



Hampshire and Isle of Wight

# Butterfly Walks

46 species across 34 sites in 25 wonderful walks



## Geology Legend (after Woodward, 1904)

- Fluvio-marine Series
- Barton, Bracklesham and Bagshot Beds
- London Clay
- Chalk
- Upper Greensand
- Lower Greensand
- Weald Clay

## Walk Maps Legend

- Butterfly walk
- Described direction
- GPS waypoint
- Adjoining path
- Car park or lay-by parking
- Woodland

# Hampshire and Isle of Wight Butterfly Walks

By Kevin Freeborn and Ashley Whitlock



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The authors would like to thank Cheryl and Kelvin Richards and Juliet Bloss for checking some of the routes; and to Cheryl, Juliet and Clive Wood for their assistance in proof-reading the text.

Front cover image: Adonis Blue; Ramsdean Down from Butser Hill, *walk 15*

Back cover image: Small Blue; Tennyson Down; Brimstone

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This publication has been produced with care to ensure accuracy of the routes and associated information. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch of Butterfly Conservation cannot accept responsibility for errors, omissions and changes in the details presented. While the butterfly walks described use public rights of way, open access land and permissive paths normally open to the public, the countryside is not static and landowners may temporarily divert paths or close access for a designated period.

If you find an inaccuracy in the book, please contact *Butterfly Walks* via the Branch website.

# Preface

Butterfly sightings cannot be entirely guaranteed. Seeing all 46 butterflies known to breed in Hampshire and Isle of Wight is certainly no exception. And where would the fun be if it were? But armed with this guide and given some favourable weather, and a good pinch of luck, the odds in this captivating pastime of chance should be tipped in your favour.

The walks in this guide visit 34 of the best butterfly sites across both counties. Compiled between April and September 2015, Ashley and I have walked every route – many more than once, and many of the sites are known to us from visits since the early 1980s. We have seen all the species listed for each place and there is no reason why you cannot too. On the whole these are reasonably gentle, family-friendly short walks, so pick a good weather day and enjoy an unhurried time and some splendid scenery amid the chalk downs, sandy heaths, broadleaved woodland and remnant meadows in these special places of butterfly interest across Hampshire and Isle of Wight.

One day while compiling the guide, I was wandering in Cowley's Copse (Eastern Clearing), Bentley Wood, in June, wanting to see Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Having no luck, I sat on a bench to take a drink and ponder the afternoon's disappointment. After a while, as I was stowing my flask back in my rucksack, two of them suddenly appeared dancing in the air beside me.

So walk slowly and patiently. Stop regularly. Let the butterflies come to you. Stay vigilant. Every now and again allow for a modicum of disappointment and, during the course of the season, this should be more than offset by the rich rewards of some beautiful butterfly moments.

*Kevin Freeborn, March 2016*



# Walking with Butterflies

The walks described in this book follow public rights of way and/or lie across land where public access is usually permitted. Some of the routes present options for shorter circuits or longer walks. They act as an introduction to each site. Once familiar, give full rein to your natural curiosity for further exploration of other paths at each place.

Choose fine weather for going on a walk. Generally speaking, butterflies will be more active in sunny and warm conditions. On windy days seek out the more sheltered spots. As spring and summer progress, different species will be on the wing, so check the guide to adult flight periods on page 64; annual variation in adult populations is entirely typical at any site, and you may expect variation from one site to another across the region.

If you see a butterfly not on the check list (see inside back cover) please do report your sighting to the Branch at [www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk).

## **Follow the countryside code** (Natural England)

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home with you
- Keep dogs under effective control
- Plan ahead and be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs

## **Clothing and footwear**

Brambles, nettles, grass cuts and insect bites – especially ticks associated with Lyme disease, found in bracken and long grass – mean that shorts are not necessarily a wise option, even on the warmest of days. Sensible footwear is always advisable.

## **Optical aids**

Bringing binoculars has its advantages, and not just for scanning tree tops for the more elusive species such as Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak or Brown Hairstreak. Gaining a close-up view can aid the identification or sexing of a butterfly and can permit observation without the need to disturb it through trampling, casting a shadow or the inevitable noise of close proximity.

## Photography

Photographing butterflies adds interest and challenge to a walk. Sharing the best images on the Branch website or on social media is a pleasurable and informative après-walk activity.

