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*THE MACRO-LEPIDOPTERA OF  
BURBAGE WOOD*

*by*

*Ray Morris*

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# THE MACROLEPIDOPTERA OF BURBAGE WOOD

R. Morris, 142 Hinckley Road, Barwell, Leics., LE9 8DN

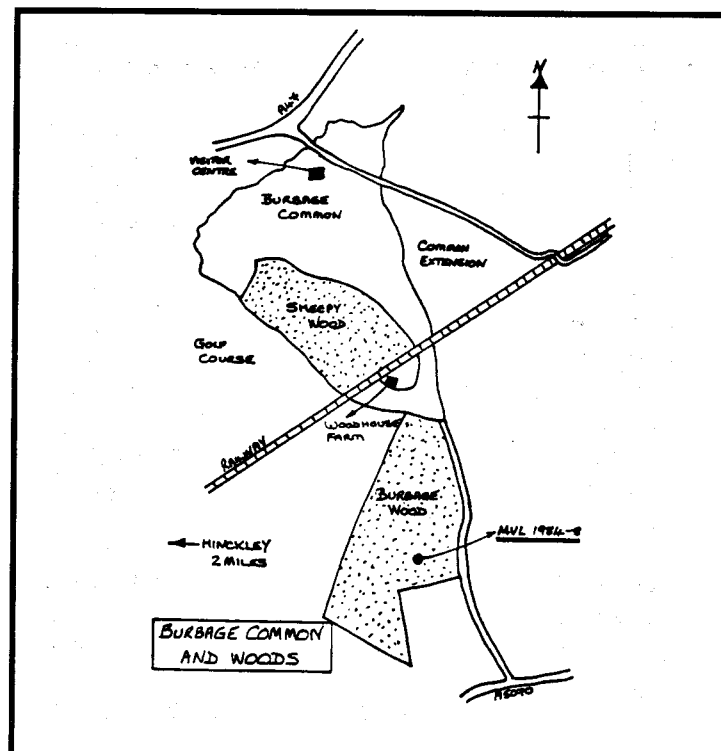
## INTRODUCTION

The south-west of Leicestershire is poorly served by nature reserves and sites of special scientific interest (SSSI). Indeed, several sites have been destroyed in recent years, either by drainage, motorway construction or quarry infilling.

When Hinckley & Bosworth Council decided that the amenity value of the Burbage Common and Woods complex was not being fully exploited, little did they realise the profound effect their decision to commission an ecological survey of the site would have on the area. The construction of a new golf course resulted in the Common no longer being treated as a fairway and, since 1984, the Common has reverted to a more heath-like appearance. As a result the summer of 1988 saw the Common awash with flowers.

The 1984 survey (Baker *et al*, 1985) recommended the proper maintenance of both the Common and Woods and a management plan was developed for the site. Since 1985, work has been carried out by the Countryside Ranger and his team in developing the complex for recreational use whilst enhancing its natural history interest. Grass cutting regimes were introduced on the Common while in the woods coppice cycles, especially for hazel, together with thinning of crowded standards have been reintroduced.

Figure 1.  
Burbage Common  
and Woods,  
Leicestershire



The results were startling. First and second year coppiced areas were wall-to-wall bluebells and wood anemones and, as light penetrated into the woodlands, the site became more attractive to insects and birds. The laying of hardcore paths seemed, initially, to be a big mistake. However, this has been a blessing in disguise. Walkers keep to the paths thus leaving much of the wood relatively undisturbed. Indeed, leachates from the paths seem to have enhanced the growth of broad-leaved helleborines and, more recently, greater butterfly orchids have appeared in greater numbers than ever seen before.

With such changes taking place, monitoring of the site has been carried out by the Countryside Ranger with particular reference to plants and birds. A small group of enthusiasts joined in this monitoring by running periodic light traps in Burbage Wood with plans to extend trapping into Sheepy Wood and onto the Common. The present report describes the findings in relation to the range of macro-lepidoptera in Burbage Wood during the period 1984 to 1988. Also included is a range of historical records associated with the wood which have been uncovered to date.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SITE

Burbage Common and Woods (Figure 1) cover approximately 74 hectares being made up of the Common (30 ha), Burbage Wood (20 ha), Sheepy Wood (13 ha) and the recently acquired Common extension (11 ha). The site is located between two major roads, the Leicester Road (A47) and Sapcote Road (A5070) leading to the M69 motorway. Lying about two miles east of Hinckley town centre, the site occupies two tetrads of SP49. A bridleway extends from Smithy Lane on the Sapcote side of the complex across the Common to Burbage Common Road near the A47. Numerous footpaths criss-cross throughout. The site is bisected by the Birmingham-Leicester railway line.

