



No. 200

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Editorial Panel: Helen Ikin, Steve Woodward, Jim Graham.

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HERITAGE REACHES THE TWO HUNDREDTH EDITION

Heritage started in 1961 as a summary of records put into a portfolio, which was circulated to members, each member adding their sightings for the quarter before passing it on.

The first editor was Peter Gamble who wrote all the reports himself, using the records in the portfolio. In 1969, special Field Notes record sheets were produced and members sent records by post to the editor. With Heritage 21 in spring 1966, coloured headings were added – a different colour for each quarter. These coloured strips had to be printed separately from the text and the text added over them.

Pat Candlish, later to become Pat Evans, took over as editor from Heritage 33 in 1969 and other members had the responsibility for writing some of the sections and contributing leading articles. Members could buy smart green files to store their copies of Heritage. We had Club ties and headscarves patterned with the Curlew logo, too, in those days. Pat edited Heritage for 67 issues, including the extended 100th edition with its lovely silver cover, before handing over to Monica Gillham for Heritage 101 in 1986. With No.101 the size changed to A4 from the previous quarto.

Monica was editor for 76 issues and in 2005, with No.177, the job was split into two sections and Peter Wilkinson did the editing while Helen Ikin collected the records from members, sorted them, photocopied and sent them out to the report writers. Previous editors had done both these tasks, which must have been really hard work, especially when the final draft had to be typed out on a typewriter. The early collating of Heritage was a social affair with piles of each photocopied page spread out on a table and several of us walking round taking a page from each pile to make one issue which was then stapled together. There were always some pages left over!

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Helen took over both jobs for a few issues in 2008 with the help of Steve Woodward and they were soon to be joined by Jim Graham to form an editorial panel of three. The format was altered and photographs were introduced.

The current process for producing Heritage is as follows: Helen gathers the contributions from the various writers and edits them into a Microsoft Word file. The file is emailed to Steve who proof-reads and marks up errors and suggested amendments. The file is returned to Helen, who makes the final changes. It is then emailed to Jim, who uses the Serif Page Plus X4 Desk-top Publishing program to set out columns, headings, photos and so on. The final output is a Portable Document Format (pdf) file. The pdf file is sent to a printing firm, which collates and staples the final copies. They still have to be put into envelopes, labelled and stamped, as most members do not want digital copies. The pdf is then stored on a portable hard disc, which is backed up by another hard disc.

It is always difficult for the report writers to decide what to include in the reports. We receive a great number of records now and they cannot all be mentioned. Verification of unusual records is sometimes a problem for the writers and we are grateful to the various County Recorders for helping with this difficult task.

The original records were all photocopied and then filed and stored at the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC), the precursor of which was started by Ian Evans at the Leicester Museum Service as a Biodiversity Database. Computerisation of records started in 1987 and the intention was to put all records on a computer database for easy retrieval. This continues today with more sophisticated databases but the amount of inputting hours required has prevented it from being complete.

The photocopying of the records was originally done by the staff at the Record Centre, then it was done for each separate quarter by the editor and now we are moving on to scanning the originals and storing the digital copies on two portable hard discs. Up to now, Monica Gillham has stored all the photocopies in her loft and is relieved to know that this is no longer necessary.

The different sections have been written up by a number of members one of whom has been doing it for the full 50 years – Peter Gamble.

The list is;

P H Gamble, H A B Clements, J Crocker, S R Davey, F R Green, D S Fieldhouse, P A Candlish/Evans, M Walpole, J Stacey, J M Horwood, W K Lloyd, D B Forgham, (1972 and still doing it), A W Wildig, S H Bishop, D O Jones (1975 –2010), E C Webster, H Ikin, D A Lott, M J Gillham, L E Hall, A Finch, D Palmer, A M Marmont, P T Wilkinson, H Bradshaw, E M Penn-Smith, G Felstead, S M Lister, K Harper, G L Finch, J Graham.

Helen Ikin

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

MAMMALS

Moles seem to have been very active this quarter judging by the number of molehills. Records came from Quorn, Swithland, Grace Dieu, Ulverscroft NR and Shepshed. Have you ever thought about how Moles actually dig their runs and how they get the surplus soil to the surface as molehills? According to the Mammal Society Handbook a Mole digs with its large, especially adapted, front feet, throwing the soil behind it. The hind limbs can be braced against the tunnel wall to provide support. The Mole then turns round and scooping with its front legs, it pushes the soil forwards until it reaches a previously excavated vertical tunnel, up which it pushes the soil to make a hill.

PMH's little **Hedgehog**, reported in the last Heritage, was taking food until 13 November but signs of it digging in the borders were seen after this and it looked well and seemed to have a good chance of hibernating successfully now. In GF's Scraftoft garden Hedgehogs were visiting for food throughout the frost and snow until 10 December. On 3 December, one was seen crossing the snowy terrace and ignoring food. One or two smallish to medium specimens have been seen feeding here. PH has had no traces of the usual Hedgehogs in his Shepshed garden from November onwards and comments that numbers are reduced from previous years.

Two or three **Bats** at a time were seen flying around PH's Shepshed garden in the first two

weeks of the quarter – Pipistrelles and a larger species.

A **Rabbit** was sighted at Grace Dieu in October and it was interesting to see how many Rabbit prints there were in the snow in a number of places where Rabbits are not normally apparent. We may not see Rabbits but there are a lot of them about, especially in DAP's Swithland garden where they provided food for the resident Buzzard during the snow and hard frosts.

Up to 12 **Brown Hares**, at a time, were seen by PH in fields near Sibleby – a very high number.

A dead **Bank Vole** was found on the path in PHG's Quorn garden.

Grey Squirrels were noted in Grace Dieu, Shepshed, Loughborough and Woodhouse eaves.

PHG does not mention **Badgers** so we assume his garden has not been vandalised this quarter but DAP has not been so lucky and his Swithland lawns have been damaged throughout the quarter. Maize cobs were found in the paddock – spoils of a raid on adjoining fields. A freshly used latrine was noted at Ulverscroft NR and signs of extensive Badger activity were recorded near Grace Dieu.

The almost straight lines of small **Fox** footprints in the snow have revealed nocturnal visits to several members' gardens and LEH & MH report hearing them call at night in Woodhouse Eaves.

A **Weasel** was seen crossing Main Street, Swithland at the reservoir end of the village on 22 October. We have not had records of either Weasel or Stoat at Grace Dieu and sighting them is really a matter of luck, so if any member sees these species at Grace Dieu, Cademan, Swannymote Wood or along the roads nearby, please send us the record.