## Records

If you don't already do it, start recording your butterfly sightings. The best method is to keep a check-list tally on each walk and then enter your observations on Living Record, see [www.livingrecord.net](http://www.livingrecord.net). Once you have an account on this website you can log all your sightings for anywhere in the UK. Butterfly Conservation's county recorders are able to access this data so that your records can aid the work of the Branch and BC nationally: the more recorders and locations for which sightings are entered, the richer the data available. Try Butterfly Conservation's butterfly recording app, *iRecord Butterflies*, which is easy to use and has a gallery to aid identification.

## Volunteering

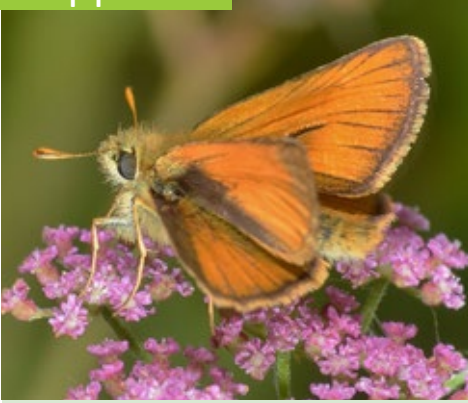
Many of the sites visited in this guide are local nature reserves, dependent upon voluntary help to maintain habitats and raise funds to support conservation activities. Do please consider becoming a volunteer to help sustain these beautiful pockets of countryside. See details on the Branch website for opportunities to join work parties at Magdalen Hill Down, Yew Hill or Bentley Station Meadow. Do support other local conservation organisations, too.

## Membership

Membership of Butterfly Conservation's Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch is a vital means of supporting the work of safeguarding butterflies and their habitats. Through its various events, field trips and work parties, the Branch is working tirelessly to seek new ways to engage existing members and to recruit new ones. Do please spread the word to family, friends and colleagues and encourage them to join the branch by visiting the main Butterfly Conservation website: [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)



# Skippers



Small Skipper



Essex Skipper



Silver-spotted Skipper



Large Skipper



Dingy Skipper



Grizzled Skipper





Clouded Yellow



Brimstone



Large White



Small White



Green-veined White



Orange-tip

## Walk 1 Magdalen Hill Down

*Owned by BC since 1989, the 'original' reserve has been extended through acquisition of adjacent land in 1997 and 2004 to create 100+ acres of magnificent chalk grassland.*

A broad ridge of chalk extending east from Winchester at the western end of the South Downs, Magdalen Hill Down is a surviving piece of traditional sheep-grazed downland that once surrounded Hampshire's county town. The reserve comprises three distinct areas. There's the Original reserve, taken in between waypoints **C** and **F**, of steep-sided unimproved grassland; this was choked with scrub when BC bought the site in 1989 and tireless work since, cutting back and managing the hawthorn, has returned the hillside to flower-rich downland. The Extension lies to the east of the Original reserve and is overlooked at waypoint **A** and circumnavigated between **A** and **C**. This was ploughed and intensively farmed after World War II and its remarkable transformation by BC since 1997, patiently restored with carefully sown native wildflower seed mixes, is a conservation triumph. The carpet of yellow Cowslips is a splendid sight in spring. Magdalen Hill Down North is the third area, lying between the Original reserve and the Alresford Road, and, sown like the Extension, is being restored to wonderful flower-filled grassland habitat. In a national context this is a flagship reserve for BC.

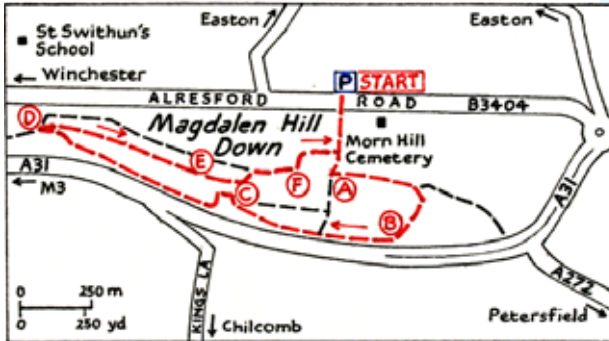
### The Walk

Cross Alresford Road and head up the track opposite passing the stonemason's yard. Go round the vehicle gate halfway up and at the top pass the reserve noticeboard (right) to reach a junction of tracks in front of a stile (**A**) overlooking the Extension part of the site.

