



No. 220

1 October - 31 December 2015

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## CLASSIFIED RECORDS

The original records from which *Heritage* is compiled will no longer be archived at the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre, County Hall. The committee is looking for a new home for them.

### MAMMALS

Several members have sent in **Hedgehog** sightings this quarter, one was reported to HB by a gardener in Spinney Hill Park in November, the first there for several years; SFW had fresh droppings in his Groby garden on 11 October; one was photographed in the garden on a trail camera on 23 & 24 October, and one was crossing a road in Groby on 1 November about 9 pm. PJD had droppings in her Quorn garden on 13 and 27 October, TB had one sleeping in her hedgehog house in Quorn but it was

not in hibernation as it was not always in the house and was seen in the garden in the first week of January. HI had one in her Woodhouse garden – snapped by a trail camera on the night of 5 October. A small one and a larger one, who weighed in at 640 g, came for food several nights between early October and 12 November. A neighbour in Woodhouse had one or two different ones visiting her garden. Hedgehogs seem to have been late going into hibernation – the weather was mild in late autumn.

HB noticed plenty of molehills in Leicester Arboretum in October and **Moles** were active in DAP's Swithland garden throughout the quarter. Molehills were noted in Empingham in October and at Kings Norton, Illston on the Hill and Tamborough Hill, Gaulby on 29 December.

No shrew reports this quarter.

The only bat reports came from JG's Cropston garden when **Common Pipistrelle** was sound recorded on 23 December when temperatures were very mild.

There have been up to six **Rabbits** in a Swithland garden and one was squashed on the A47 near Tugby. Below the Laughton Hills near the GU Canal three live rabbits were noted.

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## BIRDS



*Grey Squirrel © Steve Woodward*

**Grey Squirrels** were seen in a garden at Burrough on the Hill and by the GU Canal near Theddingworth Lodge. Squirrels were noted throughout the quarter in Spinney Hill Park and two were feeding on bird food at St George's Church in Leicester on 4 December.

No voles or mice were noted.

A **Brown Rat** was caught by the trail camera in a Woodhouse garden on 5 October and on 10 October. In the same garden, four young rats were climbing up the Hollyhock stems in daylight to eat the seeds.

A dead **Red Fox** was noted on the A6 near Wanlip. DAP found Fox droppings in his garden throughout the quarter and saw Foxes in the garden at 8 am on 11 October and at 7 am on 27 October. One was crossing a Groby road on 1 November about 6 pm and one was seen crossing the road in the middle of Sibleby at 9.45 pm on 16 November.

**Badgers** have a well-worn track through DAP's Swithland garden and an adult was seen on Wood Lane in Quorn on 2 October and one crossing a road near Swithland on 19 October at 11 pm.

**Muntjac** were noted by five members – a dead one on the A6 near One Ash, Quorn on 10 December and another roadkill at Long Whatton. Live ones were seen at Castle Gardens in Leicester, near Woodhouse and two flushed from brambles at Ulverscroft NR in November. One was drinking at the shoreline of Cropston Reservoir just after noon on 6 December. If anyone sees a Muntjac in Bradgate Park, do let us know, as we have no records from there although they have been seen nearby at Warren Hill.

**Helen Ikin**

Swithland Reservoir had regular counts of over 50 **Mute Swans** but the highest total of the quarter was 103 at Watermead Park on 16 November. A single **Whooper Swan** was at Swithland Reservoir on 21 November. A **Pink-footed Goose** was at the same site on the same day. On 3 December there was one at Groby Pool and two on the 28th. The only big number of **Canada Geese** was at Swithland Reservoir on 21 October when 150 were counted. An **Egyptian Goose** was at Groby Pool in early December. Small numbers of **Greylag Geese** were seen in some areas but all seemed to congregate at Swithland Reservoir where the maximum number was 242 on 18 November.