Our only record of **Mink** was one seen by SML where the Black Brook enters the River Soar near Dishley Pool on 19 December.

DAP had sightings of **Muntjac** in three different places. One was browsing in his Swithland garden during three days in early December, one was on the grass verge near One Ash in October and the third, also in October,

was crossing Mountsorrel Common on Bond Lane.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

The majority of the **Mute Swans** were to be found at Swithland Reservoir with a maximum of 58 on 20 December. The only other double figure count was at Sence Valley Forest Park when there were 15 on 19 December. There were no "wild" swans reported at all.

On 24 October four separate skeins of **Pink-footed Geese** numbering 180, 100, 400 and 140 were seen migrating generally SE in the Loughborough area. A few **Graylag Geese** were at Cropston Reservoir during October but there were 350 grazing in a field at Swithland on 2 November and 507 probably including the same birds on the local reservoir the following day. Also there that day was a **Snow Goose** showing signs of the blue phase. There was a surprising lack of **Canada Geese** in the area. Apart from a few (max 32 on 10 November) at Cropston Reservoir, the only other count was at Sence Valley Forest Park where there were 200 on 23 October. A single **Shelduck** was at Birstall GP on 19 November.

Mandarin Ducks were found at Groby Pool, Grace Dieu and the reservoirs at Cropston, Swithland and Blackbrook, where the most were to be seen with a maximum of 14 on 21 October. Most of the larger stretches of water held at least some **Wigeon**, the most seen regularly were at Swithland Reservoir with at least 340 on 21 October. However there was a count of 700 at Wanlip North on 13 December. The previous day there had been 162 **Gadwall** at the same site. Like the previous species most of the larger areas of water attracted at least a few but Swithland Reservoir constantly held the most. **Teal** were found at fewer sites with Cropston Reservoir being the main stronghold, 188 on the 19 December being the highest count when the water was mostly frozen over. Cropston Reservoir also held most of the **Mallard** reported (there were around 200 in November and December). Surprisingly, none was recorded at Swithland Reservoir and the only other sites to be mentioned were Grace Dieu, Groby Pool and Sence Valley Forest Park where the

maximum number of 249 was present on 19 December when the site had very little open water. What was presumably the same female **Pintail** stayed at Swithland Reservoir for a period in October and November. The only other record was of a pair circling Albert Village Lake on 18 November. **Shoveler** were only found at Birstall GP, Cropston Reservoir and Swithland Reservoir where the majority were seen regularly peaking at 156 on 17 October.

A single female **Red-crested Pochard** stayed at Swithland Reservoir throughout most of October but three females and a male were there on 21 November. Very few **Pochard** were reported and the only double figure counts were at Albert Village Lake with a maximum of 51 on 15 December. Not surprisingly with all the ice about **Tufted Ducks** were not as plentiful as usual. Cropston Reservoir had a maximum of ten, Sence Valley had 31 but the most seen was 43 at Cossington Meadows on 19 October. **Goldeneye** suffered the same as the previous species, the only double figure record was 27 at Swithland Reservoir on 7 November.

A redhead **Smew** was at Wanlip North Pits on 13 December and on the last day of the year there was a male and two redheads at Swithland Reservoir. All **Goosander** records were either from Wanlip North or Cossington Meadows with a maximum of 11 at Wanlip on 24 November.

A female **Ruddy Duck** was present at Swithland Reservoir on one day in October and also November.

Red-legged Partridges were only found at seven sites including a garden at Swithland. There were only two double figure counts, 14 at Normanton in December and 26 at Queniborough in October. The only **Grey Partridges** noted were six at Netherfield and the same number at Lockington, both on 7 October. As usual, **Pheasants** were under-reported but 18 were seen together at Lowesby on 9 October.

After the freeze late in the year **Little Grebe** numbers were never more than five at any site. However in October there were up to 16 at Swithland Reservoir. Apart from one at Groby Pool in October, all **Great Crested Grebe** reports were from Swithland or Cropston Reservoirs, the maximum at the former was 65 on 14

November and 78 on 3 December the later, in spite of the ice.

Apart from one **Cormorant** at Groby Pool on 16 October all other records came from Cropston Reservoir where they were seen in all three months, the highest number being 52 on 30 November. Most of the **Grey Heron** sightings were also at Cropston Reservoir, there was one double figure count there on 14 November when ten were present. Early in the quarter 25 were seen at Swithland Reservoir. During the cold spell birds did occasionally visit garden ponds without much success. A **Little Egret** visited a garden stream at Swithland on 10 December searching for open water. Others were seen at Cossington, Hugglescote, and the reservoirs at Swithland and Blackbrook but never more than two birds.

Only three **Red Kites** were noted, Two together at Redmile on 15 December and one at Sweystone two days later. As usual **Sparrowhawks** were widespread and well reported. Among the garden visits reported was one at Cropston that took a Blue Tit, Greenfinch and two Goldfinch in four days! **Buzzards** were more widespread than the previous species with 32 separate records, all sightings were never more than two, apart from 14 in the Knipton, Branston area in late October.

Kestrels were widespread across the area although sightings did drop during the cold spell, no more than two birds together were noted. The only **Merlin** reported was at Cossington Meadows on 19 October. **Peregrines** were found at half a dozen sites, mostly around the quarries. They were usually seen in ones but there were two together at Swithland Reservoir on 27 October and three at Cloud Quarry, five days earlier.

Water Rails were noted at the usual reed beds with three at Cossington Meadows and two at Dishley Pool. At Kelham Bridge one fed almost continuously under the bird feeders out in the open during the latter part of the year and into 2011. A few **Moorhen** were reported but most were seen at Cropston Reservoir but still only peaked at 14 on 10 October. **Coot** were probably under-recorded, with only Groby Pool, Cropston Reservoir, (max 34), Sence Valley, (max 59) mentioned apart from Swithland

Reservoir were 610 were counted on 6 November.

