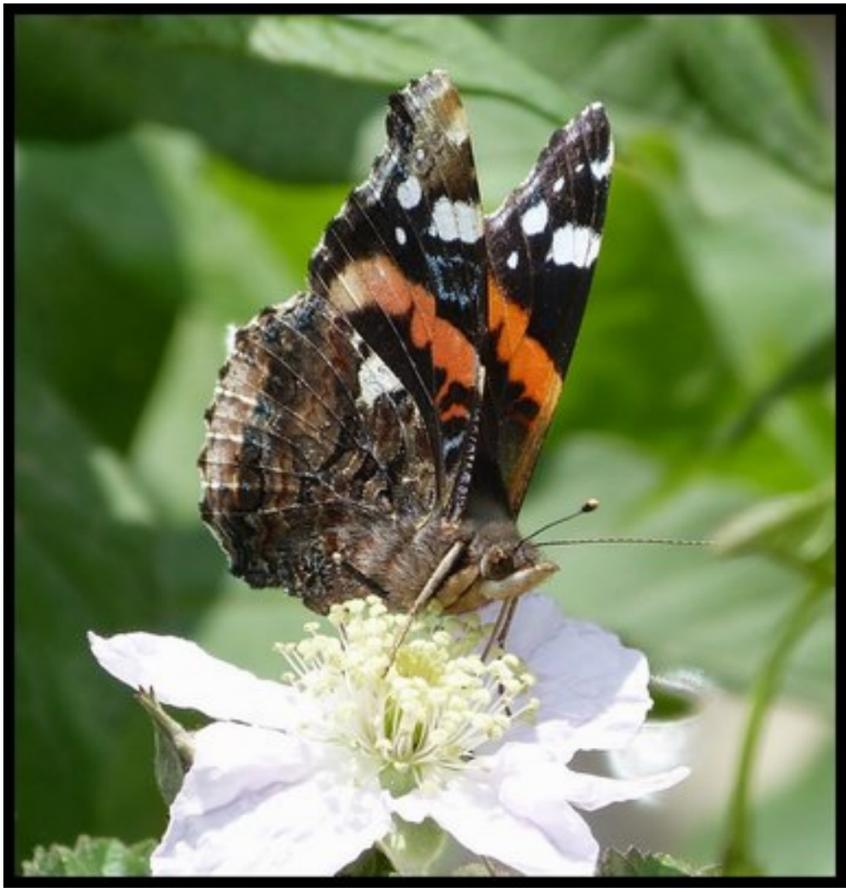
"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 07-Jun-14 09:29 PM GMT

What a busy week or so its been, I'm struggling to keep up with all that's going on, but today there were heavy showers across most of South Wales and so I've taken the time spent indoors to catch up a bit 🙄

Last Sunday I had a 'Dragonfly Day' on the beautiful **River Wye, near Monmouth** looking for Common Club-tail (their not common!) and White-legged Damselfly, on both counts I was successful and had healthy counts 😊 but I'm always aware to all the other things that Mother Nature has to offer and she was in generous mood – offering a nice fresh **Red Admiral** nectaring on bramble on the steep river bank, alas 🙄 as I put my foot forward to position myself for a better record shot of the insect it went into a hidden divot and I plunged forward towards the deep fast flowing river...phew!!! how I did'nt go headlong in I'll never know 🙄 and the Monmouth Ladies Rowing Club sailed past me giving wolf whistles (of derision 🙄 ) the sad people 😞 whatever, even in my flailing I got a couple of shots in...one of a butterfly and the other of the sky 😊



*Increasingly more uncommon the lovely Red Admiral*

Further along the bank I saw several larval webs belonging to **Peacock** and also a probable final instar of **Small Tortoiseshell** in the low bankside grasses and undeterred from my earlier near swim I manouvered to get a record photo... 😊



*Small Tortoiseshell Larvae*



One of several Peacock larval webs along the river bank

On my bank side journey I had counted several teneral Common Club-tail but I almost trod on one that must have been hardening off it's wings low in the grasses and appeared to be struggling to find a way out of the grassy tangle prior to flight, I vey gently moved the grasses and allowed it to settle onto my hand and waited until it decided to embark on it's maiden flight high into the air above the river, it always thrills me to see these first flights, another one of the few fortunate survivors from the egg stage, lets hope it goes on to maturity and produces it's own generation of Common Club-tail 😊



Common Club-tail being pointed in the right direction!!!

Further along the bank I came upon a Sawfly that has to rate among the true jewels of the species *Tenthredo scrophulariae* and this is one of many of it's tribe that produce larvae that can often confuse the new 'moth-er' that tries to identify it's discovered larvae 😊



Love them or loath them their stunning insects!

Back to the butterflies and I was pleased to discover **Comma** larvae low in the upright grass stems, I can't remember when I last saw this species larvae and as I bent low over the bank crouched forward to get a decent shot I once again heard the Monmouth Ladies Rowing Club's whistles as they rowed back down river...what a crew 😊



*Nice bonus Comma larvae...captured with wolf whistles!!!*

To end my day I headed for a lovely Gwent Wildlife Trust reserve called Dixon's Embankment which is sandwiched between the busy A40 (South Wales to Midlands) and the River Wye itself, people pass within metres of it and don't even know it's there...good thing or bad, I wonder 🤔 The reserve looked charming dressed in it's early summer clothes and many **Common Blue** danced among the flowers. I cannot recall seeing more Burnet Companion day-flying moths, but this meadow has always been a favourite, as it is for Mother Shipton.



*Simply stunning Common Blue*

And so ended another adventure, with the early June sunshine helping me enormously 😎

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by David M, 07-Jun-14 10:23 PM GMT

Great larval images, Bill. Seems like your near-supine moment produced dividends. 😊

## Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-14 11:29 PM GMT

Great report Willrow 😊 I love seeing Red Admiral shots where they've got their heads down for some serious nectaring 😊 I too appreciate the occasional rainy day to catch up, so long as we don't get too many...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willrow

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jun-14 09:37 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

Great report and photos, I can just picture you being harassed by the 'ladies' of the rowing club 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 08-Jun-14 03:17 PM GMT

David, Wurz and Neil...much appreciate your kind responses, cheers lads 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by Lee Hurrell, 09-Jun-14 10:51 PM GMT

Lovely reports and photos, Bill. The ladies rowing club seem like a rowdy bunch... 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 10-Jun-14 07:46 PM GMT

[Newport Wetlands NNR, Monmouthshire](#) yesterday provided much better weather than I anticipated on leaving home and the grey clouds slowly moved away leaving a pleasant day with the temperature hitting 23c by mid-afternoon 😊 yet it was a relatively quiet day butterflywise, with just ten species seen and of those **Large Skipper** came out top on numbers at a round dozen.



*Orange & lemon*

The reserve was built on the old fly-ash tipping area of the Uskmouth Power Station and has since been run jointly between Newport Borough Council and the RSPB, the image below shows the power station in the background.



*Newport Wetlands NNR with Uskmouth Power Station*

I can never resist checking among any orchids for something a little out of the usual and among the Bee Orchids I discovered a variant with almost white petals – appreciate anyone confirming an official name (perhaps Mike Oxon?) 😊 the photo was not easy to get owing to other orchids being disturbed if I wanted to improve my position and I don't do that, so apologies for image quality 😞



*Probably Bee Orchid Var. flavescens*

Leaving the orchids I grabbed a few photo's of Drinker (macro moth) larvae, I've got a personal quest to find the longest ever 😲😄 currently the longest I've seen is well over 80mm and the one you see here is approximately 75mm and that's at least 10mm more than what most of the fieldguides say they should be!!!



*Drinker larvae compared with 20mm coin*

The **Large Skipper** were their usual pugnacious selves and I watched the one shown below see off two harmless Five-spot Burnet that dared to enter it's air space, the poor Burnet's must have wondered what hit them and flew away with a few spots (and bumps!) added...poor critters 😞



*The typically aggressive skipper*

Not exactly great on the dragonfly side of things yesterday either with only a couple of flighty Emperor Dragonfly and three male Black-tailed Skimmers seen, the show was probably saved by very healthy numbers of Blue-tailed Damselfly that are mentioned as decreasing in numbers in the new BDS Atlas throughout their UK range so this is a positive for the species locally. Many of the Blue-tailed Damselfly were seen paired 😊😊



*One of many in-cop Blue-tailed Damselfly seen*

**Speckled Wood** were second in numbers seen with ten, not exactly great numbers considering the fact that I usually count them in considerably more numbers at this location, but what I did see were in lovely nick!!!