What were probably the same two **Shelduck** were noted at Groby Pool and Cropston Reservoir intermittently from late October until Christmas. A few **Mandarin Duck** were around Charnwood with a maximum of 28 at Swithland Reservoir on 17 November. The only counts of over a hundred **Wigeon** were at Watermead Park with 134 on 16 November. **Gadwall** were observed at six different waters but again Watermead Park on the same day held 108, the highest total. High counts of **Teal** came from Swithland Reservoir with 112, Wanlip Meadows 150 and again Watermead Park with the highest number, 199 on 15 December. Although there were good numbers of **Mallard** around the area, Watermead Park again provided the highest number with 142 on 16 November. Swithland Reservoir had the only **Pintail** record with one on 8 and 26 October. Also on the latter date was a **Garganey** which had also been reported the previous day. **Shoveler** were only noted at Swithland Reservoir with 20, Cossington Meadows 20 and Watermead Park where there were 55 on 15 December.



*Gadwall © Steve Woodward*

Two female **Red-crested Pochard** of questionable pedigree were seen on the canal in Leicester on 18 December. The only **Pochard** reported were at Albert Village and Watermead Park but only up to 13 birds. **Tufted Duck** in small numbers were at the suitable waters but again the most were at Watermead Park with 172 on 16 November and 159 on 15 December. What appears to have been a first-winter female **Scaup** was present occasionally at Swithland Reservoir during November and December. Apart from one bird occasionally at Groby Pool all other reports of **Goldeneye** came from Swithland Reservoir with a maximum of 23 on 18 November. Five **Goosander**, increasing to seven, were at Watermead Park in mid-December.

It is perhaps not surprising that there were no **Partridge** reported this quarter but only one record of **Pheasant** - five birds, must be under recording!

A **Great Northern Diver** put in an appearance at Swithland Reservoir on 3 December and stayed for just one day.

Double-figure numbers of **Cormorant** were at Watermead Park and Groby Pool but Cropston Reservoir regularly held more with 91 on 8 November. **Little Egret**, usually singles, were to be found at most stretches of water irregularly throughout the quarter. However there were ten at Swithland Reservoir on 9 October. Although seen in greater numbers there were actually less reports of **Grey Heron**. Again, Swithland Reservoir held the greatest number with 11 on 1 December.

There were small numbers of **Little Grebe** on most of the suitable waters until the end of the year but 14 were present at Albert Village Lake in October and November. Small numbers of **Great Crested Grebe** were at Swithland and Blackbrook Reservoirs, Watermead Park, Albert Village and Sence Valley Forest Park. Throughout the quarter Cropston Reservoir had far more than the other sites with a maximum of 42 on 7 November.

Surprisingly, with the amount of **Red Kite** around there were only two records, one at Barsby on 20 October and one at Dunton Bassett on 18 November. A single **Hen Harrier** was in Bradgate Park on 2 October.



*Sparrowhawk with Woodpigeon © Jim Graham*

**Sparrowhawk** were widespread with lots of garden records, all sightings were of single birds apart from two together in a Groby garden on 2 October. **Buzzard** numbers appear to be down on recent quarters but they were widespread, the highest number together was seven over Sheet Hedges Wood on 4 October.

**Kestrel** numbers seem to be increasing as there were more records of this species than any other raptor. They were noted in around 20 different sites usually singles but two together were seen at Kelham Bridge and Broombriggs Farm. Single **Peregrine** were seen at Ibstock and Groby Pool but a pair was noted at Swithland Reservoir and also regularly over Leicester city centre. One was seen mobbing a Raven over Buddon Quarry on 1 December.

**Water Rail** were reported from Dishley Pool and Groby Pool where two were noted on three different occasions. There were the same number of **Moorhen** records as Water Rails but in far greater quantity, the most being 34 at Watermead Park on 16 November. There were even less **Coot** reports but again higher number of individuals with Albert Village Lake recording 117 on 15 November.

Wanlip Meadows was the only site where **Golden Plover** were noted with the highest count being 100 on 14 October. With the birds on that day were 200 **Lapwing**. Watermead Park and Cropston Reservoir also held flocks of over a hundred Lapwing during the quarter.

