

## Leisure

# Photo call!

A READER from the Beeston Rylands writes:

"I am gathering information about 'The Rylands' that, one day, I hope we might see in print.

"What I would like are pictures of Ericsson's Fancy Dress Children's Christmas parties held in the old canteen on Trent Road, preferably between 1950 and 1954, also any Ericsson's Sports Day photographs taken on the

sports/cricket field on Meadow Road next to the railway station.

I wonder if anyone has any photographs of Ray Booty, the cyclist from Stapleford, who also worked at Ericssons around 1956.

Please find enclosed a picture of Ericsson's cricket team, taken on the Meadow Road sports field but I don't know the year that it was taken. It may be that the picture includes Larwood

and Voce, who both played at the Meadow Road ground.

The sports field used to be where the bowling green is now, and this used to be the home of Notts County in the 1860s. W G Grace also played here."

More details of the request for information and photographs can be found on page 13.

# Wildlife Watching

## Local news and views of the natural world

*AFTER a succession of cool and wet summers, this year has had much more in the way of hot dry weather - a little too dry for some.*

There is a variety of wildlife that we might associate with warm sunny days, but top of many people's list would be a butterfly. They have a level of popularity that few, if any, insects can match and, for some, are amongst their favourites of all wildlife.

In many ways, butterflies are an ideal subject for anyone wishing to gain detailed knowledge of a particularly order of British wildlife. There are fewer than 60 species that can be found in the British Isles and many, although not all, are quite distinctive and easy to identify. Another attraction of studying butterflies on the wing is that this is best done in pleasant sunny weather!

This, along with opportunity to be in the 'great outdoors' and the beauty of their quarry, was no doubt part of the appeal of what became the widespread hobby of butterfly collection.

Although for some this was simply a matter of catching, killing and mounting butterflies for the sake of building a collection, for others it was part of a serious study.

Although this type of collecting is now unacceptable and collecting, particularly in more recent years, could have had a serious impact on some species when the collecting craze took off in Victorian times, butterfly numbers would have been much higher, with many species benefiting from the widespread availability of the sort of habitats that now sometimes have to be re-created in order to conserve them!

However it was obtained in the first place, there is now a wealth of knowledge of the ecology and habitat requirements of British butterflies that anyone wishing to study them can call on. This need not be restricted to when they are flying. The preferred food plants of British butterflies are well understood and these are the places to look for their eggs, larvae and pupae. Knowing just where these plants can be found will also help you see butterflies on the wing and you may even be able to encourage some of them yourself, in parts of a garden or on other land.

The more research that is done into butterflies, clearer it becomes just how particular some species are in their habitat requirements.

A classic case is that of the large blue, which requires the presence of both wild thyme, the food plant of its larvae, and a species of ant which 'milks' the larva's honey gland, then picks it up and takes it to its nest, where the butterfly larva grows by feeding on ant larvae!! The large blue's fascinating life history was unravelled before the importance of grazing in maintaining its habitat was fully appreciated. By the time it was, it was too late

– the large blue had become extinct in this country.

There is no doubt that many butterflies lead a fragile existence and are sensitive to change. Many see changes in their distribution as indicators of climate change. The northward spread of the speckled wood is one such example – this was a rare species locally thirty years ago but is a common one now.

Despite their extensive study, it is not easy to identify exactly why many of our commonest butterflies have seriously declined in recent years. A succession of poor summers for breeding

could certainly be a factor and the recent harsh winter will not have helped, but loss of habitat ranging from 'over tidying' gardens and open areas to large swathes of agricultural land being taken out of set aside could also be involved.

Perhaps the most important information that is needed when investigating these declines is which, and how many, butterflies are out there. It is not too late to help with this by taking part in the 'Big Butterfly Count', details of which can be found at [www.bigbutterflycount.org](http://www.bigbutterflycount.org). This has been organised by Butterfly Conservation, who also do

more extensive ongoing surveys for which they always need volunteers with an interest in butterflies.

Anyone doing so could be doing both enjoyable and potentially very useful work. In support of the Big Butterfly Count, Sir David Attenborough, president of Butterfly Conservation, said: "Butterflies in profusion tell us that all is well with nature. When they decline it's a warning that other wildlife will be soon heading the same way."

Jack Smith  
Local ecologist



### Thought for the Fortnight

*"To err is Human. To really foul things up you need a computer."*

Anon