*Lovely fresh Speckly*

Finally the **Common Blue** and a solitary **Brown Argus** (Cheers Neil!) put in a belated appearance, surprisingly I saw more females than males of the former with the fairer sex winning out 5 to 4...which is not really fair at all 😊



*Male Brown Argus*

Other species seen were **Brimstone**, **Large White**, **Red Admiral**, **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Peacock** and **Small Heath**.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-14 08:39 PM GMT

Hi Bill,  
Great report (as always). However, you must recalculate your sex ratio – that's a male Brown Argus (last image).  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 10-Jun-14 09:23 PM GMT

Thank you Neil...I'm glad that you noticed my deliberate mistake 😊 .... 🤔😬 but if anyone had to find it I'm glad it was you 😊 it just could be the medication (mine that is)!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willow

by badgerbob, 10-Jun-14 09:41 PM GMT

Hi Bill. Love the Clubtail dragon. Still hoping to catch up with them one day. Your Bee Orchid looks like var. chlorantha. We get quite a few of this variety near Beachy Head at Eastbourne. Hope this helps.  
Bob.

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 10-Jun-14 10:02 PM GMT

Many thanks Bob for the confirmation, its much appreciated...you'll notice I had made a tentative ID stab at var. chlorantha on the image file comment....phew 😊 I'm glad I didn't make another 'deliberate mistake' today 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willow

by William, 11-Jun-14 07:31 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

Lovely shots Bill, I'd go with *Flavescens* for the Bee Orchid, the markings are more pronounced than those of *Chlorantha* which tend to appear smudged I think. Very jealous of that sighting – a rare thing indeed 😊

BWs,

William

## Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-14 09:36 AM GMT

Great report Willow, especially like the Brown Argus 😊 Oh to not be stuck at work 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 16-Jun-14 03:37 PM GMT

My apologies for the belated response gents.

### "William" wrote:

Lovely shots Bill, I'd go with *Flavescens* for the Bee Orchid, the markings are more pronounced than those of *Chlorantha* which tend to appear smudged I think. Very jealous of that sighting – a rare thing indeed

I've checked out your ID advice William, I'm delighted to find your *var.flavescens* recommendation looks pretty good to me 😊 I've always said I would never get into orchids, yet I can usually spot something out of the ordinary...and then never take the time to ID them properly 😞 I hope you don't think I'm being a rather lazy naturalist...and if you do your probably right 😊

Thanks also to Wurz and may you thoroughly enjoy your sparetime in the field 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 16-Jun-14 05:38 PM GMT

Another attempt to catch up with my Personal Diary takes me to [Aberbargoed Grasslands NNR, Monmouthshire \(Gwent\)](#) where a peak count of the **Marsh Fritillary** hit well over 400, this is most encouraging and the only real downside this year has been irresponsible photographers destroying patches of habitat while lying down and probably rolling around to obtain the 'must have' image 😞 Still onto more positive news, as well as the Marshies the **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** have also been evident in reasonably good numbers, the Meadow Thistle being their equivalent of the local pub 😊



*Don't fresh bracken and Marshies go well together...*



*Marshy on Bluebell, what a pair!*

It's a nice bonus to see **Marsh & Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** in close proximity to one another and I have sat watching them go about their business on late afternoons over the past couple of weeks and they never cease to entertain me 😊 just what is it about our butterflies that induces such a state of peace and wellbeing...is there a better way to relax away from life's stresses 😊



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary*

During my searches on the perimeter areas of the core Marshy pasture I came upon only the second recent Monmouthshire record of *Anania funebris* or the White-spotted Sable to give it its more recent generic name, last year the reserve also produced the first recent record after many years absence from the county, again courtesy of yours truly with the help of a couple of other **UK Butterflyer's** – Rosalyn (whose a Real Superstar) and PhilB 😊



*The lovely little micro moth Anania funebris*

The Heath-spotted Orchid are to be seen in excellent numbers and among the many hundreds I saw just a single completely unmarked white one (variant alba).



*Just the one white orchid was seen...*



*Marsh Fritillary on Meadow Thistle*

**Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** are either hyper-active or nectaring, there just does not seem to be an in-between, but if they do calm down a bit chances are you can get a decent photo or two, below you can see some examples.



Nicely posed S P-b Fritillary



Calm for a while!!!

Many of the **Marsh Fritillary** are past their best now but there are still some fresh ones for the keen observer to find, and for anyone wanting to see this beautiful and interesting species on traditional unspoiled habitat (at least that's how it should be 🙄) then its still not too late to enjoy a visit to this super reserve 😊



Marsh Fritillary settling down,,,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

**Re: Willow**

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-14 10:30 PM GMT

Cracking report and images Willow 😊 I find that when I'm out butterflying I can just forget everything, I become engrossed and can feel the endorphins flowing 😊 It's almost like doing meditative yoga, especially getting the shot lined up. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Willow

by Maximus, 17-Jun-14 12:49 AM GMT

Nice shots Bill, especially the Marsh Fritillary on the Bluebells, lovely photo 😊

Mike

### Re: Willow

by Willow, 17-Jun-14 10:42 PM GMT

Thanks kindly Wurz and Mike, your comments are always very appreciated, my apologies if I don't always reciprocate with your own excellent reports 😊 where does Summer time go 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Willow

by Willow, 18-Jun-14 05:47 PM GMT

Spent a day at one of my local patches [Parc Penallta, Near Ystrad Mynach, Glamorgan](#) last Wednesday (11th) primarily to check out 'my' Chimney Sweeper colony, pleased to report their doing okay, this is a very local macro moth in South Wales and those I saw all looked mint fresh and I noticed one still had a bit of a curl to it's wing-tip.



*Chimney Sweeper*

The female **Common Blue** are I believe for some reason looking rather extra blue this year or is it my imagination?



*Female Common Blue – extra blue???*

There was certainly no shortage of coupled Common Blue, last year saw them in much healthier numbers than in some recent years and lets hope this trend continues for this beautiful species 😊



*In-cop Common Blue – love worn!!!*

During my search along a mature path I came across a lovely Buff-tip macro moth, I've had many come to light, seeing them out in daylight on bracken though is a real delight, what a fascinating species this is, a broken twig perhaps 🤔



*Superb Buff-tip*

The local Caerphilly County Borough Council office staff must have one of the finest working views in the country; looking down on what was until some years ago habitat that held a small colony of **Marsh Fritillary** – I've suggested many times that a scheme is created to re-introduce them – but finances are tight and prevent it at present 😞



*What a view for the 600+ council staff to enjoy!!!*



*The underrated Meadow Brown*



*Another underrated species Dingy Skipper*

The two species above might not be exactly colourful yet both have that certain something about them, the **Dingy Skipper** is usually very obliging when it comes to having it's photo taken 😊 but the **Meadow Brown** usually shuts up shop 😞 a very aware species.

My good fortune with the macro moths continued when I noticed a Shears nectaring, you can see where it got it's name from by studying the photo below.



*Note the scissors pattern on mid-wing*

I'm still seeing good numbers of **Brimstone** wherever there are flowers to suit it's palate, then it can be watched at ease, some are showing signs of wear and tear...a tough life 😞



*Brimstone on clover*

My day ended almost as it began with **Common Blue** and I noticed a feisty male with a not fully formed wing 😞 it's misfortune still didn't deter it from either quick flight or territory defence and I spent an age admiring it's pluck 😊😊



*Deformed wing but still quite capable of quick flight*

Another 'love-match' in the making with a pair of **Common Blue** seen courting as I headed back to the car...and hey!...I'm actually starting to catch up with my Personal Diary dear people 😊



*Another pair of Common Blue heading for matrimony!!!*

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Willrow

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jun-14 08:57 PM GMT

Cracking reports and photos Bill, looks like some great sites around your area.