Golden Plover have been noticeably scarce this quarter. There was only one record, this being 800 birds around Eaton on 25 October. **Lapwing** were not much more common with 30 at Cossington Meadows in October being the only double figure count apart from Cropston Reservoir where the maximum number was 121 on 5 November. During the cold spell only two single birds were reported. A **Dunlin** was present at Swithland Reservoir on 10 November and one flew over Charnwood Lodge a week later. Common Snipe were also scarce with reports coming from only six sites with never more than two birds. **Woodcock** were almost as widespread as Snipe with single birds being flushed in five different wet woody areas. Two were flushed in a marshy area of a Swithland garden on 20 November. Single **Curlews** were noted at Cossington Meadow, Normanton-le-Heath, Wanlip and Albert Village. On 19 December, during the cold spell four were seen at Bishop's Meadow. A **Redshank** stayed at Swithland Reservoir for a few days in the middle of November. Single **Green Sandpipers** were at Kelham Bridge and Swithland Reservoir in October and Cropston Reservoir in late November.

A **Mediterranean Gull** was on the ice at Albert Village Lake on Christmas Eve. **Black-headed Gulls** were far more common with most observations being well in the hundreds. Swithland Reservoir held 2000 on 17 November but there were 6500 at Albert Village on 18 December. Ringed birds in the area were known to come from Denmark and Poland. Albert Village had few **Common Gulls** but there was bird of German origin there on 30 December. A few were noted at Cropston Reservoir but the maximum count was at Swithland Reservoir where the pre-roost count was 265 on 17 November. Almost all the **Lesser Black-backed Gull** records were from Albert Village with 1600 on 4 November. Albert Village was also the site for all the next gull species with maximum numbers as follows:- **Herring Gull**: 530 on 24 December, **Caspian Gull**: three on 18 November, **Yellow-legged Gull**: seven on 15 December, **Great Black-backed Gull**: 115 on 24 December. A juvenile **Arctic Tern** frequented Cropston

Reservoir during the first week of October and a juvenile **White-winged Black Tern** was at Thornton Reservoir on 3 October.

All **Stock Doves**, apart from eight at Griffydam, were in Charnwood with ten at Dean's Lane on 17 October. **Woodpigeons** were numerous in many areas with many three figure counts and a few in four figures. The largest number, accurately counted was 2435 migrating over Dean's Lane on 25 October. It would appear that the numbers of **Collared Doves** are falling, they were only seen at nine sites, mostly gardens and the maximum was only 19 at Measham on 24 December.

The cold weather could have affected **Barn Owls** as only one bird was reported, this being at Hallaton on 12 November, before the worst of the weather. Little Owls fared only slightly better with three birds: one at Tugby, one at Normanton-le-Heath and one perched on a television aerial at Cropston. **Tawny Owls** were more in evidence but the last sighting was on 12 December at Birstall. During October a pair and a juvenile were noted two or three times in a Cropston garden.

Kingfishers were found at six sites with at least two after the cold weather set in, these were at Dishley Pool on 15 December and Loughborough on 27th.

Green Woodpeckers were noted at nine sites all around Charnwood, one making regular visits to a Cropston garden. Some of the records were after the worst of the weather showing that they managed to get through the worst time for ground feeders. I suppose that **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** could survive the cold weather better especially as they are now using garden feeders. There are over forty records many from gardens, which include four together



Green Woodpecker © Jim Graham

in a Cropston garden on Boxing Day. By contrast the only **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was heard at Swithland Reservoir on 15 November.

A lone **Wood Lark** flew over Dean's Lane on 2 October. During October double figure counts of **Skylarks** passed over Dean's Lane with a maximum of 32 on 24th. Other double figure counts were at Cropston and Sence Valley where there were 30 in a root crop field on 5 October. Most **Swallows** had left by the middle of October, the last being seen at Dean's Lane and Hugglescote, both on the 17th. On the same day the last and only **House Martin** of the quarter also passed over Dean's Lane. Small numbers of **Meadow Pipits** were at around a dozen sites including 40 at Swithland Reservoir, twelve at Albert Village and 60 at Sence Valley. However, on 4 October, 202 passed over Dean's Lane. **Grey Wagtails** were found at Dishley Pool, Cropston Reservoir, Ravenstone, Measham, Quorn and a garden at Birstall.

For anyone who had not seen a local **Waxwing** this was the year to get it onto the list! At any one time during December there were probably over a thousand in the county. Small numbers were found in gardens and anywhere there were berries to be found but numbers of well over a hundred were regularly reported from Loughborough and Coalville had almost as many. This was probably the best Waxwing year for many years.



Waxwing © Steve Woodward

Wrens, Dunnocks and **Robins** were well reported and were also still around late in December having seen off the worst of the weather. The only **Stonechat** of the winter was at Charnwood Lodge on 2 October. A single **Ring Ouzel** passed over Dean's Lane on 10 October. Numerous **Blackbirds** were observed, numbers probably augmented by continental birds.



Redwing © Steve Woodward

Double figure counts came from half a dozen sites with 33 at Swepstone and Normanton both in December the highest numbers. There were around 50 different reports of **Fieldfare** from small numbers to well into the hundreds. There were over 400 at Normanton-le-Heath on 10 December and eight days with hundreds flying over Dean's Lane culminating in just over a thousand on 21 October. By contrast, **Song Thrushes** were noted in only eight places half of which were in gardens although six were found at Swepstone on 17 December. **Redwings** were not as plentiful as the previous Fieldfares but were probably more widespread. There were only two counts of more than a hundred apart from the Dean's Lane migration viewpoint. Here there were four counts in three figures and one of just over 2000 birds on 10 October. **Mistle Thrushes** were about as common as the previous Song Thrushes but the maximum count for this species was only four at Lount on 29 December.

A **Cetti's Warbler** was calling at Cossington Meadows on 15 November. Three over-wintering **Blackcaps** were in gardens at Cropston and Harborough. **Chiffchaffs** were present at both Cropston Reservoir and Groby Pool in mid-October.

Goldcrests were widespread at most suitable sites with eleven being counted at Benscliffe Wood on 15 October. Just two **Firecrests** were noted, these being at Barlestone on 23 December. **Bearded Tits** were present at Cossington Meadows reed bed from mid November until the end of the year with five on 15 November. There were 13 double figure counts of **Long-tailed Tits** at least half of these being after the cold spell. The most seen together was 26 in the Outwoods on 5

December. There were ten records of **Marsh Tit** mainly in the Charnwood woodlands although on 29 December one was seen at Eaton and four at Lount. **Willow Tits** were only observed at Easthorpe Bridge, Netherfield Lane, Cossington Meadows and Kelham Bridge. **Coal Tits** were mainly seen at garden feeders but 16 in Benscliffe Wood and 15 in the Outwoods were good counts. Like the previous species most **Blue** and **Great Tit** observations were from gardens but there were counts of over 30 **Blue Tits** at Swepstone, Measham and Griffydham during BTO atlas surveys. On the same surveys counts of over 20 **Great Tits** came from Lount, Measham and Swepstone.

