

The Butterflies of Lymington



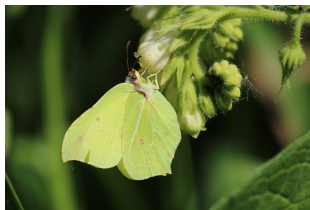
A short guide to the Butterflies of Lympham

Part 1: March to May

I have always loved the challenge of photographing Butterflies and have travelled around the county to do this. Lockdown gave me the opportunity to explore and record the amazing variety we have on our doorstep.

The first 5 Butterflies to appear in the village are those which hibernate over the winter in the adult (Imago) form, **Brimstone**, **Peacock**, **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Red Admiral** and **Comma**. When the temperature rises above 13°C they will start to emerge from the shelter of hedgerows, trees and outbuildings and take to the wing to find food and then a mate.

Flashes of yellow signal the arrival of the **Brimstone** (right)— they can be seen flying along verges, the churchyard and in gardens. Both have distinctive leaf shape wings; the males have the brimstone yellow colour whilst the females are a pale green.



The **Small Tortoiseshell** (left) can be seen in large numbers in the village especially along the nettle strewn banks of Middle Rhyne (follow the footpath from Hope Farm round to West Road). Along with the Peacock, they use the Common Nettle as a food plant for their caterpillars.

The beautiful colours of the **Peacock** with their glorious eyespots, in stark contrast to their pure black underwing and the distinctive orange and white stripes on the black wings of the **Red Admiral**, will start to appear in gardens as well as along verges and hedgerows, where they will feed and bask in the sun.



The striking **Comma** (left) named after a silver comma on their underwing rather than the shape of their wings is another which can be found in the hedgerows on sunny days. All of these 5 butterflies can be seen throughout the summer. Blackberry flowers will always attract them in good numbers.

As we move into April those butterflies that have overwintered as a Chrysalis (Pupa) start to emerge. Walk down the muddy footpath at the end of South Road or through the tree-lined path down to Dulhorn Farm and you will spot the **Speckled Wood** basking on leaves, where rays of sunshine penetrate the canopy.





Whilst you are looking at leaves, keep an eye out for the **Holly Blue**. This beautiful little butterfly likes Holly, Ivy and Bay leaves and can be seen where they occur; check out the churchyard and old ivy covered walls around the village.

Last year saw huge numbers of **Orange Tip** Butterflies (right) in the village, attracted to spring plants in gardens and on verges. They are the most distinctive of the four 'whites' that take to the wing in April and May. The **Large White**, **Small White** and the **Green Veined White** make up the set. The **Orange tip** is easy to identify but the others are very similar and I would suggest a field guide to help you with this.



Choose a sunny day in May and take a wander down Wick Lane and then carefully cross the railway tracks and follow the footpaths through the fields back down to Middle Rhyne. If the grass is high you will be surrounded by a sea of **Small Heath** Butterflies (below), later on in the month they will be joined by the similar but significantly larger and darker **Meadow Brown**

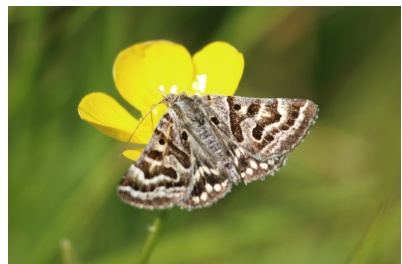


If you take the time to look closely you may spot other Moths and Butterflies in amongst them. The thin **Grass Veneer** moths are plentiful but if you are lucky you may catch sight of a **Mother Shipton** Moth (below). Named after the markings on the wing, which resemble an old woman's face. (see close up below) I will leave you to 'google' **Mother Shipton** to find out her story!