Its not your imagination, there does seem to be an uncommon number of blue female Common Blues around this year 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-14 09:58 PM GMT

Cracking shots and report Willrow – especially like the Shears as I've not seen one of those before 😊🇬🇧 Your very blue Common Blue is very blue indeed – you could almost mistake it for the Irish form. 😲

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Willrow

by millerd, 18-Jun-14 10:03 PM GMT

Those are **very** blue females, Bill. Lovely photos of something equal to any blue butterfly in my book. 😊

Dave

### Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 21-Jun-14 08:10 PM GMT

Thanks lads, nice comments 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 22-Jun-14 10:04 PM GMT

My adventures moved on to **Haddon Hill, Exmoor** on Thursday the 12th, to spend some time with **Heath Fritillary** which I had failed to find a couple of weeks earlier at Bincombe, believing that their emergence in Cornwall would also herald their emergence on Exmoor...mistake 😊 but on this visit I

knew they were out 😊 The view from the car park is a very pleasant one and a few Exmoor ponies very obligingly grazed away unconcerned as I took a photo of the view presented behind them.



*Exmoor Ponies*

Twenty minutes walk from the car park and I had located my search area and the warm morning sun had helped me find my first butterflies of the day **Green Hairstreak** which appeared in excellent condition and a couple posed nicely for some images – not for long though because a 'turf war' was going on and the males were acting very 'macho' 😊



*One of the 'mobster' Green Hairstreak!!!*

My first couple of **Heath Fritillary** were soon found as they busily moved through the bilbury and bramble, they frequently paused to take on bramble flower 'fuel' before continuing on their busy way. I do like this species and there's also something special about this lovey habitat that suits them so well 😊

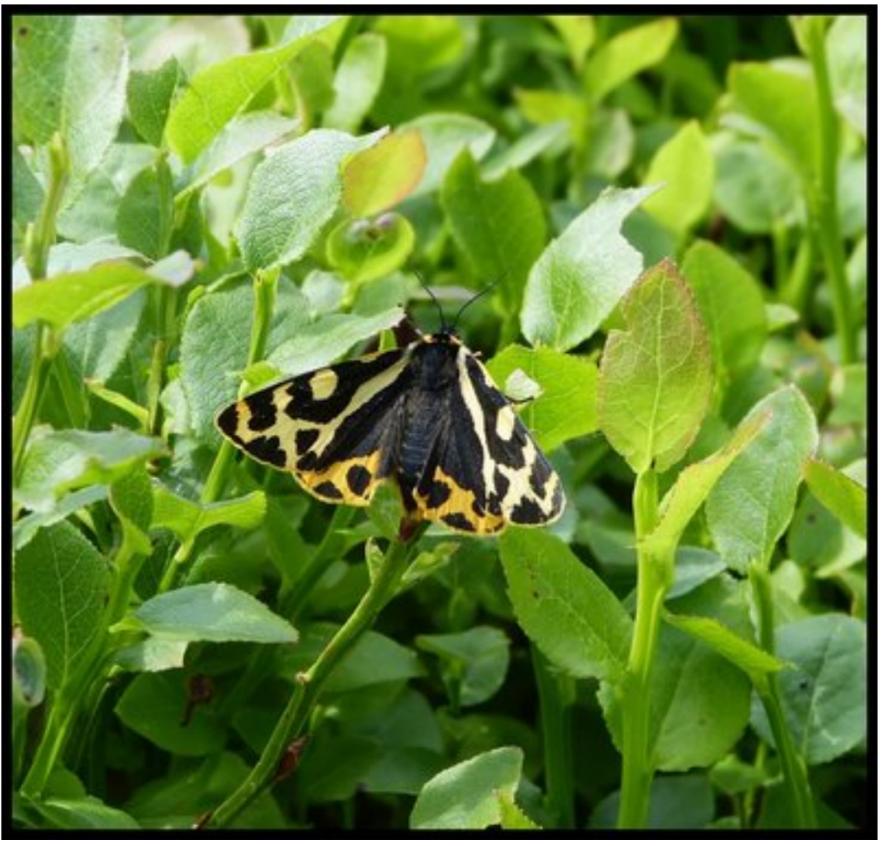


*Open winged pose from Heath Fritillary...*



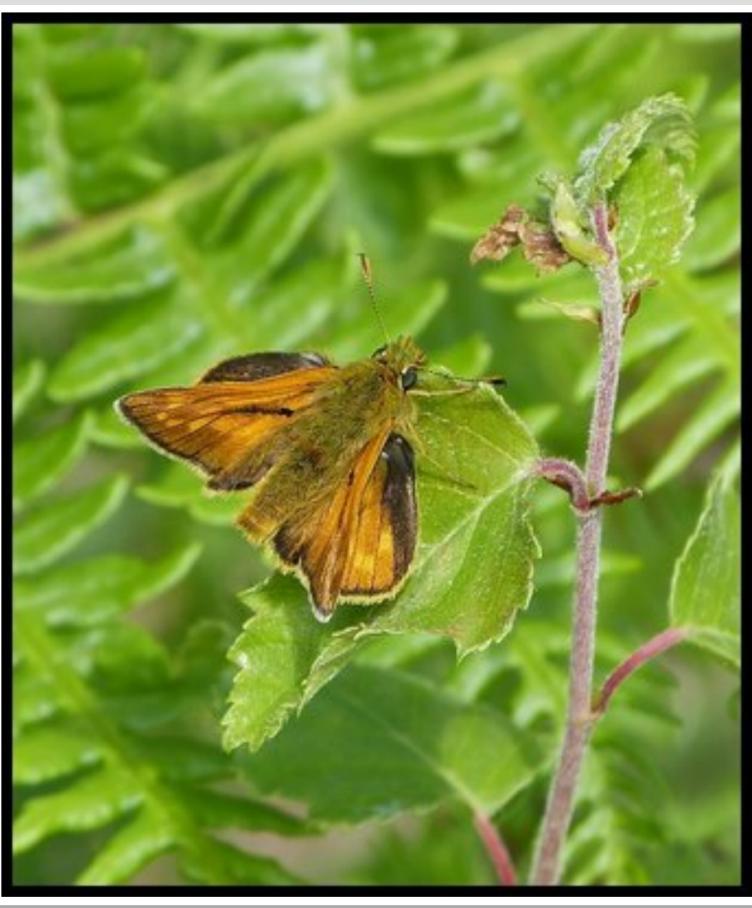
*Classic Heath Fritillary pose*

Among the bilbury as I searched for the HF I disturbed a species of macro moth that has long evaded me – Wood Tiger – this is a significant species record for me because it means I have now finally managed to see all of our British tiger species and this was my bonus for the day 😊



*My final British tiger moth...found!!!*

Few habitats are devoid of **Large Skipper** or so it seems and whenever they take time out from scrapping they provide lovely image opportunities especially before they get themselves beat up...and now its sounding as if I'm describing Exmoor as being akin to downtown Chigago in the 1920's... 😊



*Male Large Skipper*

I must have seen well over a dozen **Green Hairstreak** in an area about the size of two tennis courts and most of them were in fine fettle, the species seem to have had an exceptionally good year, perhaps the best I can remember 😊



*One more lovely Green Hairstreak poses on fresh bracken*

I left Haddon Hill just after lunch, during my visit I saw probably 18 to 20 **Heath Fritillary** and I can categorically state here that compared to Bincombe...Haddon is a real dawdle 😏

On my journey home I decided on a diversion to visit **Collard Hill** in a vain yet hopeful attempt to see the years first **Large Blue** but I knew I was being overly optimistic because last year they didn't appear until the 14th (which by coincidence they also did this year!) and apart from the wonderful setting the hill was rather quiet.