Before the stile turn left. Walk around the perimeter of the reserve, initially with the cemetery on the left. At the end of the top section bear right with a wire fence (right) and continue to follow the reserve boundary, soon descending to the bottom corner (**B**). Follow the boundary path as it turns right. Later, climb a stile on the right and follow a field-edge path left, gradually ascending to a line of trees ahead. Here turn right and walk up to the kissing-gate (**C**).

## Magdalen Hill Down

Go through to the Original reserve. In a few paces turn left, dipping steeply to find a crossing path emerging from the left-hand hedge. Turn right, contouring along the bottom of the down. Cross a stile and continue ahead, the main road screened by a dense hedge to the left. After a path enters the reserve from the left, the way begins to ascend to ultimately intercept a wire fence. Here turn left to reach a small stockade and a pair of kissing-gates (D).



Turn right after the second gate and pass through a third kissing-gate immediately ahead, following a fence on the right. Eventually this leads to another kissing-gate (E), through which take a detour along the sinuous chalk scrape to arrive at a kissing-gate giving on to a surfaced path. Turn right and walk on to a junction with a side path (F), taking it left to pass two Morn Hill Camp information boards. The path curves right to reach a stile on the left. Climb it, turn right and take the grassy path to go over another stile on to the reserve access track. Go down the hill to return to the start.