In the next edition I will explore those Butterflies which emerge later in the year, but if this has sparked an interest in Butterflies then check out Somerset Butterflies Conservation at:

www.somersetbutterflies.org.uk



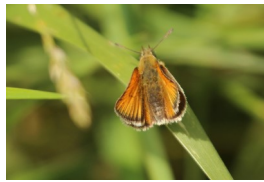
By Jim Bishop

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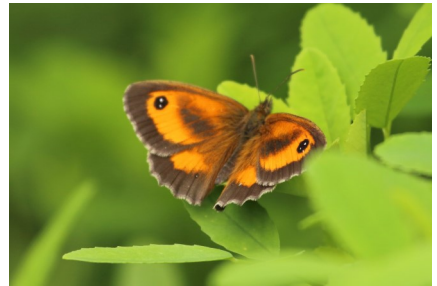
Part 2: June onwards

At the start of June those Butterflies that have overwintered as caterpillars (Larva) start to arrive on the scene. If you walk along the footpath that runs from Purving Row Lane down to Dulhorn Farm, you may spot some **Brown Argus** (below) in the long grass beside the rhyme. These beautiful little butterflies are very similar to the female **Common Blue** and are stunning.

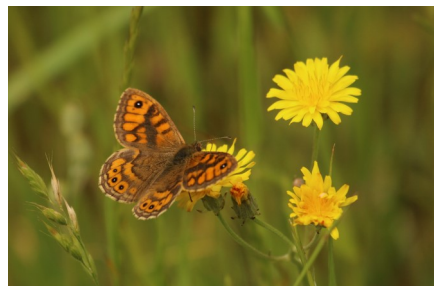
Along this same stretch you may also spot small groups of **Large Skipper** (below left). More like a moth than a butterfly, they are pretty orange flecks amongst the grass. **Small Skipper** (below right) will start to appear in July along these same stretches, also keep your eyes peeled along Purving Row Lane and the Middle Rhyme footpath near the West Road footbridge.



If you are lucky you may see **Common Blue** (top right) amongst these same grasses and anywhere the grass is still long. As the height of Summer approaches the hedges and verges come alive with butterflies; **Meadow Brown, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Large, Small and Green-veined White** as well as **Speckled Wood** are all on the wing and competing for space in the brambles. They will also be frequent visitors to gardens, especially those with an abundance of flowers, buddleia being everyone's favourite.



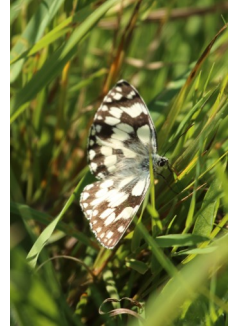
Joining this merry band are the **Gatekeeper** (upper right) and **Wall** (right) butterflies. As the name suggests, the **Wall** can often be seen near walls, so check out the churchyard, old boundary walls and around the Pavilion and cricket net.





At this time of year any walk on a sunny day will reward you with sightings of numerous species. The Footpath from Wick Lane across the fields heading towards West Road, is a great place for **Meadow Brown** and **Gatekeeper**, but check the hedgerows more carefully and you may spot the exquisite **Ringlet** (left).

Harder to find, but staggeringly beautiful is the **Marbled White** (right) and for this you will have to venture a little bit further. If you walk the length of West Road, turn towards East Brent and then take the first footpath on the right, head up to Brent Knoll and you may be lucky to find them playing in the long grass and thistles. **Ringlet**, **Gatekeeper**, **Meadow Brown**, **Comma**, **Peacock** and **Red Admiral** can all be found in good numbers here also.



Not resident in the UK, but a frequent migratory visitor, is the exquisite **Painted Lady**. In some years, millions of these butterflies get as far as the UK from North Africa, in other years there will be none. When they do join the party, they can be seen in the hedgerows and along paths taking up minerals from the ground.

The highlight of any year for me, is not a butterfly but a moth, the distinctive flight and sound of a **Hummingbird Hawk Moth** (left) sends me running for my camera every time. They often visit lavender in gardens and will hover like a tiny Hummingbird extending their massive tongue to drink nectar from the flowers. Once they have found a good spot they often return so keep watching.

I hope you have enjoyed this brief exploration of the butterflies and the occasional moth that surround us during the spring and summer months. If this has sparked an interest in butterflies check out my booklet, 'The Butterflies of Lympsham' available from the Post Office and Brent House Farm Shop, all profits are being donated to the school. Thanks , Jim.