*New info board Collard Hill*

My visit wasn't without its interest though because I did come across a **Painted Lady** that was pretending to be a **Grayling** and to be rude about her she was hardly painted up at all, a drab worn example of the species 😞



*Pretending to be a Grayling...*

My 'bonus' species for Collard was a Thistle Ermine micro moth, this can appear to be more like a macro moth especially when seen in flight and is rather typical of the difficulties presented to beginners in differentiating correctly between the macro and micro moths...so just stick to butterflies 😊😄



*The stunning Thistle Ermine*

After spending sometime in quiet contemplation on the hill, I reluctantly left the splendid view behind and strolled back to my car, in the lovely flower meadow along the footpath I saw just a solitary Greater Butterfly Orchid in an area I usually see several and so I ended my visit with a snap of this beautiful flower and then headed back home, a full day behind me...much enjoyed 😊



*Greater Butterfly Orchid*

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-14 10:36 PM GMT

I read with relish about the Heath Frits at Haddon 🍷 as I have been targeting them for the last couple of years but they're just that little bit too far 😞 Mind you next year I have offered to take my wife away for the weekend...to Exmoor 😄 The Greenstreaks look in good fettle for this time of the year and the Wood Tiger is a great looking species 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 26-Jun-14 09:09 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Mind you next year I have offered to take my wife away for the weekend...to Exmoor 😄

I'm sure your missus' will be delighted to go with you on a **Heath Fritillary** hol Wurz...what more come a woman possibly ask 😄😄

Thank you for the nice report response 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willow

by CJB, 26-Jun-14 10:22 AM GMT

Hi Willow,

Great pictures of the Heaths, which is one I am yet to see! 🍷

It will take a rebooting of my WMS (Wife Management System) before I can head to Exmoor!

Flutter on!

CJB

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 26-Jun-14 01:03 PM GMT

Super summer weather during the early emergence period for the much threatened **High Brown Fritillary** saw me venturing to the **Alun Valley, Near Bridgend** and its always a great pleasure to return to this relatively unspoilt location that has defied the odds and still retains healthy populations of not just **HBF** but also **Dark Green & Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. There are several reasons why the **HBF** have survived at this location beyond essential habitat requirements; much of the site is on private land, it's secluded and has hard to access terrain, another reason is the **superb** work done by Richard Smith and the hard-working volunteers of **Butterfly Conservation** 😊

Although much of the Alun Valley is privately owned, butterfly enthusiasts that understandably wish to see this rare and threatened butterfly can do so by visiting the publically accessible **Old Castle Down, Near Ewenny (Grid Ref SS903 760)** where it can be found along the tree line among bracken, scrub and bramble, this area is also relatively comfortable from a searchers point of view compared to the rough and tough terrain of the Alun Valley.

Below I have included two habitat photo's of the same area, one from last year the other from this year, I firmly believe that habitat management should include annual record imagery to refer to over time, one photo is worth a thousand words and by comparison you can often see what you got right and what went wrong 😞 the digital era has been an immense advantage to the record keeper.



*HBF habitat late June 2013*



*Same HBF habitat late June this year*

When the weather is hot both near relatives **HBF & DGF** are positively hyper with males of both species hunting out females, the males of the former species seemed to check out any pathway cut through bracken that the habitat management had provided, the scent of females was obviously much stronger down low and I eventually saw at least a half dozen **High Brown Fritillary** in-cop and took just one photograph as a record rather than disturb any future generation production 😊



*High Brown paired on a bed of petals!!!*

It always proves difficult to count these similar species in flight, their seriously powerful flyers only rivalled by the larger **Silver-washed Fritillary** so its easier to count an aggregate of both and on this occasion at least 60 were on the wing and showed no sign of ceasing their relentless activity 😬😬



*Dark Green Fritillary on Marsh Thistle*



*High Brown Fritillary at rest...at last!!!*

Apart from the **HBF & DGF** there were also several **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** out and about and also many **Large Skipper** seen 'sun-bathing' on the bracken, how can anyone possibly resist photographing these overlooked little butterflies 😊 and there appear to be lots more females about now.



*Female Large Skipper*

As I left the site I noticed a single Bee Orchid tucked away on the side of the track, luckily it had managed to avoid any clumsy feet 😊 😊



*One lucky Bee Orchid!!!*

I can never spend too much time in the Alun Valley and feel very fortunate to have it near enough to home to pay regular visits, I shall return in the next week or so, I'm constantly adding more to my understanding of these beautiful fritillaries 😊 but only time spent will allow that.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-14 02:29 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Willrow – those HBFs look lush 🍷 Do they show a penchant for any source of nectar in particular as DGFs always seem to go for Knapweed?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 26-Jun-14 07:35 PM GMT

"CJB" wrote:

Great pictures of the Heaths, which is one I am yet to see! 🍷

Many thanks CJB, not so far from Gloucestershire for a visit to Haddon Hill, and thoroughly recommended 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

Fantastic stuff Willrow – those HBFs look lush 🍷 Do they show a penchant for any source of nectar in particular as DGFs always seem to go for Knapweed?

Thank you Wurzel 😊 Marsh Thistle is the favoured 'purple' food plant of DGF, but most bramble flowers are acceptable to HBF...we like to spoil em! 😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Willrow

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jun-14 08:29 PM GMT

Great reports and photos Bill 😊

I stopped off at Haddon Hill last year on my way to a few days in the Heddon Valley, much easier than Bin Combe 🤪 which I also visited whilst down that way. Your photos are stirring memories and already putting thoughts into my head for next year 😊

Saw loads of HBF and DGF in the Heddon Valley and noticed that whilst both species would use both Meadow Thistle and Bramble flowers, the DGFs were mostly on the Thistles whereas the HBFs seemed to prefer the brambles.

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Willrow

by millerd, 26-Jun-14 09:52 PM GMT

Lovely series of reports and photos, Bill. That Painted Lady at Collard looks very much like the one I saw there on 15th. My (limited) observations of HBF and DGF at Arnside agree with Neil's thoughts: the former prefer brambles, the latter prefer purple flowers. I use it when I'm up there as a first guess for which they are!

Dave

## Re: Willrow

by David M, 26-Jun-14 10:24 PM GMT

As you know, Bill, I'm very familiar with that Alun Valley landscape and what strikes me is how much more 'lush' it looks this year, no doubt due to the wet winter/spring this year. The stream that bisects this site was dry this time last year, but it is flowing freely right now and the water table is clearly much higher than in 2013, which would explain the preponderance of water-loving umbellifers in the flat part of the meadow behind the tree cover in your images.

It'll be interesting to see how this affects the numbers of Fritillaries in the lowest part of this site. My guess is that with fewer marsh thistles they might be less numerous in this particular spot but to counter this, the 'greener' vegetation on the Down itself may afford the larvae from this year's generation an increased chance of survival.

Every year throws up surprises and I'm looking forward to at least half a dozen visits over the next 6 weeks to 'take stock' of what's happening.

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 26-Jun-14 10:27 PM GMT

### "nfreem" wrote:

Your photos are stirring memories and already putting thoughts into my head for next year 😊

Go for it Neil, you can never start planning a butterflying adventure too early...and thanks for your response 😊

### "millerd" wrote:

My (limited) observations of HBF and DGF at Arnside agree with Neil's thoughts: the former prefer brambles, the latter prefer purple flowers

These are greedy unfussy Welsh Frits Dave...they will accept anything on offer 😊 thank you for your input.

Regards to you both,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by David M, 26-Jun-14 10:32 PM GMT

Absolutely have to agree with Neil. It's rare to see DGFs on bramble but HBFs seem to love it.

That said, neither can resist marsh thistles, although from my observations these two frits' preferences are rather like those of Meadow Brown and Ringlet – DGFs are 'open space' butterflies whereas High Browns tend to favour areas where there is a bit of 'cover'.