Four **Dunlin** were present at Swithland Reservoir on 21 November. Small numbers of **Snipe** were reported from the usual marshy areas, five at Kelham Bridge on 15 October, was the highest count. A **Woodcock**, the only record, flew over Hinckley Road, Leicester at

dusk on 26 October. **Green Sandpiper** were noted throughout the quarter at Cropston Reservoir with a maximum of three on a few occasions. Singles were also seen at Swithland Reservoir and Kelham Bridge.

Apart from 220 **Black-headed Gulls** at Cropston Reservoir and 400 at Dishley Pool and a **Glaucous Gull** at Groby Pool on 1 December, no other gull species reached double figures on the local reservoirs. The exception was Albert Village Lake where all the gull maxima were noted. Namely 2500 **Black-headed Gull** on 13 December, nine **Common Gull** and 650 **Lesser Black-backed Gull** on the same day. 61 **Herring Gull** on 15 November, two **Yellow-legged Gull** on 18 October, two **Caspian Gull** on 13 December and 24 **Great Black-backed Gull** on 15 November. Although none was reported this quarter it is understandable that there is usually a Peregrine in this area!

Two **Stock Dove** in JG's garden at Cropston and three in my own garden, both in December were the only reports of this species. **Woodpigeon** were only noted in single figures, the exception being 2500 in Bradgate Park on 25 October. **Collared Dove** do seem less common at the moment but there is probably more about than 11 at Ibstock and two at Loughborough.

A **Barn Owl** (the only one of the quarter) was seen at Cossington Meadows on 27 October. All **Little Owl** records were from Bradgate Park in all three months of the quarter. **Tawny Owl** were a little more widespread with sightings or calling birds in ten different locations. One or two **Short-eared Owl** were seen regularly at Cossington Meadows throughout the quarter.

**Kingfisher** were noticed regularly at Groby Pool, Swithland Reservoir and Bradgate Park as well as odd sightings at two or three other suitable sites.

Woodpecker sightings were in short supply with marginally more Green than Great Spotted. **Green Woodpecker** were noted in six places including a garden in Loughborough and **Great Spotted Woodpecker** in five which included two gardens in Loughborough and one in Cropston. The latter species is now a regular garden visitor and is no doubt under recorded.

The only **Magpie** report of note was a group

of 20 at Kelham Bridge on Boxing Day. **Jay** were seen in various places around Charnwood with three together at Groby Pool and Cropston Reservoir. In the early days of the club the next sentence would have been unthinkable. **Raven** were by far the most reported corvid. They were noted in eight areas, all on Charnwood, apart from two over Ibstock and one at Browns Hill Quarry. Two birds together were regularly seen in the Buddon Quarry area.

Most of the **Goldcrest**, **Blue Tit**, **Great Tit** and **Coal Tit** reports were of garden sightings, six Blue Tit and six Great Tits being the highest counts. Unfortunately, the only place to see **Willow Tit** was again Kelham Bridge with occasional sightings there until the year's end. Likewise **Marsh Tit** were only noted in the Swithland Reservoir area.

Three **Swallow** and eight **House Martin** over Groby Pool on 4 October were the last of the hirundines of the year.

Single **Cetti's Warbler** were heard at Cossington Meadows and Kelham Bridge in late October.

Nearly all **Long-tailed Tit** observations were of groups around ten. The largest numbers were 15 at Glenfield Hospital, Knighton and Swithland Reservoir all in December.

Over wintering **Blackcap** were found in gardens in Cropston, Quorn and Loughborough all in December.

**Nuthatch** seem to have been in the area around Quorn, Bradgate Park and Swithland Reservoir with garden visits in Quorn and Loughborough. Two birds together were mentioned on two occasions. **Treecreeper** were seen at Groby Pool, Bradgate Park, Buddon Wood, Kelham Bridge and Cropston Reservoir where there were three together on 13 December.

Almost all the **Wren** records were of garden visitors, never more than three together. The only major **Starling** counts were at Cropston Reservoir with 100 on 8 November and at Kelham Bridge with 200 at dusk on 26 December.

In a winter with few migrants, **Fieldfare** were seen in groups of six, 22, 32, 42, 50 and 100, the latter being at Charnwood Lodge on 27 October.

