

## Case study: Friends of Wardsend Cemetery

---

### Name of project or group

Moth recording at Wardsend Cemetery. Case study by Sean Ashton, July 2022

### What actions for nature did your group want to take and why?

As part of an initiative called the DECIDE project we have run some moth recording sessions in the cemetery. We were contacted by Lucy Baldwin of the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC) to ask if we would be interested in doing some moth recording. The cemetery had been identified as an example of a habitat that was under-recorded for moths.

The DECIDE Project is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative project led by The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology in conjunction with NEYEDC and other partners including the University of York, Butterfly Conservation, Greenspace Information for Greater London, University of Warwick, Open University, and more. The aim of the DECIDE Project is to encourage biological recorders to record nature 'where it matters'.



**Photo credit:** Sean Ashton

### What resources or support did you use?

Wardsend Cemetery is a mixture of habitats with woodland, heath, a railway embankment and a river in close proximity. Howard, Meghan and I met Lucy at the cemetery and we identified several promising sites to put the trap. Moth trapping is quite harmless to the moths. They are attracted to the light and some enter the box, filled with cardboard egg cartons underneath. In the morning, you take a look to see what you have caught and let them go.

## Case study: Friends of Wardsend Cemetery

On the first occasion, Lucy put the trap out and we met in the morning to survey the contents. Opening a moth trap, I'm filled with the same eager anticipation that I had as a child on Christmas morning but we were disappointed not to trap anything on this occasion. The weather overnight had been cold and breezy, far from ideal for encouraging moths to fly.

Undaunted by this we tried again and this time with much more success! 22 moths of 14 species were recorded. Buff Arches was perhaps the pick of the bunch but Bramble Shoot Moth, Brown Silver-line, Mottled Beauty, Ingrailed Clay, Barred Fruit Tree Tortrix and Foxglove Pug provided a beautiful supporting cast.

There are around 2500 moth species in the UK, and the thought of being able to identify them is a bit daunting at first. However, there are useful apps, such as Obsidentify that point you in the right direction and several very helpful Facebook groups. Using a small clip-on macro lens on our phone we are able to get close-up photos of the moth which can be loaded into the app. This will identify the moth if possible, although it is good practice to also use the field guide. Identification apps do occasionally get things wrong.

### How did it make you feel?

Moths are really beautiful, even the smaller micros are delicately patterned and they have such wonderful names. Many of the names were given in the eighteenth century by country gentlemen, the only ones with time to record moths, and so there are names suggestive of country houses; Red-green Carpet, Chimney Sweeper, Dingy Footman and Smoky Wainscot to name a few.

"The favourite moth I have recorded is Merveille du Jour, marvel of the day, both for its name and its appearance.."



**Photo credit:** Sean Ashton

## Case study: Friends of Wardsend Cemetery

### What's next?

We have now done 3 sessions with 20 species recorded and hope to trap regularly on the site throughout the year. As we gain confidence we may do a public session so watch this space for details.



**Photo credit:** Sean Ashton