Evidence of ridge and furrow in Burbage Wood indicates that the wood is not as old as it may seem at first glance and is probably of secondary ancient woodland status. Certainly the wood has been in existence for some time as it appears on a 1777 map produced by Prior. Burbage Wood is nationally recognised and protected by provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as a SSSI. It has also been designated as a "site of ecological significance at county level" by the Leicestershire Museums Service on behalf of the county council. At this time Burbage Common and Sheepy Wood have received recognition as being of district significance.

Burbage Wood is predominantly an oak-ash woodland with derelict hazel coppice and a floristically-rich understorey. Restoration of coppicing compartments in some parts of the wood has resulted in transitory open areas where wild flowers bloom in profusion. By the end of 1988 the hazel was once again starting to shade out the ground flora in the coppiced areas. Some thinning of standard trees has allowed the growth of younger specimens thus establishing a woodland with a good age profile. This type of traditional woodland management will ensure a living, rather than dying, habitat.

## MOTH RECORDING

Little in the way of historical records exist for the wood. Father Desmond Murray of Stoke Golding carried out some recording during the 1950s and there is some evidence from the Leicestershire Museums Service that a small amount of surveying was carried prior to this in the the 1930s, 1940s and later in the 1960s. However, it was not until the 1980s that intensive monitoring was carried out using light traps. The 1980s data were generated at a single site in the woodland (Figure 1) using a 125 watt mercury vapour lamp. The light trap was run for up to four hours on any particular visit (Table 1). Occasionally a second light trap was run about 50 metres from the main trap and a Heath trap was run on a few extra occasions out of sight of the main lights.

Table 1. Dates of light trapping at Burbage Wood 1984-8.

1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
11.viii	27.v 26.vii 26.viii	5.v 26.v 7.vi 21.vi 20.vii 8.viii	25.iv 16.v 6.vi 4.vii 12.viii 24.viii 12.ix 3.x	26.iii 9.iv 23.iv 7.v 21.v 4.vi 25.vi 16.vii 30.vii 6.viii

## SPECIES OF INTEREST

1885 Clouded magpie (*Abraxas sylvata*)

A local species in Leicestershire. The record of two males and a single female in pristine condition at Burbage Wood on 25.vi.88 seems to indicate that the species is breeding at the site. Previous records were fifteen and twenty-three years ago. The wood has a substantial amount of elm suckers and some wych elm which may encourage the expansion of this population.

2335 Slender brindle (*Apamea scolopacina*)

Another local species at the wood which has been recorded in three of the five survey years but never in any numbers. The three records were all within a fortnight of each other (11.viii.84, 12.viii.87, 30.vii.88)

1662 Light orange underwing (*Archiearis notha*)

The only known record for this species at Burbage Wood was one seen on 30.iii.46. It may be advantageous to visit the wood on suitable days early in the spring to ascertain whether the wood still has a population of this moth.

2421 Scarce silver lines (*Bena prasinana*)

A local species, the larvae of which feed on oak. Only once recorded from the wood (26.vii.85).

1667 Blotched emerald (*Comibaena bajularia*)

A local species with larvae feeding on oak. Found in Burbage Wood in both 1987 and 1988 after a fourteen year gap. On the night of 4.vii.87 at least twenty perfect examples of the moth were attracted to the MVL over a two hour period indicating the likelihood that there was probably a strong population at the site.

1950 Brindled white-spot (*Ectropis extersaria*)

Nationally notable (Nb) with larvae feeding on oak and birch. The Burbage Wood record (21.vi.86) is the only known record for the south west of Leicestershire.

2031 White satin (*Leucosoma salicis*)

Found in 1984 and 1988 as singles. While classed as a local species by the NCC Invertebrate Site Register, the moth has been found at two other sites in the district but never in any numbers.