The most **Song Thrush** in one area were four at Cropston Reservoir on 13 December. There were few other reports. Although there were more **Redwing** flocks noted than Fieldfare, there were only three flocks in double-figures with a maximum of 60 in Bradgate Park on 10 November. Bradgate Park also had seven **Mistle Thrushes** on the same day. They were only seen at three other sites with no more than two birds.

A single **Stonechat** was in Bradgate Park on 22 November.



*Stonechat © Steve Woodward*

A garden in Loughborough was the main site for **House Sparrow** with a regular double-figure counts and a maximum of 48 in all three months of the quarter. At least we have a **Tree Sparrow** record this quarter; there were seven at Low Woods Farm, Belton on 9 November.

**Grey Wagtail** seem to be doing well with sightings of one or two birds at most of the reservoirs and wet areas. **Pied Wagtail** on the other hand had fewer reports but in greater numbers. There were 23 in Bradgate Park on 5 October and 50 in Loughborough on 25 November. All **Meadow Pipit** were found in Bradgate Park with 263 counted migrating over the park on 2 October. There was a **Rock Pipit** at the same site on 25 October and another at Swithland Reservoir two weeks earlier.

Reports of finches were scarce with a maximum of 41 **Chaffinch** in Bradgate Park on 25 October, two single **Brambling** in gardens at Hugglescote and Quorn, both in December. Twenty **Greenfinch** were in a garden at Cropston on 23 November and 45 **Goldfinches** in the same garden on the same day. More **Siskin** were evident with a few double-figure counts. A flock at Groby Pool reached 120 on 1 December. Around 100 **Linnet** were regularly

seen at Cropston Reservoir in December. Most of the **Lesser Redpoll** records were from gardens with a maximum of 11 at Quorn on Christmas Eve. Single **Crossbill** were in Bradgate Park throughout October and there was one at Swithland Reservoir on 1 December. Single **Bullfinch** were occasionally seen but there were five at Cropston Reservoir on 13 December.

The only buntings seen were three **Yellowhammer** at Newtown Linford on 4 October. Unfortunately there was not one **Reed Bunting** mentioned!

**Bas Forgham**

### REPTILES, AMPHIBIANS and FISH

The Reptile, Amphibian and Fish report for this quarter will be combined with the first quarter of 2016 and will appear in the next Heritage. Please send in your records so that Tony has something to write about.

### MOTHS

### BEETLES

The Moth and Beetle reports will also be combined with the next quarter.

### DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

It is usual for there to be few fourth-quarter records but disappointingly there were just five concerning three species all in October.

The only record of **Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** was a single at Woodthorpe Pond on the 8th. A single male **Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*** was noted in the Reedbed Reserve at Watermead Park on the 14th.

Small numbers of **Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*** were found at three sites. Single males were noted resting on the side of the brook in the War Memorial gardens in Quorn on the 1st and at Woodthorpe Pond on a warm early afternoon of the 8th whilst eight were in the Reedbed Reserve at Watermead Park on the 14th.

**Jim Graham**

## BUTTERFLIES

Some eight species were positively identified during the quarter but apart from a **Peacock *Inachis io*** in HBH's Loughborough garden on 11 November and the exceptional sightings of two **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*** in December in LWP's Rothley garden on the 1st and in a garden on Scraftoft Lane belonging to the gardener at Spinney Hill Park, per HB, on the 2nd; all other reported sightings were during October and mostly during the first half of the month.

Single **Large White *Pieris brassicae*** were seen by HB at Leicester Arboretum on 9 October and Castle Gardens on the 26th. Unidentified whites, either Small or Green-veined, were noted on the wing in early October.

A late, rather ragged **Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*** was still active at Buddon Wood South Mound on 1 October.

The **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** was reported seen in nine well scattered localities during October, often visiting Ivy blossom but also Michaelmas Daisy flowers in HS's Quorn garden where two were present on 9th. All other sightings reported were of singletons and the last one reported was in HBH's Loughborough garden on 26th.

The only **Painted Lady *Cynthia cardui*** reported was along Great Central Road, Loughborough during October but the precise date of this sighting is not known.

**Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*** were observed in five localities during October and a maximum of three were present in FTS's Barlestone garden on the 4th. The last sighting reported was in EPT's Loughborough garden on the 11th.

Late **Comma *Polygonia c-album*** were noted in six localities during October with four in the grounds of Twycross Zoo on the 1st and the same number in Leicester Arboretum on the 9th. Other sightings were all of single individuals.

The **Speckled Wood *Parage aegeria*** was found in seven widely spread localities and two were present at Charnwood Lodge NNR on the 1st and at Buddon Brook Meadows and Evington Park on the 9th. The last sighting reported was on Great Central Way in Leicester on the 13th.

On behalf of the Club, I wish to thank the 15 or so members and friends who made the effort to report their sightings throughout the year.

Peter Gamble

## OTHER INSECTS

Despite the temperatures this quarter being some of the mildest recorded for this period, very few insects were noted anywhere, most having hibernated or died off.

### Hemiptera

Just five species reported.

Three **Green Shieldbug *Palomina prasina*** were resting on vegetation in Castle Gardens on 26 October not yet in hibernating colours. A single **Parent Bug *Elasmucha grisea*** was on Silver Birch Leicester Arboretum on the 9th and two **Juniper Shieldbugs *Cyphostethus tristitatus*** at Monks Rest on Lawson's Cypress on 26 November. Also on Lawson's Cypress were two ***Rhopalus subrufus*** in hibernating colours at Humberstone Park on the same date.

A single ***Pantilius tunicatus*** was on Alder at Leicester Arboretum on 20 October.

### Diptera

Very few Hoverflies were reported this quarter, reflecting the poor season most of them had.

Two ***Syrphus ribesii*** were reported, both in the city, one on Beatty Avenue on Ivy on 12 October and one on *Mahonia* in Spinney Hill Park on 18 November.

One ***Eupeodes luniger*** was seen in Spinney Hill Park, also on the 18th.

***Episyrphus balteatus***, had again just one record, a single at Great Central Way on Ivy on 13 November.

PHG managed to find two **Sun flies *Helophilus pendulus*** in his Quorn garden on 9 October.

HI & SFW had singles of the distinctive hoverfly ***Myathropa florea*** at Empingham and Cossington in October, both on Ivy.

The only **Drone Fly *Eristalis tenax*** we have for this quarter is a single at Spinney Hill Park on the 25 November and 7 December on *Mahonia*.

We are really scraping the barrel this quarter!

## Soldier Flies

The **Yellow-legged Centurion *Sargus flavipes***, one was seen briefly on Ivy at Great Central Way, Aylestone on Ivy on 13 October.

## Hymenoptera Social Bees

One of the few species that have been more in evidence this quarter, has been **the Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris***, PHG had them active in his Quorn garden from 2 November, with a queen and worker visiting *Mahonia* and throughout the month had further queens and workers visiting winter-flowering Honeysuckle and on 2 December still had several workers visiting Honeysuckle. Further records came from Spinney Hill Park, with a single worker on *Mahonia* in the latter part of November and one with a full pollen basket on 2 December. Two queens were also noted on *Mahonia* on 25 November and 2 December. MF observed one or two workers in Chapel Lane, Knighton also on *Mahonia*. Other queens were at Barlestone on 30 October and another reported from a garden in Thurnby Lodge on the 26 December.

The only **Red-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lapidarius*** records came from Barlestone with single queens on 1, 2 & 4 October on *Verbena*, and on flowers of *Cerinth* on 11 November.

Barlestone was the only place recorded for the **Common Carder Bee *Bombus pascuorum*** with three workers seen by FTS on 3 November and singles on 21 & 26 November.

**Hive Bees *Apis mellifera*** were on Ivy on Gartree Road and Evington Park on 9 October and also at Empingham on Ivy on the 11th.

## Social Wasps

A **Hornet *Vespa crabro*** was feeding on Ivy on 6 October at Swithland Reservoir. In Bradgate Park four were investigating holes in a wall on 19 October – possibly for hibernation sites and several visited Ivy in a Quorn garden on 26 October. **Common Wasp *Vespula vulgaris*** were active around a nest site at Leicester Arboretum on 9 October but few were seen anywhere after that – just singles reported at Monks Rest on 26 November, at St George's churchyard in Leicester – the only Serbian Orthodox church in the county, on 4 December and in Spinney Hill Park on *Mahonia* on 25

November and 7 December.