**Site** Butterfly Conservation (BC)

**Parking** Parking area on Alresford Road, B3404, opposite the Morn Hill Cemetery entrance

**Public transport** Stagecoach services 64/65 between Winchester and Alresford stop at Morn Hill Cemetery

**Distance** 2¼ miles (3.7km)

**Terrain** Downland paths, in places steep and uneven

**OS maps** Landranger 185, Explorer OL32

**GPS waypoints**

**Start** SU 511 294

(A) SU 510 291

(B) SU 513 289

(C) SU 507 290

(D) SU 500 293

(E) SU 506 291

(F) SU 509 292

**Refreshment** Pubs and cafés in Winchester



*Kidney Vetch – larval foodplant of Small Blue*

### Ashley's picks

**Green Hairstreak** – May to Jun

**Common Blue** – May to Jun; Aug

**Brown Argus** – May to Jun;  
Aug to Sep

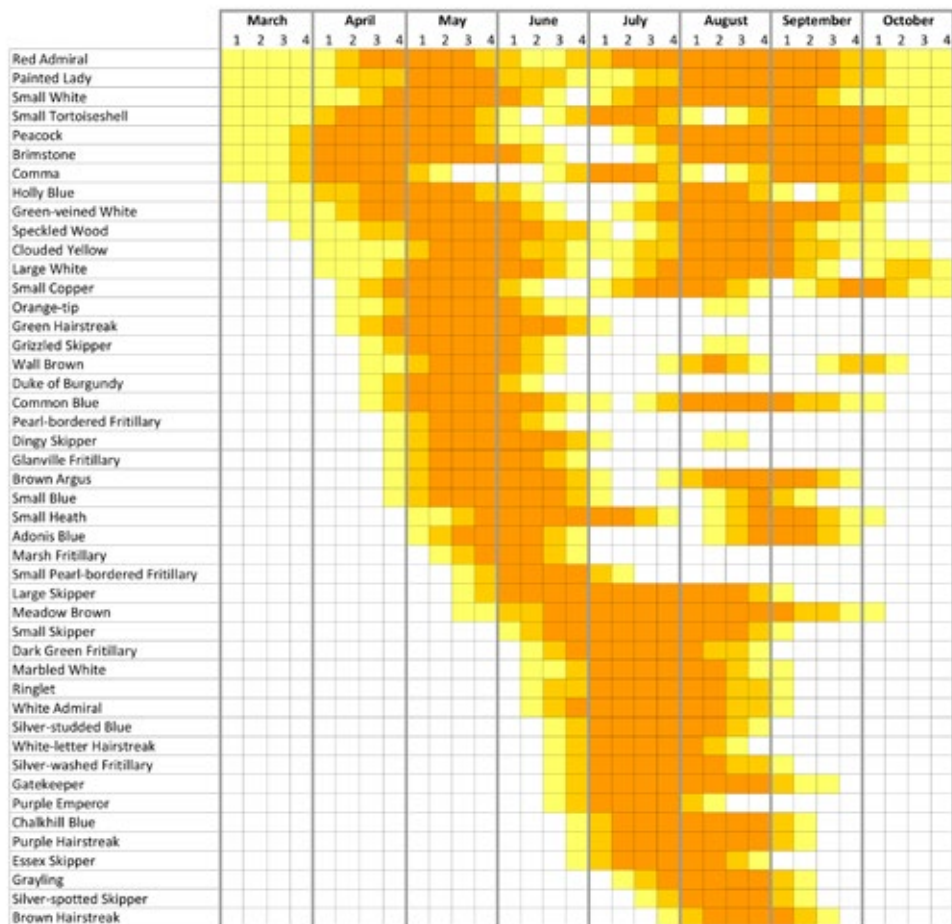
**Small Blue** – May to Jun; Aug

**Chalkhill Blue** – Jul to Aug



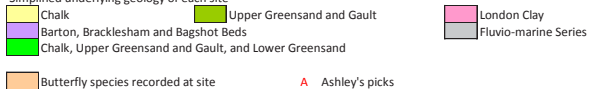
# Butterfly Flight Periods

Orange denotes main flight period; monthly divisions are simplified into 4-weekly periods.





Simplified underlying geology of each site



Butterfly species	Hampshire and Isle of Wight BUTTERFLY WALKS: sites and species check list																								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Common name	Magdalen Hill Down	Bentley Station Meadow and Lodge Inclosure	New Hill	Silchester Common and Pamber Forest	Valeley Common	Butter Wood	Abbotts Wood Inclosure	Shipton Bellinger	Broughton Down	Stockbridge Down	Cowley's Copse, Bentley Wood	Pit Down and West Wood	Near Hill	Old Winchester Hill NNR	Baber Hill NNR and Ramsdown Down	Whiteley Pastures	Howant Thicket	Petersdown Hill	Marin Down NNR	Pigal and Ramor Inclosures	Hawkhill Inclosure and Beaulieu Heath	Walter's Copse and Newtown Meadows - IDW	Brook, Compton and Afon Downs - IDW	Ternyston Down - IDW	Knockhill Down and Wisemans Bay - IDW
Small Skipper						A				A		A													A
Essex Skipper																									
Silver-spotted Skipper									A	A															
Large Skipper																									
Dingy Skipper				A																					
Grizzled Skipper			A									A													
Clouded Yellow																									
Brimstone								A				A													A
Large White																									
Small White																				A					
Green-veined White		A																							
Orange-tip		A								A															
Green Hairstreak	A									A															
Brown Hairstreak								A					A												
Purple Hairstreak	A					A																			
White-letter Hairstreak										A													A		
Small Copper																									
Small Blue	A																								
Silver-studded Blue					A	A																A			
Brown Argus	A													A											A
Common Blue	A							A																	
Chalkhill Blue	A		A																						
Adonis Blue									A															A	
Holly Blue																									A
Duke of Burgundy												A													
White Admiral					A			A																	
Purple Emperor		A					A	A																	
Red Admiral																									
Painted Lady																									
Small Tortoiseshell						A																			
Peacock																									
Comma								A																	
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary												A													
Pearl-bordered Fritillary												A	A												
Dark Green Fritillary																									
Silver-washed Fritillary		A																							
Marsh Fritillary																									
Glanville Fritillary																									
Speckled Wood									A																
Wall Brown																									
Marbled White				A																					
Grayling						A	A																		
Gatekeeper					A			A																	
Meadow Brown						A	A	A																	
Small Heath				A																					
Ringlet						A	A																		



Brown Argus



## Walking with butterflies in Hampshire and Isle of Wight

- 25 lovely family walks from ½ to 4½ miles
- Route descriptions, maps and GPS waypoints
  - What to look out for and when to see it
- Top butterfly sites on downland, woodland and heathland
  - Nearby pubs and cafés
- Butterfly identification guide and flight period indicator



£6.00

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch of Butterfly Conservation  
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