All **Nuthatch** reports came from Charnwood woodlands apart from a count of six at Lount on 29 December. The highest count was at Swithland Wood with seven on 13 November. **Treecreepers** were found in similar areas with five at Cropston Reservoir during November.

Bas Forgham

Our thanks to Ken Goodrich and LROS who co-ordinated the bird records for this period.

FISH (including CRAYFISH)

We have no records for this section but there is an item of news which I felt it would be appropriate to discuss because it may have important implications for the future. The "Independent" Newspaper seems to be quite keen to report on environmental issues, and on the 22 September 2010 carried the headline "A Giant Leap into the Unknown", above a picture of two Salmon: a normal one, and behind it a very much larger, genetically-modified fish. Below the headline, they added, by way of explanation: "...Three times bigger than its natural counterpart ... it is a genetically modified creature, made in a laboratory. And it is on the point of being allowed to enter the human food chain..." Inside the newspaper, there was a double-page spread on the story, consisting of two articles: a report by Steve Connor, the Science Editor, on the development of the GM fish in the USA, followed by a discussion of British attitudes towards GM foods, by Martin Hickman.

So what exactly is this "Frankenfish" (as it has been dubbed by opponents of the development)? The fish has been developed by an American company in Massachusetts, in the north-eastern USA, and is essentially a modified Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*). The genes of the salmon have been artificially augmented with DNA from two other species. The first of these is the Pacific Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). The Chinook Salmon (which is also known as the Tyee or King Salmon) is the largest of the five species of Salmon found on the North American side of the Pacific. (There is a smaller, sixth species – *Oncorhynchus masu* – found only on the Asiatic side of the Pacific: There is only one species of Atlantic Salmon, by the way.) The Chinook typically grows to a much larger size than its Atlantic cousin and, although its life history is broadly similar to that of the Atlantic in that it spends some time in fresh water before migrating out to sea and eventually returns to fresh water in order to spawn, it is worth mentioning that there is one very important difference. Atlantic salmon are capable of surviving their first spawning run: some of them manage to get back to the sea and survive to make a second or even a third run. (The figure is normally put at about 12%, and they are almost invariably female fish.) By contrast, for the Chinook it is a one-way journey: *Pacific Salmon invariably die after spawning*. The second species is an entirely marine species, known as an Eelpout (*Zoarces americanus*). This is one of a family of comparatively small fish found in temperate and cold waters: it reaches a length of about 45 cm. It is a somewhat unusual fish in that it gives birth to live young: its European counterpart is known as the "Viviparous Blenny". Frankly, I have no idea why they should have chosen to use DNA from this fish: the article does not explain this. However, the object of the exercise was to produce a fish with an accelerated growth rate, and in this they certainly seem to have succeeded. According to the graph which is included with the article, a normal Atlantic Salmon grows steadily for the first 500 days and then starts to grow more rapidly, reaching a weight of 3.5 kg after 800 days. In contrast, the GM Salmon starts to grow rapidly after about 300 days and reaches 4 kg after 600 days. The Atlantic Salmon is already being farmed

extensively in the North Atlantic, in cages in the sea. The GM Salmon, however, has been designed to be reared in tanks of fresh water, on land – which would, needless to say, make them cheaper to produce. It is also argued that if these fish do escape into the wild, they are unlikely to cause problems, because the eggs are treated to turn the GM fish into sterile females.

The reason for the timing of the report was that the previous day, the U.S. Food and Drugs Administration had held a public consultation, following “an exhaustive scientific review which found there were few serious concerns about the risk either to human health or the natural environment”, and it seems likely that a final decision on whether the eggs can be sold will be taken in the next few months. The report also points out that there has been fierce opposition to the GM fish from various groups within the United States, and in the second article, Martin Hickman explains how the main supermarkets in this Country shied away from selling GM foodstuffs following “public uproar” in 2003. So what does the future hold? Well, “futurology” is a very inexact science! Personally, as far as the dangers posed by GM foods to human health are concerned, I have no opinion because I do not feel competent to hold one: I am happy to leave that question to those better qualified than I am! It does, however, seem likely that if the eggs do go on sale then they will eventually find their way here: fish farmers, like other farmers, are under pressure to produce more food, more cheaply. In his report, Steve Connor makes one point with which I am in complete agreement, and which I feel is worth quoting:

“Scientists have warned that the marine environment, which has already suffered from decades of intensive over-fishing, is close to collapse. Yet the demand for fish has increased at a time when stocks have dwindled. Humans face a stark choice between giving up eating many kinds of wild-caught fish, or turning to alternatives such as captive-bred animals.”

Connor goes on to say that: “GM technology offers one potential solution to the problem of feeding a growing human population, but it is one solution among many.”

Well, whatever the future may hold, it seems that there is one thing which we can say with absolute certainty, and it is that, whether or not you agree with it, this issue of the farming of GM foodstuffs is not going to go away!

Tony Onions

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the early advent of cold weather, we have very few records to report for this quarter.

Smooth Newt - *Triturus vulgaris*

DU reports finding one at the Ulverscroft Nature Reserve, on 4 October.

Common Toad - *Bufo bufo*

GP reports two sightings of this amphibian. The first was a large adult, found under dry dead leaves, near a house wall, in the front garden of a house in Mill Close in Birstall. The second sighting - on 8 October - was of a medium-sized adult, caught in car headlights while crawling across the road in Mill Close on a warm night, after a comparatively warm day.

Common Frog - *Rana temporaria*

PMH of Markfield, reports that she still had tadpoles in her pond on 10 October and on 4 November found several large adults under leaves at the bottom of a hedge.

Tony Onions

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

The Odonata season continued to be poor in the final quarter with ten sites holding a total of just five species between them. All but one record received were for October.

The only sighting of **Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*** was at Dishley Pool on 5 October, whilst one or two **Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** were found at four sites during the month at Wileman’s Pond in Beacon Country Park, Grace Dieu, Dishley Pool and Leicester.

Four **Migrant Hawkers *Aeshna mixta*** were at Birstall Meadows on 6 October and were also present at Dishley Pool on the 25th.

The larva of **Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*** was found at Grace Dieu on 27 October.



