



MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

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*A monthly newsletter covering
Gwent and Monmouthshire Vice County 35*

Editor: Martin Anthoney

More New Moth Species for Gwent

In August, two new macro moth species and one micro-moth were added to the Gwent list:

Jersey Tiger (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*)

Roger James caught a specimen of this spectacular moth in his light trap at Newport on 12th August. Inspecting his MV trap at about 9.30pm, fluttering around the light was a large, highly-coloured moth. At first he thought it was a Garden Tiger – the colour was right but the markings were wrong. Reference to a field guide quickly identified it as a Jersey Tiger. The first Welsh record was for Flat Holm island in 2008. Five miles off Cardiff, Flat Holm island is visible from Roger's house. A coincidence or is the species established in Wales?



*Newport's
Jersey Tiger*

The larvae feed on a range of common herbaceous plants such as nettle, hemp-agrimony and also bramble. Like its close relatives Scarlet Tiger and Cream-spot Tiger (both also found in Gwent), it flies during the day as well as coming to light, but is on the wing slightly later in August and September.

Jersey Tiger's distribution in mainland Britain was largely confined to Devon and Dorset, but in recent years it has spread as far as London. It occurs on the other side of the Bristol Channel, so if it is not already breeding in Wales the chances are it soon will be. A species to look out for!

Square-spotted Clay (*Xestia rhomboidea*)

On 14th August, a group of us were mothing at Blaen-y Cwm car park, at the very north-western tip of the "chimney" of Gwent, when six specimens of Square-spotted Clay came to light. Their identity was confirmed by Norman Lowe, the recorder for neighbouring Breconshire, who catches the species

regularly in his county. It is probable that the moth has been present in the northern tip of Gwent all along, but nobody has been recording there at the appropriate time of year.

A nationally scarce (Nb) moth, Square-spotted Clay is typically a species of woodland edge, with the larvae recorded on a range of common plants such as nettle and dog's mercury. British records are concentrated in south-east England, particularly East Anglia, with smaller pockets in northern England, Scotland and Wales. It is easily confused with similar species such as Double Square-spot.



Square-spotted Clay

Ectoedemia sericopeza

On 19th August, during a trip to Newport, Robert Homan (Cheltenham) noticed a number of mined keys of Norway Maple showing the tell-tale signs of the micro-moth *Ectoedemia sericopeza*; far more than he has seen anywhere else. Some of the keys also had cocoons. Rather than the leaves, this species mines into the winged seeds of Norway Maple. Either through range expansion or lack of previous recording (or indeed, both) the species has cropped up in a number of new locations this year away from its known SE England sites. These are the first Gwent VC35 records of *Ectoedemia sericopeza* and possibly the first Welsh records.

Martin Anthony & Roger James



Winged seed of Norway Maple mined by Ectoedemia sericopeza, showing also egg (left) and orange cocoon (right) ringed in red. Inset shows adult moth. (Robert Homan)

Leek Moth - A New Problem For Gardeners

How much longer can one very tasty symbol of Wales survive? Until 2009, in Cwmbran leeks were a relatively trouble-free crop. I could grow leeks in my garden and allotment with the minimum of effort. Then, suddenly, in 2009 the hearts of young leeks were severely damaged, with examination revealing the presence of small, pale larvae. Rearing them out produced the micro *Acrolepiopsis assectella*, the Leek Moth.

Volume 3 of *Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* (1996) states “recorded from the coast of south-eastern England, but occasionally penetrates inland. Although a potential pest it is usually local and not plentiful”. However, in the past ten years it has spread rapidly. Colin Plant’s “Moths of Hertfordshire”(Hertfordshire Natural History Society) listed only one record of this species by 2005 and stated that it was “new to adjacent Middlesex in 2005”. Sam Bosanquet informs me that my records are the first for Gwent, VC35. Dave Slade (Glamorgan VC41 recorder) has recorded it in Cardiff and believes it may have been present, but not officially recorded, for three years or more.

In 2010, leeks on allotments in Thornhill, Cwmbran, about half way up Mynydd Maen, were free of this pest. However, in 2011 pupae were found on leeks there. An allotment colleague lower down in Oakfield, Cwmbran, who uses pesticides, cleared his leeks with an aphid insecticide. Most plants are not killed but show limited recovery, although they are still poor specimens at normal harvest time. The “Growing Your Own” booklet, published by the Guardian in April 2008, states under *leeks; pests and diseases*: “Leek Moths (tiny caterpillars) are becoming increasingly common. Crush on sight and use nets if necessary”.

An internet search revealed good images of the adult moth and one article suggesting it isn’t plentiful enough to be a pest in the U.K., but is a serious pest on the continent. Other articles reveal it reached Canada in 1993 and that the USDept.Agr. has produced computer models of its likely spread into the USA. The moth is found in much of Europe, in Russian Europe north to Karelia, in the Caucasus, Transcaucasia, western and eastern Siberia, the Far East and throughout Ukraine. It is also a pest in Japan and in Algeria. In southern Europe there can be 3 to 5 generations per annum, with moths flying from April to October and generations overlapping. Damage to onions in Italy can be very severe with up to 40% attack in food crops and up to 70-80% of flowers destroyed in seed onion crops. In Britain there are two generations, the first flying in June and July with larvae feeding in July and August to produce a second flight in October. The species overwinters largely as adults (with some diapause pupae), with more larvae being produced the following May and June.