Records emphasize the importance of both Ivy and *Mahonia* flowers for the autumn insects.

Howard Bradshaw

## FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

There is little to report this quarter - very few records and none of particular interest. The main topic is the very mild weather which has resulted in some unusual records of plants in flower. These include the following:

**Lesser Celandine, Red Campion, Daisy, Ivy-leaved Toadflax, Herb Robert, Nipplewort and Cow Parsley** to name but a few.



Ivy-leaved Toadflax © Steve Woodward

These are a few from personal experience but many friends have reported unseasonal flowering of many garden plants and in *The Times* newspaper I read the BSBI had reported over 300 species in flower during December.

On a more normal level, PHG reports of a colony of **Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*** on the south mound of Buddon Wood. The rosettes of grey green leaves are very distinctive. A single flower spike was noted near this spot last June but was quickly lost, presumably eaten by Rabbits.

You will therefore agree there were no plants of interest to report this quarter.

Eric Webster

## OTHER RECORDS

Records were also received for:

Molluscs, Ants, Galls, Barklice, Aphids, Psyllids, Scale Insects, Millipedes, Mites, Mosses, Lichens, Fungi.

## WEATHER

October was a mild month with both rainfall and sunshine figures close to average. Sometimes the perception of a month is different to reality in the figures. For those of you who thought it was a fine month in many respects you are correct. October did contain 20 dry days and the heavy rain was just confined to just five days so sometimes broad brush statistics need further examination! Before I begin this month's report I wish to explain some changes in the contributors to this monthly piece. Sadly, Jim Lofts has had to retire from regular reporting from his Nanpantan station due to a variety of factors. I wish to thank him for his help and support over the years and I wish him well in the future. To provide some comparison to my data Ken Hickling, from Barrow upon Soar, who has been recording for 32 years, has agreed to step into the breach and he will provide some monthly data too! As already stated October was a mild month. Average afternoon temperatures were around 15°C, about 1°C above normal, with night time minimums logged at 7°C, about 0.5°C above the usual. The overall mean of 11°C was the ninth highest in the Barrow record which began in 1984 and was 0.7°C above the long term average.

Rainfall was higher than normal. I recorded 72 mm at Mountsorrel with Barrow logging 69 mm. The ten year average for October is 63 mm so this month saw 10% more rain than usual. Sunshine figures totalled 106 hours which was 5% below normal.

The month began dominated by high pressure. The first week saw temperatures peak at 19°C on the 1st but the first wet spell on the 5th and 6th produced 32 mm at Mountsorrel and Barrow nearly half of the monthly total! There followed a two week dry spell. On the 11th and 12th the sun shone for seven hours and it felt more like spring. The last ten days

were generally more unsettled with rain at times. It began to turn cooler too. The lowest night time temperature of 1.4°C was recorded in Barrow on the 26th which once again we avoided an October air frost. The month ended with another deluge of 14.5 mm on the 28th with another 6 mm on the 30th. So in many respects a reasonable month's weather if you avoided the rainy days.

There has been much reporting about the coming winter's weather in the national media with a variety of alarming predictions. Many of these are written by small independent groups who then sell these to tabloid newspapers for profit. These increase the circulation of these papers by readers who think they are coming from an official source. No responsible weather forecasting organisation, however, would ever try to forecast accurately more than ten days ahead with the Met. Office going for a 30 day monthly trend forecast only. The truth is that many factors can and do vary the British weather and we still do not have the technical ability to go for accurate seasonal at the present time so the message is do not panic and let us take each week at a time!