Common Darter © Jim Graham

Small numbers of **Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* were noted at five sites including at Puddledyke where a female ovipositing was the final record of the year and the only one in November on the 6th.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed during 2010. Let's hope for more suitable weather for a better recording season in 2011.

Jim Graham

GRASSHOPPERS AND BUSHCRICKETS

Orthoptera Report for 2010

This summer was not ideal for Orthoptera but ten species were recorded by seven members and friends.

The only **Oak Bush-cricket** *Meconema thalassinum* was found at Misterton Marshes in July.

Roesel's Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii* was not quite as common this year but was reported from North Farm at Shenton, Whitwick, Glenhills, Frisby Gravel Pits, Kirby Lakes, the Gynsills at Glenfield, Sapcote – M69 Roundabout, Ibstock – near Grange Wood and the Ashby Canal area near Ambion Wood where AJ noticed that it was spreading towards Shenton this year.

The **Long-winged Conehead** *Conocephalus discolor* was also less frequent and sightings only came from The Gynsills and Rough Hill at Newtown Linford.

We had no records for the Short-winged Conehead *Conocephalus dorsalis* and the Speckled Bush-cricket *Leptophyes punctatissima*.

The **Slender Groundhopper** *Tetrix subulata* continues to be regularly reported and was noted at Leire Cutting, Swithland Churchyard, Manor Park at Twycross, Cloud Wood, Grace Dieu, Watermead and at Cropston Waterworks Grounds on the last day of October.

The **Common Groundhopper** *Tetrix undulata* is the less common of the two and was only seen at North Farm, Shenton.

The **Common Green Grasshopper** *Omocestus viridulus* was much more frequent and records came from Bradgate, Glen Hills, Bagworth Heath, Gynsills, Charnwood Lodge, Bagworth, Lea Meadows NR, Ulverscroft NR, New Lount NR, Watermead CP, Cloud Wood, Ulverscroft Pond and a number of compartments in the Grace Dieu, Cademan and Swannymote Wood survey area.

The **Lesser Marsh Grasshopper** *Chorthippus albomarginatus* was again the most common grasshopper and was recorded from many sites. It seems to prefer a good cover of grass and does not usually appear in the more extreme habitats such as very short grass or stony hilltops. Although the common name suggests damp habitats and at one time it was more or less confined to areas near water, now that it has spread its range further north, it seems to be able to tolerate drier places.

The **Field Grasshopper** *Chorthippus brunneus* was as common as usual and records came from Jubilee Walk at Leire, Grace Dieu, Grantham Canal, North Farm, Leicester, New Lount, Bradgate, Gynsills, Glenhills, Bagworth Heath, County Hall at Glenfield, Ratby, Charnwood Lodge, Glenfield, Asfordby Hill, Birstall and Frisby Gravel pits.

The **Meadow Grasshopper** *Chorthippus parallelus* was only recorded by MB at Bradgate and the Gynsills and by DT at Ibstock.

The **Mottled Grasshopper** *Mymeleotettix maculatus* was present in its old haunts of Buck Hill and Bradgate.

Thysanura

There was only one response to the request for **Silverfish** *Lepisma saccharina* records – GC is lucky enough to have them at her house in Whitwick.

Helen Ikin

BUTTERFLIES

Small numbers of some ten species remained active during October but only two species were noted into early November.

Pieridae

During October a **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*** was seen in Felicity's Wood at Woodhouse Eaves on the 6th and on the 27th, two males were seen in HBH's Loughborough garden. The only **Large White *Pieris brassicae*** and **Small White *P. rapae*** reported seen during October were in PH's Shepshed garden where several remained active until the third week.

Lycaenidae

Late **Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*** were seen in FTS's Barlestone garden on 10 October and at Birstall Meadows on the 11th. Two late **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*** were still active on PH's Shepshed garden during the first week of October, a very late occurrence for this species and probably representing a partial third generation emergence.

Nymphalidae

Small numbers of **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** were seen throughout October in some ten well scattered localities often nectaring on Ivy blossom and the species was last noted at Shepshed on 4 November.

Occasional **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*** were reported seen in four localities during October.

The **Peacock *Inachis io*** was likewise noted in four localities with a last sighting on 6 November at Puddledyke.

The **Comma *Polygonia c-album***, like the Red Admiral, is particularly attracted to Ivy blossom and was reported seen in nine well scattered localities throughout October with five on Ivy blossom at Windmill Hill, Woodhouse Eaves, on the 11th.

Satyridae

A late **Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*** was still active at Dishley Pool, Loughborough, on 7 October and from Leicester, HB reports seeing singletons at Beattie Avenue on the 10th, at

Washbrook Nature Reserve on the 11th and on Great Central Way on the 20th.

Peter Gamble

MOTHS

We went into October with only a few mild evenings, then, things soon cooled down, heavy rain followed plus mainly clear, cold nights. November turned out to be the coldest on record, December started and ended in the same vein as November so all in all hardly any nights when a moth trap could be run. The much-awaited and anticipated "Provisional Atlas of the UK's Larger Moths" is now available. A four year culmination, from the Moths Count project, led by Butterfly Conservation, has brought decades of national recording and just under eleven and a half million records together to produce a milestone in macro moth recording. This atlas presents distribution dot maps of all our macro moths, with the first ever published for Geometridae and the first maps for nearly 30 years for most other species. Available from Butterfly Conservation at £20 consisting over 400 glossy A4 pages - a snip.

Members' Casual Sightings

SFW managed to add **Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner *Cameraria ohridella*** new to the Ulverscroft Nature Reserve list, by finding a pupa inside a leaf in October. A single **Grey Dagger *Acronicta psi*** larva was found at Grace Dieu on 5 October.

Light trap results

SFW managed to operate an Actinic light trap in his Groby garden for two nights during this quarter. 8 October produced five moths of four species, singles of **Light Brown Apple Moth *Epiphyas postvittana***, **Common Marbled Carpet *Chlorochlysta truncata***, **Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba***, **Red-line Quaker *Agrochola lota*** plus two **Yellow-line Quaker *Agrochola macilenta***. On 3 November, a solitary **Yellow-line Quaker *Agrochola macilenta*** was the last moth recorded for the year here.