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 27-Jun-14 10:35 AM GMT

### "David M" wrote:

It's rare to see DGFs on bramble but HBFs seem to love it

Thanks for your learned input David – as you well know we give both species plenty of choice in the Alun Valley 😊 but yes, your probably right, having said that the bramble flower is in absolute profusion at the site this year and both species were observed nectaring on it frequently during my last visit a week ago. Interestingly I measured a Marsh Thistle against my monopod – it was well in excess of 7'6" 😲 and I also counted thirteen plants of the *Cirsium palustre* v.alba (white) in a small area where both species were very active, I watched for around twenty minutes to see if either species showed interest in nectaring these white flowers, none did 😞 If you go there David do spend time checking for such nectaring and let me know if you observe anything, such small points always fascinate me 😊😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 27-Jun-14 01:25 PM GMT

Its a wet rainy morning here in South Wales and so I'm going to take the opportunity to try and catch up with another instalment of my Personal Diary, this time we head back over the border to Bernwood M50 Compensation Area, Oxfordshire I say we because David M was my companion for the day and it was nice to accept his kind offer to do the driving on this occasion, as indeed he did to the same location last year...thanks David 😊

It took two and a half hours to our destination, here we were met by Cate Barrow a very accomplished photographer and fellow butterfly enthusiast who longed to see the iconic **Black Hairstreak** for the first time, Cate was not to be disappointed and during our time searching among the Blackthorn and flowering Wild Privet we saw at least 25. Happily Cate had one individual within three feet to photograph and despite her efforts to let us know about her find her shouts were unheard by both David and myself on the other side of the Wild Privet owing to the constant roar of traffic not many metres behind us on the M50. It was not too long though and we also had a few 'record only' shots on our memory cards 😊



*One of the 25 Compensation Area Black Hairstreak seen*



*Black Hairstreak*

For me the **Black Hairstreak** is the toughest butterfly species of all to study or get a good photograph of, they cause neckache 😞 and much frustration for us poor butterflyers 😞 but hey! their lovely little critters well worth all the suffering ain't they 😊

During our searches we came across several freshly emerged **Marbled White** and also **Ringlet** and these grassland and meadow lovers certainly added extra charm to the surroundings, we took time away from the **BH** to get some nice photographs...we know that mid-summer is with us once these lovely butterflies are on the wing 😊



*We saw many fresh Marbled White*



*Ringlet in open wing pose...*

How can anyone resist a fresh open winged **Marbled White** I ask, the contrasting black (really deep brown?) on white is just stunning, they really are one of my favourite butterflies!!!



*Open winged...inviting a photographer!!!*

The weather was mainly overcast, gray and leaden during the six or so hours we spent at the Compensation with only brief episodes of sunny intervals to bring the **Black Hairstreak** within view, and this bit of sunshine only occurred from around 3.30pm in spite of the Met Office forecasting better much earlier in the day 😞 still you have to get on with it 😊 and in **Part 2** of this Oxfordshire saga I will tell you about what happened when I returned four days later...on 'unfinished business'...and I'll bet you simply can't wait 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-14 11:25 PM GMT

Looking forward to part 2 Willrow 😊 I'd settle for a few of those record shots as that's a species I've yet to catch up with 🍷 - so many butterflies , so little time 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 03-Jul-14 03:32 PM GMT

**Oxfordshire Saga - Part2** Unfinished business saw me once again heading back to Oxfordshire four days after my last visit to the **Bernwood M50 Compensation** area with David M, but this time my first port of call was to **Whitecross Green Wood** where I was met with grey leaden skies with the threat of rain in the air 😊 I knew it would be a hard task to locate **Black Hairstreak** even in the preferred pond 'hot-spot' in these unfavourable conditions and the only sighting I got during the morning was at the back of the Blackthorn and then only very briefly, so rather than waste precious time at WGW I decided to have an early lunch and dedicate the rest of my day to the Compensation area, however, I was not going to neglect the chance of enjoying the freshly emerged **Marbled White** before leaving WGW 😊



*Whitecross Green Woods info board*



*Communication*



*Beautiful side on MW pose*

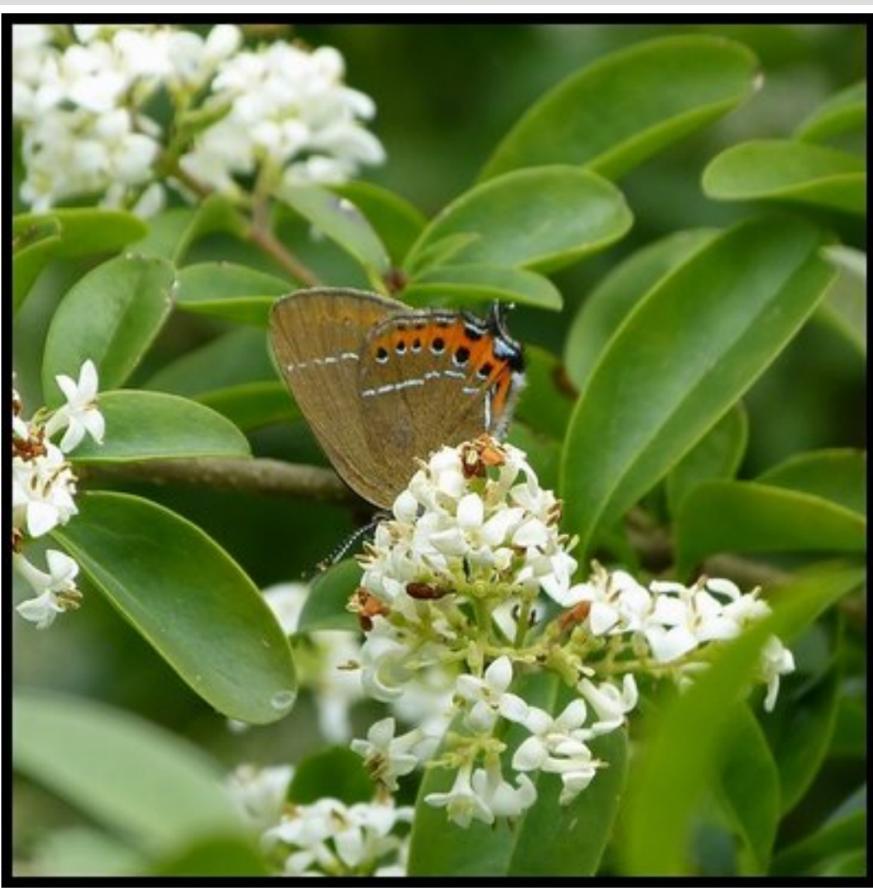
And so with the lovely MW left behind I headed up the road a few miles to the '**Compensation**' and on leaving the car for the trek down the ride to the **Black Hairstreak** location it started to rain 🙄😓 luckily not too heavy or for too long, just enough to soak the grass and foliage surrounding the thickets of Blackthorn I needed to search...bah!..but, at least the sun was now making a weak attempt to smile on me and the first BH started to descend onto the Wild Privet, and a fair chance of some photographs 😊



*One of the 'Compensation' Black Hairstreak*



*BH on Wild Privet*



My approximate count of **Black Hairstreak** during the afternoon was 15 or so which was considerably lower than the previous Sunday's tally of 25, however, considering the adverse weather conditions I was not too disappointed and I concluded my 2014 BH sessions quite contented 😊 This is a fascinating species well worth the time and expense of travel to study.

I made the trek back to my car a leisurely one and was rewarded with a fine looking immature male Black-tailed Skimmer and several feuding male Broad-bodied Chaser's some of the latter showing the effects of battle 😬



*Immature male Black-tailed Skimmer*



*Male Broad-bodied Chaser esting between aerial spats*

Oh! and just before closing Part Two of the **Oxfordshire Saga** I've gotta say thanks to Wurz for responding to the first part... 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-14 11:03 PM GMT

No worries Willrow – the second part was a great read with great shots too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 04-Jul-14 10:03 AM GMT

Cheers Wurz 😊 appreciate your positive response, and that you take timeout to make the effort 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Willrow

by CJB, 04-Jul-14 10:51 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

Two great reports and a definite target species for me next year as I suspect that they are doe for this season. 😞

I am yet to get stuck into the chasers and dragonflies but will do so once I have completed my hair brain mission to photograph all the UK species on my mobile! I am now up to 45 species with some 'easy ones' to go, but also the likes of the chequered skipper and other Scottish specialities. That said, if Scotland gains its independence it will make my task easier! 😊

I am hoping to get a DGF this weekend if the weather permits.

Flutter on!