1748 Beautiful carpet (*Mesoleuca albicillata*)

Found in 1987 at dusk (4.vii.87) but also taken at MVL at two gardens in the district around the same time.

2185 Lead-coloured drab (*Orthosia populeti*)

Recorded in 1987 with identification being confirmed by the examination of the genitalia. Nationally notable (Nb).

1791 Brown scallop (*Philereme vetulata*)

This notable species (Nb) has only been recorded once at Burbage Wood (5.vii.63). The larvae feed on buckthorn of which only a few plants exist in the Burbage Common and Woods complex. The species is almost certainly extinct at the site.

100x Scorched wing (*Plagodis dolabraria*)

Even though generally distributed over Britain, the insect tends to be local. The moth was recorded at Burbage Wood on only one occasion (21.vi.86). However, a few miles away at Barwell the moth is regularly attracted to a garden light trap but is never found in any numbers.

161 Leopard (*Zeuzera pyrina*)

A local species recorded each year in the Hinckley district (although usually only singles) with only one record from Burbage Wood (26.vii.85).

SUMMARY

189 species of macrolepidoptera have been recorded at the 28 light traps run during the five year period 1984 - 1988. The following appendices detail the records obtained in that time together with information on other records from the wood. To date, Burbage Woo has a total list of 209 macrolepidoptera of which several are probably now extinct at the site. Other species, for example the clouded magpie, are probably small and vulnerable populations. Still other species are possibly vagrants. It is to be hoped that the reintroduction of traditional management to the wood will be carried out in a sympathetic way so that those species most at risk will be able to thrive.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE APPENDICES

LMS - Leicestershire Museums Service  
DPM - Father Desmond Murray moth collection  
All other records are HDNHS and the author's.

BURBAGE WOOD MACRO-LEPIDOPTERA SPECIES LIST

Species	84	85	86	87	88	Historical
<i>Abraxas grossulariata</i>	*				*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Abraxas sylvata</i>			*		*	vi.55 (DPM); 14.vi.63 (LMS)
<i>Abrostola trigemina</i>			*		*	
<i>Abrostola triplasia</i>					*	vii.53 (DPM)
<i>Acronicta megacephala</i>				*	*	vi.76 (LMS)
<i>Acronicta psi</i>		*				
<i>Acronicta rumicis</i>			*			
<i>Agrochola circellaris</i>				*		4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Agrochola litura</i>				*		4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Agrochola lychnidis</i>				*		
<i>Agrochola macilenta</i>			*	*	*	
<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>		*		*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Agrotis ipsilon</i>						4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Agrotis segetum</i>		*		*	*	
<i>Alcis repandata</i>		*		*	*	
<i>Allophyes oxycanthae</i>				*	*	
<i>Alsophila aescularia</i>				*	*	4.v.63 (LMS)
<i>Amphipyra berbera</i>				*	*	
<i>svenssonii</i>						
<i>Amphipyra pyramidea</i>				*	*	4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Amphipyra tragopogonis</i>				*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Anaplectoides prasina</i>			*	*	*	
<i>Anticlea badiata</i>				*	*	
<i>Anticlea derivata</i>				*	*	4.v.63 (LMS)
<i>Apamea crenata</i>		*		*	*	
<i>Apamea epomidion</i>				*	*	
<i>Apamea lithoxylaea</i>				*	*	
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	*		*	*	*	1963 (LMS)
<i>Apamea remissa</i>		*		*	*	

Species	84	85	86	87	88	Historical
<i>Apamea scolopacina</i>	*				*	
<i>Apamea sordens</i>			*	*	*	
<i>Apamea unanimus</i>		*			*	
<i>Archiearis notha</i>		*				30.iii.46 (LMS)
<i>Arctia caja</i>						1975 (LMS)
<i>Asthena albulata</i>					*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Atethmia centrargo</i>		*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Autographa gamma</i>		*				
<i>Autographa jota</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Autographa pulchrina</i>			*			
<i>Axylia putris</i>			*			
<i>Bena prasinana</i>		*				
<i>Biston betularia</i>		*	*	*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Brachionycha sphinx</i>					*	ix.76 (LMS)
<i>Brachylomia viminalis</i>					*	
<i>Cabera pusaria</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Campaea margaritata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Campogramma bilineata</i>						
<i>Caradrina morpheus</i>		*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Ceramica pisi</i>						
<i>Cerapteryx graminis</i>		*			*	
<i>Cerastis rubricosa</i>					*	
<i>Chloroclysta citrata</i>		*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Chloroclysta truncata</i>		*	*	*	*	4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Chloroclystis rectangulata</i>	*				*	
<i>Chloroclystis v-ata</i>	*				*	
<i>Cidaria fulvata</i>		*	*	*	*	