Charnwood Forest Survey

Swithland Wood

In just a couple of hours during the day in Swithland Wood on 27 October we managed to

record 26 species of leaf mines and larval cases. The most distinctive mine being that of *Ectoedemia occultella* on Birch. The cases were those of *Coleophora gryphipennella* on Rose and *Coleophora serratella* on Birch. The Coleophora are a group of Microlepidoptera numbering just over 100 species in total of which we have about 38 in the county. If dealing with the adult moths, only a handful can be reliably identified on wing pattern alone, otherwise it means a dissection to look at certain internal organs. Thankfully, there is an alternative and that is to search for the portable cases constructed by the larvae. In the main, these cases are characteristic of the species and often host specific, with *Coleophora gryphipennella* only being found on Rose. 37 out of the 38 recorded in the county are down as category D, which are either rare or species we know very little about. Although May is considered the best month to look for them, several species can be found later in the year while looking for leaf mines, particularly September and October. Tenanted larval cases found in late autumn will over-winter as such then resume feeding in the spring, pupate then emerge as adult moths late spring and throughout the summer.

Charnwood Lodge

After continual freezing temperatures, the promise of 5°C, positively tropical, was just too much not to take advantage of. After setting two traps along the main ride in Gisborne's Gorse at Charnwood Lodge, I spent almost the whole of the following three hours, torch in hand, in the hope of finding the wingless females of a few of the species that are around at this time of year. A total of over 200 moths was recorded, of five species, these were seven **December Moth** *Poecilocampa populi*, 157 **Winter Moth**, which included 47 pairs in cop, six (three pairs in cop) **Scarce Umber** *Agriopsis aurantiaria*, 21 **Mottled Umber** *Erannis defoliaria* (all males) and last but not least 23 **Chestnut** *Conistra vaccinii*. Out of the 214 individuals, only 12 moths were attracted to the light traps and only five were actually inside the traps, the other seven were either on the outside of the traps or on the white sheet underneath the traps. The main target for the night was to find **Mottled Umber** *Erannis defoliaria* females, as I have only ever seen one

before (Cloud Wood) despite considerable searching. Given reasonable temperatures **Mottled Umber** can be one of the commonest species this time of year, but finding the females is proving to be a very difficult task, but thankfully not for the males.

Around the county

Mill Field, Fleckney

An afternoon walk around the Woodland Trust site Mill Field at Fleckney on 10 October produced 16 species of leaf mines and larval cases plus a single larva of **Grey Dagger** *Acronicta psi*. The best of the leaf miners being *Stigmella catharticella* quite a distinctive mine on Alder Buckthorn leaves. On Cherry, the ridiculously long winding mine of *Lyonetia clerkella* was abundant together with only a few *Phyllonorycter cerasicolella* mines.

Cribb's Meadow

In Cribb's Meadow on 23 October we found, 21 species of microlepidoptera in various early stages mainly as leaf mines. *Stigmella catharticella* mines were found on the Buckthorn, *Metzneria metzneriella* in the seed heads of Knapweed and *Endothenia gentianaeana* in Teasel heads plus a single **Grey Shoulder-knot** *Lithophane ornitopus* adult, sitting on a fence post.

Owston Wood

24 October - a respectable number of 33 species of leaf mines were found in just two hours of searching along the main ride, plus *Coleophora gryphipennella* cases on Rose.

Cloud Wood

The comparatively mild temperatures on 29 December recorded 77 moths of seven species with seven **December Moth** *Poecilocampa populi*, 61 **Winter Moth** *Operophtera brumata* and five **Early Moth** *Theira primaria*, were the only species in double figures. Singles of **Mottled Umber** *Erannis defoliaria*, **Grey Shoulder-knot** *Lithophane ornitopus*, **Satelite** *Eupsilia transversa* and **Chestnut** *Conistra vaccinii* as support.

Many thanks for the records sent in for this difficult quarter.

Graham and Anona Finch

OTHER INSECTS

As can be expected, a very quiet period for invertebrates, the small number of records sent in relate mainly to October with few records for November and zero records for the bitter December.

Hemiptera

The **Green Shieldbug** *Palomina prasina* was widely recorded throughout October from Birstall, Leicester city sites in Humberstone Park, Beatie Avenue, Appleton Park, Great Central Way and from Quorn where the last record was 1 November.

The **Hawthorn Shieldbug** *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale* - odd adults recorded throughout October from St. James' Church in Birstall and two on Appleton Park, Leicester on 15th.

Singles of the **Birch Shieldbug** *Elasmotherus interstinctus* were seen at Bede Island on 6 October, Birstall on 11th and Cademan on 12th.

The only record of the **Forest Bug** *Pentatoma rufipes* was one active in a Quorn garden on 8 October.

Several **Gorse Shieldbugs** *Piezodorus lituratus* were found at Grace Dieu on 6 October.

A single **Parent Bug** *Elasmucha grisea* in hibernation colours was at Bede Island on 7 October.

Single **Juniper Shieldbugs** *Cyphostethus tristriatus* were noted at Birstall Churchyard on 2 & 10 October.

On the dock leaves in Great Central Way, 17 **Dock Bugs** *Coreus marginatus* were counted on 20 October.

One **Birch Catkin Bug** *Kleidocerys resedae* was swept at Grace Dieu on 12 October.

Singles of the Mirid *Pantilius tunicatus* were at Grace Dieu on 15 October and at Bede Island on 7 October, swept from Birch.

Diptera

Very few records this quarter, mostly hoverflies

Several hoverflies *Syrphus ribesii* were



Pantilius tunicatus © Steve Woodward

round the pond margins in Victoria Park on 9 October and odd specimens were in the hedge margins on Ethel Road from 20 – 30 October.

Syrphus vitripennis was recorded from Humberstone Park on 4 October and Birstall on 11 October.

Eupoedes luniger Singles in Abney Street, Leicester on 5 October and at Washbrook NR on 11th and in Evington Park from 20 to 30 October.

Episyrphus balteatus Just two records, both in November from Abbey Park on 3rd and Grace Dieu on 6th.

The distinctive *Myathropa florea* – one at Washbrook NR on 11 October.

Eristalis pertinax - only one record from Ethel Road on 27 October but *Eristalis tenax* was widespread throughout October.

The Soldier Fly *Sargus bipunctatus*. City General Hospital grounds, female on 6 October, and a single female in Evington Park on 18 October. The striking red and black female lays its eggs in cow dung or rotting vegetation.

Hymenoptera: Apocrita

Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*

Queens were recorded from Barlestone on 7, 15 & 17 October. The only other sighting for this species is from Quorn with queens reported from 27 October to 16 November, workers were present on *Lonicera fragrantissima*,

gathering pollen, on the 20, 22 & 23 November but, not surprisingly, no activity reported in December.

