

OBITUARY

Barry William Ofield

25th August, 1932 – 13th October, 2017

Cornwall Butterfly & Moth Society Honorary President & founder member

I very sadly have to report the news of the death on 13th October, 2017 of our Honorary President of Cornwall Butterfly & Moth Society & former Cornwall Butterfly Conservation chairman (2003-2005), Barry Ofield..

Barry, William Ofield was born on 25th August, 1932 in Leicester and was 85 years old when he died. He had been interested in butterflies since his childhood during the 1930's and he loved breeding butterflies and releasing the adult butterflies to enjoy their freedom. Barry led a very full life indeed and after leaving school in the years that followed the end of World War II he trained to be a butcher's boy. Following this Barry joined the RAF in 1951 for nearly 3 years where he was a PT instructor. He flew to the United States of America in 1956 where he lived and worked for just over a year with a travelling circus where he trained bears & even lions! He travelled through 40 states during this time but returned to England following being mauled by one of the circus bears which left him with nasty injuries. He returned to England on the Queen Mary ocean liner to continue his working life in various businesses including attaining the position of Managing Director of Rockwell Collins during the 1970's. He was the person who suggested the percentage button which appeared on the first pocket calculator! Barry & his 1st wife had a daughter, Bellina during the 1960's and eventually a Grandson, William. Barry married his second wife Sue in 1981 and they were very happily married for nearly 37 years. Following his retirement in 1992 Sue & Barry moved to Cornwall in 1994 and lived in a lovely house at Portmellon where he made almost daily wildlife sightings (including a staggering 131 different species of moth on 1 night alone!!) from his large garden until moving to Pendoggett, North Cornwall in 2004.

He joined the Cornwall branch of Butterfly Conservation in 1999, eventually becoming the Chairman between 2003 & 2005. He spearheaded the captive breeding part of the historic 'Reintroduction of the Heath Fritillary butterfly into Greenscoombe Woods, Lucketts' between 2005 & 2007 by using his expertise in breeding butterflies to repopulate its former stronghold in Cornwall. He, together with fellow expert breeder Tom Sleep, undertook this huge task of receiving under Natural England (then English Nature) licence, 10 female Heath Fritillary butterflies from Lydford, Devon (these originated from Cornwall on a previous captive breeding project some years before). By breeding two successive broods he was able to release over 1600 healthy Heath Fritillary butterflies into the newly restored habitat in Greenscoombe Woods at Lucketts in 2006 & 2007. A Television programme entitled 'Born to be wild' was filmed for national TV in 2007 where the Heath Fritillary breeding project was

covered in great detail and Barry played a large part in the programme. To this day, each year from late May to early July, 100's of beautiful Heath Fritillary butterflies can be seen flying at Greenscoombe Woods in East Cornwall. A real legacy to our friend & expert, Barry, that all lepidopterists throughout the Cornwall will be eternally grateful for.



Female Heath Fritillary butterfly photographed at Greenscoombe Woods, Luccombe on 6th June 2015.

He was very diligent and professional in everything he undertook whilst holding a great sense of humour which he freely shared with all who came into contact with him.

One of the highlights of his lifetime of observing butterflies throughout the world came on 20th June 2004 when I joined Barry on a visit to Penhale Sands near Perranporth on a hot mid-summer morning and witnessed the astonishing quantity of upwards of 40,000+ Silver-studded blue butterflies that were flying all over the military side of these vast dunes. Barry commented to me that they looked like confetti blowing gently around and the butterflies were in clouds that rose with every step that we took! Each cow parsley flower head in some areas had in excess of 30 of these butterflies perched on them eagerly taking in nectar in the intense sunshine (photo shown below)! Many 100's of mating pairs were seen on this day with 12 being made in a single square metre!



Silver-studded blue butterflies photographed at Penhale Sands 20th June, 2004.

Probably the most historic of his observations had to be on 25th September, 1999 where Barry had noticed 2 large butterflies flying around his next door neighbour's tree and thought that they resembled the Monarch butterflies that he was familiar with from when he lived in America many years before. A little later that morning 1 of the butterflies returned & flew around Barry's garden and it settled on a flower and it was a huge Monarch that held its large deep honey coloured wings wide open. He then phoned his friend, John Gregory who was very well known in lepidoptera circles here in Cornwall and beyond. John then kindly phoned various other folk who he knew had an interest in butterflies including me to inform them of this Monarch sighting at Barry's home in Portmellon and during the afternoon several of us, including me, visited his home to be greeted by Barry (who we had never met). He then joined us in the hunt around his village in the hope of making a rare genuine sighting of this magnificent butterfly on British soil. After 3 hours of searching we had failed to find it and were just walking back to his house to say goodbye to his wife Sue when Roger Lane yelled "Monarch!!" We saw the massive butterfly flying slowly towards us along the same road that Barry's house was in, Portmellon Park. It was approaching 5:00pm and we presume that the said butterfly was returning to the same tree in the neighbour's back garden to roost for the night. The butterfly was duly photographed by me and this individual butterfly can still be seen at the top of page 119 of the book 'A Cornwall Butterfly Atlas' which was published in 2003 (actual photograph of this butterfly shown below). Barry also kindly donated his painting of silver-studded blues to the publishers to use as an excellent frontispiece on the title page in this book.



Monarch butterfly photographed at Portmellon by Lee Slaughter on 25th September, 1999.

Barry was a true gentleman and a very helpful & friendly colleague to me whilst I was Chairman of Cornwall Butterfly Conservation and in the years that followed. He was also instrumental in helping to set up the fledgling new charity 'Cornwall Butterfly & Moth Society' in 2012 with the help and support of many enthusiasts especially Barry's good friend Keith Wilson. The Society is firmly established as a registered charity and now has over 100 members. A very friendly organisation for the butterfly & moth enthusiasts in Cornwall & further afield.

I will also mention that Barry was an excellent artist/painter of wildlife and many of his butterfly paintings were used to make greetings cards sold nationwide as well as by us at 'CBMS'.

Barry's funeral took place 1:30pm on Thursday 2nd November, 2017 at Glynn Valley Crematorium, Bodmin and was attended by his family, friends, and many colleagues from 'Cornwall Butterfly & Moth Society'.

Our thoughts and prayers must go out to his widow, Sue.

Thank you for all you did for Cornwall's butterflies Barry, especially your tremendous work on breeding the Heath Fritillaries that were re-introduced into Lucketts which can still be enjoyed more than 10 generations later in their most westerly outpost in Britain and more importantly here in Cornwall as well as being a loyal friend and a true inspiration to me and countless others.



Barry Ofield 3rd from left as Honorary President of 'Cornwall Butterfly & Moth Society' with trustees & secretary at our AGM in March 2017.

Lee Slaughter (co-founder member of Cornwall Butterfly & Moth Society & Butterfly & Moth fieldtrip organiser).