Species	84	85	86	87	88	Historical
<i>Cilix glaucata</i>	*	*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Colostygia pectinataria</i>				*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Comibaena bajularia</i>				*	*	5.vii.63 (LMS)
<i>Conistra vaccini</i>				*	*	4.v.63 (LMS)
<i>Cosmia trapezina</i>		*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Crocallis elinguaris</i>				*		
<i>Cryphia domestica</i>				*		
<i>Cucullia chamomillae</i>				*		
<i>Dasychira pudibunda</i>		*	*	*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Deilephila elpenor</i>			*			
<i>Diachrysa chrysitis</i>			*		*	
<i>Diarsia brunnea</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Diarsia mendica</i>		*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS)
<i>Diarsia rubi</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Dichonia aprilina</i>				*		
<i>Diloba caeruleocephala</i>				*		ix.76 (LMS)
<i>Drepana binaria</i>	*	*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Drymonia ruficornis</i>				*		
<i>Dryobotodes eremita</i>				*		4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Dypterygia scabriuscula</i>				*		ix.76 (LMS)
<i>Ecliptopera silaceata</i>			*	*	*	1963 (LMS)
<i>Ectropis bistortata</i>		*	*	*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Ectropis crepuscularia</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Ectropis extersaria</i>		*	*	*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Eilema lurideola</i>	*	*	*	*	*	vi.40 (DPM)
<i>Electrophaeas corylata</i>		*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Eligmodonta ziczac</i>			*	*	*	

Species	84	85	86	87	88	Historical
<i>Ennomos alniaria</i>	*			*	*	4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Ennomos erosaria</i>	*					24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Ennomos fuscantaria</i>	*			*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS); 4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Epirrhoe alternata</i>	*					24.viii.63 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Erannis defoliaria</i>	*					1975 (LMS)
<i>Eremobia ochroleuca</i>	*					
<i>Eulithis prunata</i>	*					
<i>Eulithis pyraliata</i>	*		*		*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Eupithecia abbreviata</i>	*			*	*	4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Eupithecia centaureata</i>	*			*	*	
<i>Eupithecia exiguata</i>	*			*	*	
<i>Eupithecia tenuiata</i>	*			*	*	
<i>Eupithecia vulgata</i>	*			*	*	
<i>Euplexia lucipara</i>	*		*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Euproctis similis</i>	*			*	*	
<i>Eupsilia transversa</i>	*			*	*	
<i>Furcula bifida</i>				*		
<i>Geometra papilionaria</i>		*	*			
<i>Graphiphora augur</i>		*	*	*		
<i>Gymnoscelis rufifasciata</i>				*		
<i>Habrosyne pyritoides</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Hadena bicruris</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Hemistola chrysopterasaria</i>		*	*		*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Hemithea aestivaria</i>		*	*		*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Hepialus hecta</i>		*	*		*	
<i>Hepialus humuli</i>		*	*		*	

Species	84	85	86	87	88	Historical
<i>Hepialus lupulinus</i>				*	*	
<i>Hepialus sylvina</i>					*	
<i>Herminia nemoralis</i>				*	*	
<i>Hoplodrina alsines</i>					*	
<i>Hydrelia flammeolaria</i>	*	*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Hydriomena furcata</i>	*		*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Hypena proboscidalis</i>					*	
<i>Idaea aversata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Idaea biselata</i>		*		*	*	
<i>Idaea dimidiata</i>	*	*				
<i>Jodis lactearia</i>					*	
<i>Lacanobia contigua</i>					*	
<i>Lacanobia oleracea</i>		*	*		*	
<i>Lacanobia thallassina</i>		*			*	
<i>Lampropteryx suffumata</i>		*		*	*	4.v.63 (LMS)
<i>Laothoe populi</i>					*	
<i>Leucoma salicis</i>	*				*	
<i>Lobophora halterata</i>				*	*	
<i>Lomaspilis marginata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Lomographa bimaculata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Lomographa temerata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Luperina testacea</i>				*		4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Lycia hirtaria</i>						
<i>Malacosoma neustria</i>		*	*			24.viii.63 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Melanchra persicariae</i>		*	*			