White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lucorum*. Just one record, a queen on Jasmine at Barlestone on 18 October.

Red-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lapidarius*.

Two records; one at Aylestone Meadows on 20 October and a queen at Birstall, Mill Close on the 5th, later found dead on the 8th.

Common Carder Bee *Bombus pascuorum*. A few more records of this species; a few singles at Barlestone, last seen here on 11 October. Bede Island had up to four on White Dead-nettle on 20th with a similar number at Victoria Park on 21st and the last record in Ethel Road on 27 October

Hornet *Vespa crabro*.

Several were still active during October, at Quorn on the 9th, 30 or more along a hedgerow at Stanford on Soar on 18th and several patrolling the tops of holly trees at Grace Dieu on 27 October.

Norwegian Wasp *Dolichovespula norvegica* - one swept from a tree in Appleton Park on 15 October.

Coleoptera

Ladybirds

7-spot Ladybirds. Widely recorded during October and still active at Birstall, Humberstone Park, Great Central Way, Evington Park, a hedgerow in Abbey Park and Quorn. PHG records ten hibernating in the leaf axils of *Euphorbia* in his garden and several still present in December, despite severe frosts.

Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis*. - just one record of activity in Abbey Park on 3 November.

Three **22-spot Ladybirds *Psyllobora 22-punctata*** and one **Orange Ladybird *Halzia-16 guttata*** were at Washbrook NR on 11 October.

The only other record for this section was of the small rove beetle *Micropeplus fulvus* in soil at Grace Dieu on 4 November.

Howard Bradshaw

Due to an editorial oversight, the Coleoptera report for the third quarter of 2010 was omitted from Heritage 199, so it has been included in this issue.

The Longhorn Beetle *Agapanthia villosoviridescens* was swept from a damp meadow at Little Stretton on 8 August. This is my first record for this species for over ten years in this region. In recent years more records have come from the Charnwood Forest area. It is a stem nester, usually in thistles.

Other records from this group are *Grammoptera ruficornis*, several on Ragwort at Ulverscroft NR on 23 July, at Grace Dieu - many on 25 July and *Rutpela maculata* several on hogweed and bramble Grace Dieu on 4 July.

Burying Beetles *Nicrophorus humator* and *Nicrophorus investigator* were attracted to PHG's light trap at Quorn in July and in September. He also had 15 of the Dung Beetle *Aphodius rufipes* on his light trap on 24 September. The Dung Beetle *Margarinotus brunneus* was also found at Birstall Meadow Lane Allotments, one dead in a compost heap on 1 July, *Lagria hirta* was also recorded at the same site, the larva of which feed on decaying matter.

Lesser Stag Beetles *Dorcus parallelipedus* were recorded from Grace Dieu, Birstall Meadow Lane Allotments and Loughborough in July and early August.

Ladybirds

As usual, members submitted many records for this group, with the **7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella 7-punctata***, predictably, the most widespread species recorded, active throughout the quarter, with the Harlequin *Harmonia axyridis* not far behind in numbers. On the Abbey Park Canal margins many were still present on 30 September, mostly *succinea* at this site with a few larva.

2-spot Ladybirds *Adelia 2-punctata* were less in evidence, recorded from Dadlington, Grantham Canal, Abbey Park, Appleton Park and Birstall, where they were described in good numbers at Birstall Meadow Lane Allotments and elsewhere in this area.

14-spot Ladybirds *Propylea 14-punctata* were also widely recorded from, Dadlington,

Grace Dieu, Quorn, Hamilton, Bede Island, Little Stretton and Stoughton Airfield.

22-spot Ladybirds *Psyllobora 22-punctata* from Hamilton, Abbey Park, Barkby Holt, Washbrook NR, Grace Dieu, Dadlington, Groby and Shenton Estate where many were swept from crops on 10 August.

Several **16-spot Ladybirds *Tytthaspis 16-punctata*** were swept from long grass Grace Dieu on 15 August; others were from Aylestone Meadows, Barkby Holt and Willow Brook Park but only in small numbers.

Cream-spot Ladybird *Calvia 14-guttata* were less in evidence with records from Abbey Park, Willow Brook Park and Ethel Road in an old hedgerow, with a maximum of three at any site.

10-spot Ladybirds *Adalia 10-punctata* fared little better, with singles from Birstall, Grace Dieu and Ethel Road in Leicester.

Orange Ladybirds *Halyzia 16-guttata* is a cause for concern, with just a single record at Monks Rest in Leicester during August, making just two records for 2010. In 2004 PHG recorded up to 21 on his M/V light trap and it was widely recorded in 2008. It was in 2006 that the Harlequin first appeared in the county and continued to spread throughout in the following years. This may have made an impact on some of our ladybird species, particularly those that have relatively smaller colonies in our hedgerows.

The only record of **Adonis Ladybirds *Adonia variegata*** submitted was of six on sparsely vegetated waste ground Great Central Way on 6 September. At Appleton Park, Leicester on 4 September, I swept a **24-spot Ladybird *Subcoccinella 24-punctata*** from long grass, this is the first time I have recorded this widespread grassland species and as far as I am aware, this has not so far been recorded by any of our members.

Weevils

Figwort Weevil *Cionus scrophulariae* was reported as common all over *Buddleia globosa* at Birstall Meadow Lane Allotments in July and the **Pea Weevil *Sitona lineatus*** was common in the Aylestone Meadows in August.

Howard Bradshaw

OTHER RECORDS

We have also had records of:

Fungi from Ulverscroft NR, Grace Dieu and Cademan.



Pink (or Balerina) Waxcap © Steve Woodward

Leafminers from Birstall and Watermead.

Lichen, a Gall, Centipedes, Millipedes, Earthworms, Woodlice, Barkfly, and a snail. The freshwater sponge *Spongilla lacustris* was spotted by SFW in the Grace Dieu Brook and determined by Karen Evans.

Mosses from Bardon and Buck Hill.

WEATHER

October 2010 experienced a changeable weather pattern. Air temperatures averaged 14.2°C, which is 0.3°C above normal. Night-time temperatures were about 7°C giving us an overall mean of 10.3°C, which is 0.3°C above the long-term average. Rainfall totalled 75 mm at Nanpantan, which is 13% above normal while at Mountsorrel I recorded 66 mm, which is 5% above normal. It was a sunnier month than usual with a sunshine total of 118 hours, 10% above normal. Winds were variable with the maximum gust of 32 mph at Mountsorrel on the 27th.