CJB

### Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 04-Jul-14 12:56 PM GMT

My apologies if I include my most recent adventure with butterflies before I manage to actually catch up (sort through images etc) and include some earlier adventures...if you get my drift 😊😊

[Fermyn Woods, Northamptonshire](#) At the crack of dawn (3.45am 😲) on Wednesday – I awoke in excited anticipation for my day with **Purple Emperor** at the afore mentioned location. Leaving home at precisely 5am I had a relatively stressfree 170 mile journey arriving at Fermyn before 8am, I had arranged to meet a couple of real 'butterflying superstars 😊' here at 8.30am so I casually sipped a cup of coffee and happily crunched a Kit Kat as I awaited Phil B and Rosalyn, who need no introduction to regulars here on **UK Butterflies** – however Phil & Ros had already arrived and text me to say roughly where they were in this huge wood...now usually my mobile phone vibrates (oh! the thrill 😊) to inform of incoming text messages, but I missed it 😞 I did however have the presence of mind to check my messages and saw the text around 8.30 and so I was off down the ride like a good un' 😊

Fifteen minutes into my journey down the ride I hit a fork...could not for the life of me remember which way we went last year, to the left or to the right...decision or dither...decision to the right...and I was right...and you thought I was wrong, didn't you ? 😊 but there waving me forward on my belated arrival was Phil & Ros and the start of a great sunny morning with a great woodland butterfly – His Imperial Majesty – the iconic **Purple Emperor** and what a morning it was, Phil's 'hot-spot' produced a spectacle of at least ten individual insects, many posing totally unconcerned as they enjoyed Phil's 'top secret nectaring concoction' from the surrounding foliage...but Ros told me it was actually only a mixture of Lucozade and other 'special' ingredients, but next year they will be in full production and selling it to innocent and naive **PE** seekers at Fermyn for around 20 guineas a bottle (plastic at that!)... 😲😲 the cads!!! I heard Phil whisper to Ros that this time next year they would be millionaires 😲😊

I was honoured by HIM selecting my boot to savour and we watched amused as he probed with that incredible tongue for well over five minutes allowing both myself and the others present to take a variety of shots such as those shown below 😊 what exactly it was that he was savouring is a mystery, but footwear can offer much I suppose 😊



*A brief flash of imperial purple was shown to HIM's audience*



*Side pose from PE is equally stunning*

We were joined by Mark (Essex Buzzard) and Esther – both are fellow **UK Butterflies** members – it was a pleasure to meet this lovely couple, its always good to share such memorable moments with other **Purple Emperor** people 😊



*Mark (Essex Buzzard) seen here with Esther using her mobile phone camera on PE with success!*

While Esther seemed to get some very nice images on her Samsung mobile phone Rosalyn was busy using her vintage Kodak 126 (circa 1950/60s? !!!)





*Rosalyn down on her knees paying homage to HIM (note the Kodak!!!)*

Good fortune (and Phil's concoction 🤪) brought a lovely conditioned specimen onto nearby foliage and we all took the opportunity to get some reasonably good images, these shots are always far more welcome and natural looking than the more usual on path or heaven forbid on dogs c\*\*p, that's not to say that HIM doesn't flash his purple superbly on ground cos' he does and when he did we all took advantage 😊



*The bonus of a dark background*



*Purple Emperor – classic side on pose, what an insect!!!*



*Another half side purple flash*

After mid-day the sunshine disappeared and so we reluctantly moved on hoping to perhaps see **White-letter and/or Purple Hairstreak** near one of the infrequently found Wych Elm, we located several flitting individuals of the former species high above the ash tree that towered over the elm, patience paid off to some extent when the **W-I H** descended onto the elm albeit at a height and position that made photography very difficult, the best record shot I could get is included below. Regards the **Purple Hairstreak** one did briefly come down from it's oakey domain but try as I would I failed to get a view and only saw it's blurred flight exit back to whence it came...inconsiderate critter 😞



*Distant view and record shot of White-letter Hairstreak taken at 600mm on Panasonic Lumix FZ150*

Our visit to Fermyn was coming to a close and I said my farewells and thanks to Phil & Ros for their delightful and knowledgeable company, I had a cup of luke warm coffee and a Kit Kat at the car 😊 before spending the last hour along one of the rides, I was rewarded with a beautiful Large Emerald and several micro moths. I hit the road home at just gone 6pm...fantastic day had 😊😊



*Wonderful ephemeral Large Emerald was my late reward before heading home!!!*

PS. Just received a rather suspicious looking email asking if I'd like to take out a share in the **Purple Emperor Seekers Perfume Company**...wonder where thats from 😊😊😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by David M, 04-Jul-14 01:20 PM GMT

Excellent and amusing reportage there, Bill.

You certainly did far better than I did at Bentley Wood on the same day – just one brief grounding and fly-by 😞

Fermyn is **definitely** on my radar for 2015; I'm afraid it'll be too late when I get back from France a week on Sunday.

## Re: Willrow

by Katrina, 04-Jul-14 01:50 PM GMT

Top class photos – on boots and leaves in one day!! 😊

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 04-Jul-14 08:51 PM GMT

Your kindness itself CJB, David and Katrina, many thanks for your responses 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by Pauline, 04-Jul-14 09:02 PM GMT

Fantastic and funny report Bill. Sounds like you all had a great day and I just love the shots with the black background. Perhaps I should put it on my agenda for 2015 😊

## Re: Willrow

by Rosalyn, 04-Jul-14 09:58 PM GMT

I have just developed the pics from the Kodak in my dark room in the attic 😊



You must be a little deaf Bill, Phil and I were talking about the million Hares in the field. Didn't you see them? Of course if you reveal all our secrets .... Have arrow 😡 . Was a fab day in good company, shame I missed out on the fungi but I'm planning on rising early Sunday hoping they will be there again

## Re: Willrow

by essexbuzzard, 04-Jul-14 10:42 PM GMT

Great to meet you at last, Bill – spending most of the day in you, Phil and Rosalyn was most enjoyable. Some fantastic images you have there, too. Mine are

not quite as good,so it looks as if i need to up my game!

A super day out. Perhaps you can tempt David to come with you next year...

## Re: Willrow

by Maximus, 05-Jul-14 07:29 PM GMT

Brilliant images Bill, you really hit the jackpot, especially the shot with the dark background 😊

Mike

## Re: Willrow

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jul-14 08:47 PM GMT

Great report from Fermyn Bill, very entertaining and cracking photos too 😊

Looks like I will be missing out on Fermyn this year despite only being a 90 minute drive away, returned from a family holiday at Weymouth today and back to work next week so the best will be over before I will have a chance to go.

Never mind, can't be everywhere, I have been the past three years and no doubt will make it next year.

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 05-Jul-14 08:56 PM GMT

**Pauline** thank you for the nice response, especially appreciated 😊

**Rosalyn** Me deaf 🙄 ...whadda ya say 😂 Lovely Kodak shot!!! (Regarding the Fungi; I believe that could have come from a commercially grown spoor...check out the farm heap on the right hand side cereal field 😊).

**Mark (Essex Buzzard)** your probably being modest about your images 😊 Was great to meet you.

**Mike (Maximus)** its always good to have some pleasing records from a great day out 😊 thanks for responding so positively.

Regards to you all,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-14 10:43 PM GMT

Brilliant report Willrow it really captured the festive atmosphere searching for His Nibbs brings and stunning shots to boot. 😊🎁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 06-Jul-14 11:34 AM GMT

**Neil** thanks for the response. As you mention you can always pencil in a 'Fermyn Day' for 2015...just don't get too rusty 😊😂

**Wurz** you might have already visited Fermyn, but if not a real treat awaits when you do...it's **Purple Emperor Mecca** 😊

Kind regards to you both.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

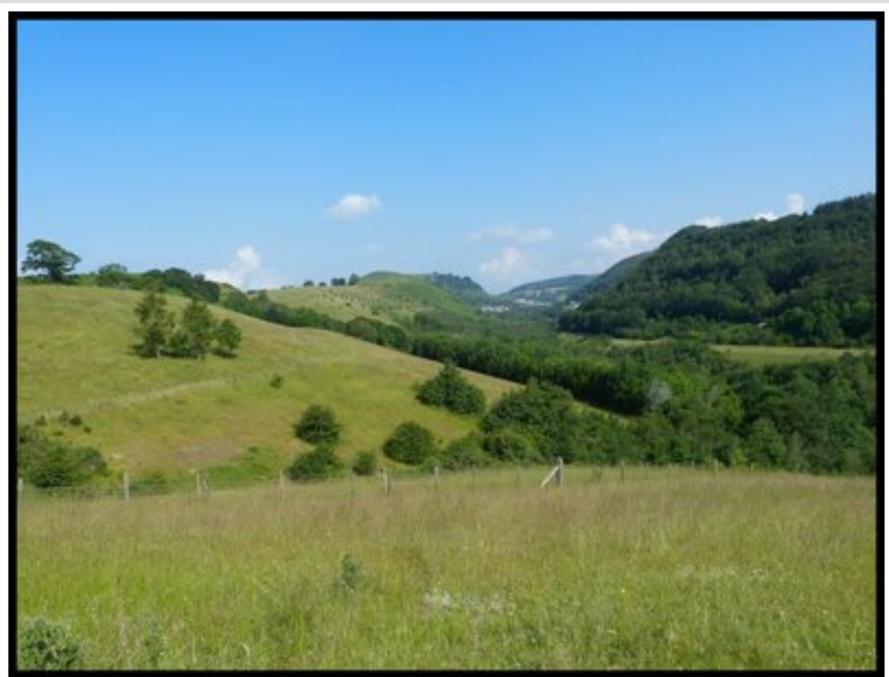
by Willrow, 06-Jul-14 01:17 PM GMT

Retrospective posting that outlines two 'adventures' I undertook during the last week of June ➡