Species	84	85	86	87	88	Historical
<i>Menophra abruptaria</i>			*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Mesapamea secalis</i>			*	*	*	14.vi.63 (LMS)
<i>Mesoleuca albicillata</i>				*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Mimas tiliae</i>	*					24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Mythimna comma</i>		*		*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Mythimna ferrago</i>	*	*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Mythimna impura</i>	*	*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Mythimna pallens</i>	*	*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Noctua comes</i>		*	*	*	*	4.ix.63 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Noctua fimbriata</i>		*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Noctua interjecta</i>						24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Noctua janthina</i>	*	*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS)
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	*	*	*	*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Nola cuculatelilla</i>						1963 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Notodonta dromedarius</i>						1963 (LMS)
<i>Ochropleura plecta</i>		*	*	*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Odontopera bidentata</i>		*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Oligia fasciuncula</i>	*	*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Oligia strigilis</i>		*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Omphaloscelis lunosa</i>		*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	*	*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS)
<i>Orthosia cruda</i>		*	*	*	*	4.v.63 (LMS)
<i>Orthosia gothica</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Orthosia gracilis</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Orthosia incerta</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Orthosia munda</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Orthosia populeti</i>		*	*	*	*	

Species	84	85	86	87	88	Historical
<i>Orthosia stabilis</i>		*	*	*	*	4.v.63 (LMS)
<i>Ourapteryx sambucaria</i>		*	*	*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Peribatodes rhomboidaria</i>	*	*	*	*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Perizoma affinitatum</i>		*	*	*	*	15.vii.60 (LMS)
<i>Perizoma alchemillata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Perizoma didymata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Perizoma flavofasciata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Phalera bucephala</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Pheosia gnoma</i>		*	*	*	*	4.v.63 (LMS)
<i>Pheosia tremula</i>		*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Philereme vetulata</i>		*	*	*	*	5.vii.63 (LMS)
<i>Philudoria potatoria</i>	*	*	*	*	*	15.vii.60 (LMS); 1975 (LMS)
<i>Phlogophora meticulosa</i>		*	*	*	*	4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Photodes minima</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Photodes pygmaea</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Phragmatobia fuliginosa</i>	*	*	*	*	*	
<i>Plagodis dolabraria</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Poecilocampa populi</i>		*	*	*	*	1976 (LMS)
<i>Pseudoips fagana</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Pterostoma palpina</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Ptilodon capucina</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Rivula seriaceus</i>		*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Scoliopteryx libatrix</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Scopula floslactata</i>		*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Scopula imitaria</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Scotopteryx chenopodiata</i>		*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)

Species	84	85	86	87	88	Historical
<i>Selenia dentaria</i>	*		*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Selenia tetralunaria</i>		*	*	*	*	1975 (LMS)
<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>						
<i>Spilosoma luteum</i>						
<i>Thalpophila matura</i>			*	*	*	
<i>Thera obeliscata</i>				*		
<i>Tholera decimalis</i>		*	*	*	*	1963 (LMS)
<i>Thyatira batis</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Timandra griseata</i>						
<i>Trichiura crataegi</i>	*					24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Xanthia aurago</i>						
<i>Xanthia icteritia</i>		*		*		4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Xanthia togata</i>		*		*		ix.76 (LMS)
<i>Xanthorhoe ferrugata</i>	*	*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i>		*	*	*	*	
<i>Xanthorhoe spadicearia</i>						
<i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>		*		*		4.ix.63 (LMS)
<i>Xestia sexstrigata</i>	*	*	*	*	*	
<i>Xestia triangulum</i>						
<i>Xestia xanthographa</i>		*	*	*	*	24.viii.63 (LMS)
<i>Xylocampa areola</i>			*	*		
<i>Zeuzera pyrina</i>		*				