The month began on a very wet note. Jim Lofts station at Nanpantan recorded 18.4 mm on the 1st with 15.6 mm falling at Mountsorrel on the 3rd. The first three days of the month saw nearly 40 mm of rainfall or two thirds of the

monthly total. It became drier and brighter in the second week before winds on the 9th turned to the south. This brought some very warm air northwards from the Mediterranean. Temperatures on the 10th reached 19.4°C at Mountsorrel and 19°C at Nanpantan. That night saw some very high minimum temperatures with temperatures not falling below 13°C. It then began to cool off before rain arrived on the 15th. Colder air resulted in our first air frost of the season on the 17th when temperatures dropped to -0.5°C at both stations. The 20th proved to be a very cold day with maximum temperatures at Mountsorrel reaching just 8.7°C or 5°C below normal. The cold arctic airflow did allow for plenty of sunshine however with 9.3 hours recorded on the 20th. The other night of air frost was recorded on the 25th with temperatures at Nanpantan falling to -0.5°C while at Mountsorrel I recorded my coldest night of the month at -1.5°C. The month ended on a milder note but there was some rain at times. So all in all an average October in most respects with a mix of rain and sunshine and our first air frosts of autumn.

November 2010 really did turn out to be a record breaker locally but not just in terms of cold weather but early in the month we had some exceptionally mild weather too. Afternoon temperatures averaged 7.9°C at both stations with minimum temperatures close to 2.3°C. This made the mean temperature 5°C about 1.3°C cooler than usual. In fact it was the coolest November since 1988 and only 11 have been cooler than this month in the last 100 years. Rainfall was below average at Mountsorrel with just 34 mm recorded for the month or 40% less than usual. At Nanpantan, however, Jim Lofts, recorded double this figure at 68 mm, which was fractionally above normal. Sunshine totals meanwhile registered at 76 hours at Mountsorrel a little higher than usual. Winds blew from all directions during the month and they gusted up to 37 mph on the 11th.

The month began with southerly winds and exceptionally mild temperatures. On the 4th I recorded a max of 16.8°C at Mountsorrel while Jim logged 16.5°C at Nanpantan. These two figures rank as some of the warmest November days ever recorded and Jim has been recording in Loughborough for nearly 50 years! That night

we also recorded one of the warmest November nights ever recorded with a balmy minimum temperature of 14°C in Loughborough the highest ever recorded for this month. It turned wet in the second week with 17.5 mm falling on Loughborough on the 8th and another 8 mm on the 9th but temperatures were starting to fall. On the 20th winds turned into the North and blew in that direction for five days. This brought south an exceptionally cold air mass that had been gathering over Scandinavia for ten days and on the 25th it swept into the UK. The last four days of the month were the coldest for nearly 50 years. Snow began falling on the 25th and as the winds turned to the east, temperatures stayed close to freezing by day for a week and dropped to -10.2°C at Mountsorrel on the 28th and -9.5°C was logged in Loughborough on the same night. That day our maximum temperature of -1°C was the coldest November day for 50 years and parts of Leicestershire had their coldest November night for 104 years with temperatures dropping to -12°C. Snow fell on the 28th but the heavy falls arrived on the 30th when the Loughborough district received 15 cm or six inches as the snow arrived from the North Sea. Temperatures dropped again to -9°C on the 30th at Mountsorrel. In just three weeks we had gone from a high of 17°C to a low of -11°C a total difference of 28°C. This goes to show what effect different wind directions have on our weather. So I broke all my November weather records for warmth and cold in the same month. I have been recording the weather for 20 years but have never experienced such a truly remarkable weather month like this one.

December was the coldest since 1890. In our area very cold Decembers are very rare and during the 20th century there were just two in 1950 and 1981. This December proved colder than both of these. Jim Lofts at Nanpantan recorded afternoon maximums averaging just 2°C and mine in Mountsorrel were similar. These figures are 4.2°C below normal. Night-time temperatures averaged -2.7°C, which was 4.5°C below normal. This gave us a mean temperature of -0.3°C. This was the first sub zero mean temperature since February 1986. The normal mean for December is 4.5°C and this shows just how cold it was. During the month I had eight ice days at Mountsorrel. These are days where

the temperature stays below freezing for the entire 24 hour period .Jim recorded a seven day period from the 16th where the temperature at his station remained constantly below freezing! There were 20 air frosts recorded with the lowest temperature being recorded by Jim on December 7th when the temperature dropped in Loughborough to -13°C.

Shepshed recorded a minimum of -13.3°C with East Midlands airport recording similar values. The other aspect to the month was how dry it was compared to normal. Just 30 mm fell at Nanpantan or only 40% of the usual figure and only 24 mm was recorded at Mountsorrel or 37% of the usual total. The dry weather was caused by blocking areas of high pressure keeping the mild and moist Atlantic air away from our shores and deflecting it up to Iceland and Greenland. Sunshine totals were close to average at 62 hours but the pattern showed a few very high totals in the clear arctic air where other days there was none at all. In fact at Mountsorrel I recorded 12 days with no sunshine whatsoever. Winds mainly came from a northerly direction with a top gust of 29 mph. The month began with a bitter first week with heavy snow falling on the 1st which gave between 10 and 15 cm in Loughborough but the villages to the south of the area escaped the worst. After a brief thaw on the 3rd the cold returned with bone-chilling days and nights. This first freezing air mass had come to us from Northern Russia and had arrived on November 26th making it the earliest period ever recorded for such frigid air to arrive. The period of the 9th to the 16th did see a brief thaw with temperatures climbing to 10°C on the 11th but the lying snow had barely disappeared before a new bout of freezing air arrived and this time directly from Greenland and the north pole. This was equally as cold as the original air mass and this gave us another ten days of bone-chilling temperatures both night and day. I recorded 12 days when snow actually fell while Jim observed 15 days when snow covered more than 50% on the ground. The 18th saw heavy snowfalls affect much of Britain but we escaped that particular fall but our turn came on the 22nd when between 8 and 15 cm of snow fell for all of us. This lay for five days including Christmas day but no snow fell on the day itself so technically Christmas was not white! Finally, on Boxing Day,

evening temperatures began to rise to leave us a less cold but dull and foggy final few days of the month.

So ended another remarkable weather month in what has been a very memorable weather year!

Phil Morrish

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preferably by 15 April.