November was extremely mild but also very dull with average amounts of rainfall. Afternoon maximums averaged 12°C which is 2.5°C above normal with average night time minimums being recorded at 6.5°C again 2.5°C above usual. The mean of 9.2°C made it the warmest November on record at Barrow upon Soar. The other main feature of the month was the lack of sunshine. Only 41 hours were recorded which was less than half the usual total and this made it the dullest November since 1990 in Leicestershire. Rainfall was close to average with 63 mm falling at Mountsorrel and 53 mm at Barrow. It was a frequently windy month too as deep Atlantic depressions affected us. The most intense of these was storm Barney on the 17th that produced a very stormy Tuesday evening with winds peaking at East Midlands Airport at 62 mph and these brought down some trees, fences and roof tiles.

A very warm sub-tropical air mass affected our weather for much of the month. The opening day saw temperatures exceed 16 °C and the nights too were extremely mild. Temperatures on the 10th reached 17°C at

Barrow, making this the warmest day of November and that night I recorded a minimum of 14 °C, nearly 10 °C higher than it should have been! Low pressure from the Atlantic coupled with high pressure in central Europe combined to feed us this tropical air mass from near the Azores. There was an abrupt but temporary change on the 20th as high pressure developed to the west and a short but intense burst of Arctic air affected us. Temperatures quickly tumbled with the coldest day of the month being recorded on the 21st with just 4°C on the thermometer. We also saw a little snow in the early hours that you saw if you rose from your bed at 5am on that Saturday morning! The following night was very cold with Ken recording a low of -4.1°C at Barrow. The month's three night air frosts were recorded in this period. The arctic air also brought with it clear sunny skies with six hours of sun on the 21st and this was by far the sunniest day of a very gloomy month! The arctic air did not stay around very long and by the 24th the mild but murky gloom returned and the month finished in the same fashion as it began.

December 2015 was the warmest ever recorded in records going back to 1659! In fact December 2015 has been the only month ever where the average temperature has been exceeded by 5 °C. The stunning warmth was caused by winds that blew almost continually from the southwest with their origin from West Africa. The jet that usually brings in low pressure and blows from west to east was blocked by a large high over central Europe. This had the effect of turning the winds into the southwest and they blew northeast into Europe spreading warm air right into Scandinavia. This pattern continued for the entire month. Afternoon maximums were logged at 12.2°C which was double the usual figure of 6.2°C. Every day saw maximums above average with 24 days seeing the temperature exceed 10°C and on 21 days it exceeded 12°C. Night time temperatures were just as remarkable. The average night temperature is usually about between 1 & 2°C in December but this month saw night averages of between 6 & 7 °C more than three times the usual figure and the average night time figure for December 2015 was higher than the temperature should have been in the daytime in a normal month. The warmest day in

Mountsorrel was the 19th when I logged 15.3°C a station record for this month and on Boxing Day my warmest night was a staggering 13 °C. Only one night frost was recorded by Ken at Barrow upon Soar and that was in the early hours of New Year's Day. The lowest number of frosts he has recorded in December previously was 12 since his records began in 1984. Rainfall figures locally were close to normal with 60 mm falling at Barrow and 70 mm falling at Mountsorrel: only about 10% above the norm. The very active weather fronts that gave Yorkshire and Lancashire so much flooding thankfully ground to a halt to the north of our area and any flooding we got was mainly modest and confined to the Soar Valley. Sunshine figures were once again below normal at 55 hours or 10% below normal due to the very moist and cloudy humid air mass that dominated. So December proved to be an exceptional month for warmth and came just five years after an exceptionally cold one. So for those of us who like it mild, December was kind to us and we saw plants sprouting and the grass continuing to grow in a truly remarkable month. The winter, however, is still young yet and colder weather is on the way with some frost and a little snow possible, so keep tuned to the forecast!

**Phil Morrish**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Heritage* has been compiled from records submitted by the following members and friends:

T Bergstrom, H Bradshaw, B Croxtall, R Dandy, P J Darby, D B Forgham, M Frankum, P H Gamble, J Graham, S C Graham, D Gray, H B Hope, H Ikin, A T Onions, D A Perry, L W Purnell, A C Rose, H Shacklock, F T Smith, E P Tromans, E Webster, S F Woodward.

We are grateful to them all.

Records for the first quarter of 2016 should be sent by 15 April 2016 to:

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