Leek Moths & pupal cases

This is clearly a small moth that is going places, aided by global trade and, perhaps, by climate change. I am watching, with considerable interest, the fate of this year’s leeks. I thought our severe winter of 2010-2011 would slow it up but it is already clear that it hasn’t. At the time of writing (early August) I have pupae and I will warn my allotment colleagues when these emerge. A survey of all the allotment sites in Cwmbran has revealed varying levels of infestation in onions, leeks, garlic and chives. A survey I conducted at the Royal Welsh Show allotment stand this year revealed that no one had experienced damage by this pest in north or west Wales or even Manchester. A large scale grower of decorative alliums in Bridgend had suffered no damage yet. The only person who had experienced the pest came from north Devon. The relative scarcity of



horticulture in Powys will probably slow the progress of this moth northwards. Possibly it will go round the coast and up the Wye and Severn valleys but, from its world distribution, go north it almost certainly will.

*Leek plant damaged by
Leek Moth caterpillars*

Bob Roome

Recent Highlights

August was in general a cool, showery month. Although Gwent often missed the worst of the showers, clearing skies led to many cold and very poor mothing nights. Apart from the three Vice County firsts there were few unusual records and negligible signs of immigration.

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| 30 th July | Dark Green Fritillary on the Bloreng | (Jenny Reeves) |
| 1 st Aug. | Double Kidney, Dog's Tooth, Small Rufous and a good assortment of wainscots (Bulrush Wainscot, Southern Wainscot, Twin-spotted Wainscot, Silky Wainscot, Small Wainscot, Obscure Wainscot) at Newport Wetlands Reserve | (Kevin Dupé) |
| 2 nd Aug. | Purple Hairstreaks at two new sites: Campton Wood (SO364226) and Turners Wood (SO464163). | (Martin Anthony & Roger James) |
| 3 rd Aug | Devon Carpet at Trewyn | (David Hathaway) |
| 5 th Aug. | Welsh Wave and Satin Lutestring to light at Beacon Hill (Trellech). | (Ray Armstrong) |
| 9 th Aug. | Graylings at Trefil and Markham Colliery tip. | (Martin Anthony & Roger James) |
| 10 th Aug. | Chocolate Tip to light at Rassau | (Rodney Morris) |
| 12 th Aug. | Jersey Tiger to light at Melbourne Way, Newport. (See earlier article). | (Roger James) |
| 14 th Aug. | 6 Square-spotted Clay (new VC35 species) and Devon Carpet to light at Blaen-y-Cwm (Grwyne Fawr). See earlier article. | (Martin Anthony & Roger James) |
| 15 th Aug | Silver-washed Fritillary at Llandegfedd Reservoir, with another on the 22 nd Aug. | (Steve Williams) |
| 19 th Aug | Pale Eggar to light at Wonastow | (Heather Colls) |
| 25 th Aug. | Anomalous to light at Risca. | (Martin Anthony) |
| 26 th Aug. | Clouded Magpie at Elmsfield, Llandogo | (Gail Reynolds) |
| 30 th Aug | 12 Oak Lutestring to light at Ravensnest Wood. | (Martin Anthony & Roger James) |

Newport Report

Moths

A relatively quiet month with very variable weather, but it still held at least one surprise! First Newport records for 2011 during August:

1 st Aug	Uskmouth	Southern Wainscot, Canary-shouldered Thorn, Oak Eggar, Bulrush Wainscot.
	Goldcliff	Double Kidney, Twin-spotted Wainscot.
3 rd Aug	Uskmouth	Small Rufous, Saltern Ear.
	Melbourne Way	Gold Swift, Straw Underwing. Described by Horton as “scarce and local in Monmouthshire”, the latter was a first site record and the first Newport record since 2008.
5 th Aug	Melbourne Way	Svensson’s Copper Underwing.
9 th Aug	Melbourne Way	Ear Moth agg., Hedge Rustic. Although common, the latter was a first site record and only the second Newport record, the first being in 2006.
11 th Aug	Caerleon Comprehensive	Six-striped Rustic.
16 th Aug	Melbourne Way	Mouse
22 nd Aug	Penhow Woodlands	Dusky Thorn
23 rd Aug	Melbourne Way	True Lover’s Knot
29 th Aug	Melbourne Way	Tawny-barred Angle, Sallow

The surprise, of course, was the Jersey Tiger on 12th August! – see earlier article.

Thanks to the recorders:

Caerleon Comprehensive Bob Roome
Uskmouth, Goldcliff Kevin Dupé, Sheila Dupé, Fiona Illing
Melbourne Way Roger James
Penhow Woodlands Martin Anthony & Roger James.
Gaer Park Lane Kevin & Max Dupé

Roger James

Dates for your Diary 2011

Saturday 15th Oct. Butterfly Conservation (South Wales Branch) Members’ Day and AGM.
Kenfig NNR Visitors’ Centre.

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