**Parc Cwm Darran, Near Bargoed, Glamorgan** I needed to check out my **Marbled White** colonies in this local – area close to home, I've watched with much interest as the two distinct 'meta-populations' have boomed and bust (almost), on this visit I saw just a single butterfly in the upper colony and just two in the lower one, I'm not unduly concerned just yet as **MW** in this part of the country are usually a week or so behind other parts of the UK...I will return 😊

Among the species seen were a dozen or so **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** which I simply enjoyed without attempting to get photographs, the same

certainly didn't apply to **Dark Green Fritillary** (although I did enjoy!) and I just could not resist a nice 'bracken posed' specimen and no excuses cos' for some reason I just love butterflies on fresh bracken 😊



*The view towards Parc Cwm Darran*



*Dark Green Fritillary on bracken*



*Another take on the same DGF image...better?*

**Small Tortoiseshell** seem to have built up their numbers over recent weeks, I was not seeing them earlier on in the season in the numbers hoped for – I saw at least a dozen during the morning.



As a dragonfly enthusiast (as well as butterflies 🤩😊) I'm fortunate to live in real Golden-ringed Dragonfly territory and its very rare for me not to see one at this time of year during my local jaunts, below is a cropped head-study of a prime conditioned male that introduced itself as I was 'fritting' 😊



*Head study of male Golden-ringed Dragonfly*

The following day (June 24th) I took David M's advice...cheers 😊 and headed over the Severn to visit [Lower Woods, Near Wickwar, Gloucestershire](#) and this years first **White Admiral & Silver-washed Fritillary** sightings – only problem was the heat 🤩😊 it was stifling in the woodland and the S-w F in particular were manic with what must have been at least 200+ on the wing and little or no respite for any decent image taking.



*Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust – Lower Woods Nature Reserve*

The **Silver-washed Fritillary** shown below was about the only half chance I got of a record capture...not too good either 😊

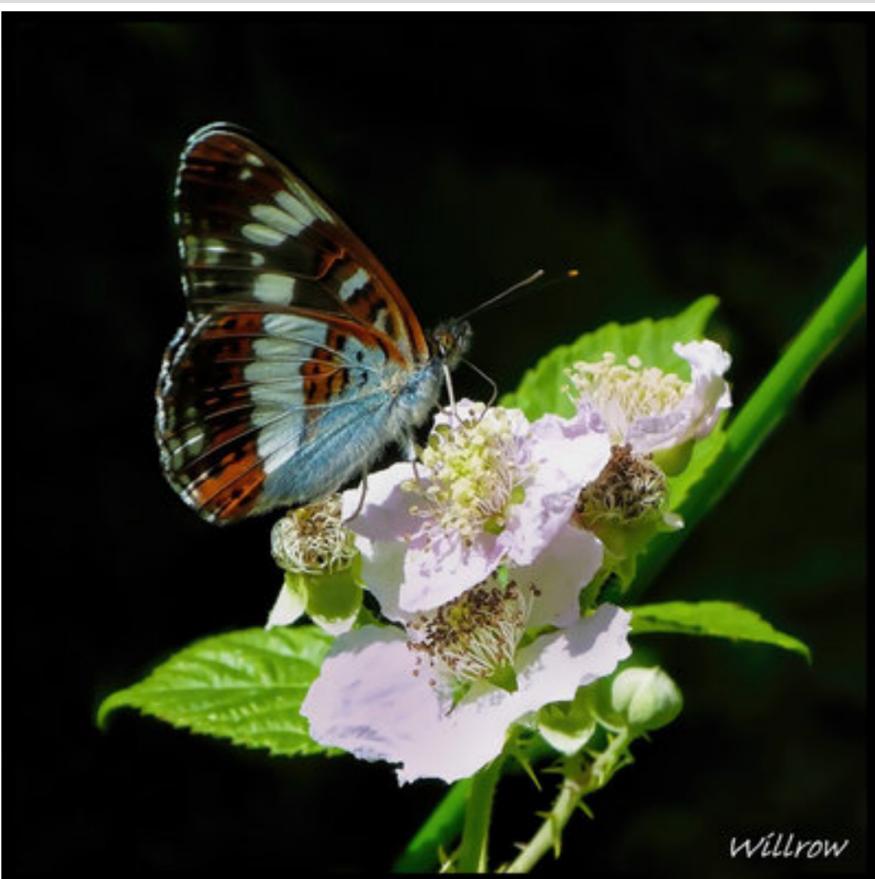


*Poor quality S-w Frit image!!!*

Regards the less often seen **White Admiral** a few did make token attempts to nectar on the bramble flowers before being rudely disturbed by the bullying **Silver-washed Fritillary** 😞 I did however manage a few images and one had enough shaded area in the background to allow for a reasonable 'portrait'. In all perhaps 15 to 20 WA were seen.



*I prefer closed wing shots of White Admiral...*



*Bit of editing improved this White Admiral from the mediocre...I think!!!*

Among the other species were a positive profusion of **Meadow Brown & Ringlet** (many coupled) and one of the latter had a wing deformity that had left it discoloured and stunted, yet the insect still managed to get about as is often the case in such sad instances... 😞 😞



*This Ringlet still got on with life...*



*Paired Ringlet...note the 'guest' bug in photo?*



*Love in the meadow...oh la la!!!*

Seems to be a long post folks...a double whammy 😊 but I need to catch up a bit (A lot 🤪) or I'll be posting this years 'adventurers' well into 2015 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by MikeOxon, 06-Jul-14 04:27 PM GMT

### "Willrow" wrote:

Another take on the same DGF image...better?

Both have their merits but, in the end, I plumped for the tighter crop because it avoids a large 'blank' area on the RHS

You've been enjoying a lot of good trips recently – thanks for sharing! **Rosalyn's** Kodak pic made me feel quite nostalgic. Nothing wrong with that image quality – though the EXIF data gives the game away 😊

Mike

## Re: Willrow

by Nick Broomer, 06-Jul-14 11:42 PM GMT

Hi Bill,

a lot of lovely photos but, your cropped photo of the Dark Green Fritillary is just brilliant. 😊

All the best, Nick.

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 07-Jul-14 04:45 PM GMT

### "MikeOxon" wrote:

Both have their merits but, in the end, I plumped for the tighter crop because it avoids a large 'blank' area on the RHS

Thanks **Mike** both for your interest and your 'tighter crop' choice...and I darned well forgot someone might check the EXIF data for Rosalyn's Kodak 😊

### "hideandseek" wrote:

a lot of lovely photos but, your cropped photo of the Dark Green Fritillary is just brilliant. 😊

Gee thanks **Nick**...I'm really chuffed about your nice comment 😊

Best wishes to you gents!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by PhilBJohnson, 07-Jul-14 07:13 PM GMT

Hi Bill,

I just read your Fermyn Woods, Northamptonshire report. It just goes to show how fruitful a well planned "butterfly journey" can be with excellent local knowledge. Having travelled all that way, I am really pleased for you that it turned out so good,

best wishes,

Philip

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 08-Jul-14 12:28 PM GMT

### "PhilBWright" wrote:

Having travelled all that way, I am really pleased for you that it turned out so good

Many thanks Phil, Fermyn is on my annual trip rota now, quite simply a must visit for the magnificent **Purple Emperor** 😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 08-Jul-14 03:35 PM GMT

On Saturday the 28th of June, myself and fellow **UK Butterflies** member David M devoted an entire day at [Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire](#) to 'survey' this beautiful World Heritage Site for southern Wales only colony of **Silver-studded Blue**. The information we had to go on was rather scant, David had been here just once before and then he had only an old 1998 report and map to work to 🤔 on that occasion he saw just 8 butterflies!!! With this basic information we decided time was right to find out what the current status of this beautiful 'under recorded' butterfly actually is in Pembrokeshire (Dyfed).

Within minutes of leaving the car we had discovered our first male butterfly at the head of a gully that meandered down to the shore, this positive start insigated further search alongside both sides of the gully and our efforts were well rewarded with at least a dozen or so insects found including our first female 😊



*David inspecting the Trevellans gully*



*Female Silver-studded Blue*

Our search above the gully included bracken and gorse 'heathland' which appeared quite typical of the type of habitat that **S-s B** enjoys at this location, here we also counted many **Dark Green Fritillary** and had to repress our natural urges to try for photographs of this splendid species and concentrate our minds solely on our target species (hard ask 🤔). Our count continued to produce a male to female ratio of approximately 8 to 1 – many of the specimens seen were in fresh condition and suggested a recent main emergence, by mid-day our count had exceeded the forty mark and we were both encouraged and pleased 😊



*Superbly conditioned male Silver-studded Blue*

Of particular interest was a small female that we originally thought was a **Small Blue** but closer inspection seemed to indicate it was probably a **Silver-studded Blue** I suggested trying to get a record photograph to indicate a better sense of scale and below you can see David holding a one pence piece coin (20mm diameter) within an inch or so of the obliging insect 😊 and note that blueish sheen!



*The smallest female S-s B either of us has seen!!!*



*Another of the female S-s B counted*



*Beautiful male Silver-studded Blue in closed wing pose*



*Just one of the 80+ males added to our 'core area' count on Trevallens Down*

After a brief respite for lunch we both remarked how kind the weather had turned out (in spite of a negative forecast 😬) and decided to spend some time on the coastal path above the spectacular cliffs, here we were rewarded with close up views of a young Chough (my favourite crow 😊) taking a bath in a puddle, the same bird was seen a little later preening and drying out on the safety of the cliff head and allowed close-up photography to commence, I've studied these lovely corvids on their coastal strongholds in Wales and inland in Snowdonia but I've not had any better views than the one this young (unringed 😊) bird allowed...a wonderful privilege 😊



*Just out of the puddle...*



*I'm chuffed to bits with this image...aagh!!!*

Our interlude complete we decided to move a about a mile further westward along the headland and investigate a likely looking 'banked' habitat, here we moved past our hundred mark for the day and it was grins all round 😊 I cannot remember doing any 'survey' in a more beautiful location, there was so much to take in and enjoy as well as the target species of butterfly 😊🕶️



*The stunningly beautiful Pembrokeshire Coast National Park*

Around teatime we moved onto some other wonderful locations Bosherton Lily Ponds and Broad Haven where we 'discovered' a discrete colony of about 9/10 **Silver-studded Blue** this discovery is at least 2 or 3 miles away from the Trevallens Downs and perhaps 2 miles from Stackpole where we understand another colony has historically been recorded from (again no further info available as yet – but I will investigate 😊)



*Bosherton Lily Ponds*

In conclusion a very successful days 'survey' with at least 110 **Silver-studded Blue** recorded, the bonus was the superb scenery and an unexpectedly good days weather, we headed home very contented butterfly enthusiasts 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"



*Fine looking female S-s B*

### **Re: Willrow**

by Pauline, 08-Jul-14 08:13 PM GMT

Black creatures are notoriously difficult to photograph Bill but the detail on that Chough is great – and when you see that level of detail you realise it is not all black at all. Wish I could do that. Smashing shot 😊 .

### **Re: Willrow**

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jul-14 09:25 PM GMT

Excellent report and photos Bill, really great job of yourself and David with those Silver-studded Blues. I really enjoy reading reports such as this from more 'out of the way' locations.

It makes you wonder how many undiscovered or under recorded colonies are out there of some species.

Cheers,

Neil.

### **Re: Willrow**

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-14 10:48 PM GMT

Congratulations on such a successful survey Willrow 😊 , that Silver Studded Blue was crazy small 😲 Brill shots of the Chough I haven't seen on for a few years so I'll have to head back to Llangrannog again this summer.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 10-Jul-14 07:54 PM GMT

### "Pauline" wrote:

Black creatures are notoriously difficult to photograph Bill but the detail on that Chough is great – and when you see that level of detail you realise it is not all black at all. Wish I could do that. Smashing shot 😊

Thanks very much Pauline, I've read most of your posts and I'm aware that...*you do do that*...your just being modest and kind, two very nice human qualities 😊

### "nfreem" wrote:

It makes you wonder how many undiscovered or under recorded colonies are out there of some species

Cheers Neil...you said it 🤔?

### "Wurzel" wrote:

Brill shots of the Chough I haven't seen on for a few years so I'll have to head back to Llangranog again this summer

Llangranog is a great Chough place 😊 my thanks for your nice comments Wurz 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Willow

by Willow, 12-Jul-14 05:18 PM GMT

On Sunday 29th of June, myself and David M visited [Daneway Banks, Near Sapperton, Gloucestershire](#) to enjoy a day on this lovely Cotswold re-introduction site for [Large Blue](#) and our expectations were more than fulfilled with at least 15 individuals seen and photographed. It was a decided advantage to have the kindest of weather conditions with us, sunshine 😊 with just the most moderate breeze that helped immensely with our efforts to attain good quality photographs, both sexes were very obliging posing for opened wings shots on several occasions 😊



*Large Blue displaying beautifully*

[Daneway Banks](#) has probably 'outshone' Somerset's Collard Hill this year, many fellow enthusiasts met on the banks that had also visited Collard reported better success at the banks, we couldn't disagree 😊



*The usually seen side on view of Large Blue*



*Marjoram is occasionally used for egg laying*

During our **LB** search we stumbled upon a couple of rather late **Green Hairstreak** the species has had a very good prolonged season and the individual seen below is a natural survivor 🤔



*Faded and tattered GH still hanging on in there*



The village of Sapperton is typically Cotswold both in atmosphere and character and the view from the banks is very picturesque with the mellow Cotswold stone cottages peeping out of the mature trees surrounding it.



*The lovely Sapperton village view*



*Another side on view of Large Blue*



*Rather 'dusky' Large Blue*

Apart from concentrating our efforts on **Large Blue** it was impossible not to be overwhelmed with the incredible numbers of **Marbled White** found throughout the banks and we watched for many minutes as they matched up and got down to business in the course grasses and meadow flowers 😞



*Marbled White female 'on top' note colour differences*

**Silver-washed Fritillary** came out of the surrounding woodland to occasionally nectar on the bramble flowers that lined the hedges along the upper reaches of the banks and the one below allowed me the opportunity to get close enough to get a reasonable photo...kind critter 😊



*One of a few male Silver-washed Frits seen during our visiit*

I can strongly recommend a visit to this beautiful and peaceful **Large Blue** site, it offers the space that is perhaps missing from Collards Hill, having said that I'm detracting nothing from the virtues of the latter, its just so nice to have choice 😊 and personally I've decided to add Daneway Banks to my annual 'pilgrimage list' 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-14 09:46 PM GMT

Fantastic report Willrow rally envious of the open wing shots 🍷 One good thing about the lack of LBs at Collard is that next year everyone will hopefully head to Daneways and then I can have Collard to myself 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Willrow

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jul-14 09:51 PM GMT

Great report and photos of the Large Blues Bill 🍷 😊

On the way back from Weymouth last Saturday we passed not too far from Sapperton but with a car loaded with holiday stuff plus 2 women and a 3 year old we couldn't really stop off. Even so I might have been tempted if it wasn't for the fact that it was bucketing down with rain at that point 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Willrow

by Paul Harfield, 14-Jul-14 11:39 PM GMT

Hi Bill

I was just admiring your Large and Silver Studded Blues, they are superb 😊 That tiny one is very unusual. I have managed to completely miss the Silver Studded Blues so far this year and it will be a while before I see my first Large Blue 😊