

## Book Case

Dr John Purvis selects 5 books that he has recently enjoyed.

### WILDING. THE RETURN OF NATURE TO A BRITISH FARM.

Isabella Tree.  
Picador. 2018.  
ISBN-13: 978-1509805105.  
Paperback.  
RRP £9.99



Quite an influential book, it describes how the author and her husband inherited a large estate in Sussex that was driven close to bankruptcy by adhering to intensive farming policies and minimal payment for products from supermarkets. The couple took the decision to abandon the “wisdom” of the past 50 years and rewild the Knepp estate. Rather than doing nothing at all, this involved moving back to almost mediaeval practices such as letting longhorn cattle, deer and Tamworth pigs roam freely across their land as well as not interfering with natural drainage in marshy areas and ponds. Their neighbours thought they were mad and feared “contamination” or flooding.

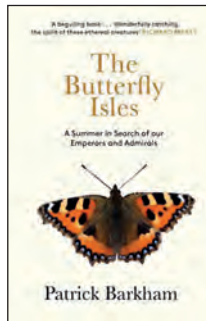
By contrast, the undrained marshy areas acted as a sump to soak up excess rainwater and the estate diversified into producing their own organic meat and dairy produce and became more than profitable. The real transformation however was in the spectacular increase in flora and fauna attracted to the wetlands, meadows and forests liberated from intensive agriculture. The estate is now a stronghold for threatened species such as Turtle doves, nightingales and the UK’s most spectacular butterfly, the Purple Emperor. Wildlife enthusiasts now flock to the estate to encounter these rare species opening a lucrative and unforeseen income stream.

A well written and informative book. Highly recommended.

And speaking of butterflies...

### THE BUTTERFLY ISLES. A SUMMER IN SEARCH OF OUR EMPERORS AND ADMIRALS.

Patrick Barkham.  
Granta.  
Second edition  
2018. ISBN-13:  
978-1-78378-458-5. Paperback.  
RRP £10.99.



One of my retirement projects has been to photograph all 25 species of Northern Ireland butterflies – so far I’m up to 17. I was therefore delighted to come across this book. The author was raised in the countryside but worked in the City of London for years. Feeling somewhat jaded, he embarked on a project to see all 59 species of UK butterfly in 1 season. He documents his encounters with information about each species, its history, location and environmental threats. He meets up with experts along the way to guide him to some of the rarer species and journeys over here to the Craigavon Lakes, Montiaghs Moss and Murlough NT reserve to encounter Marsh Fritillary, Large Heath and a butterfly unique to Northern Ireland,



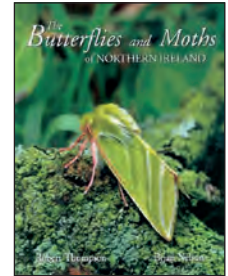
**Figure 1:** A male Silver Washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*) at Umbra Nature Reserve, Castlerock.

the Cryptic Wood White. The book also covers the history of the Victorian era of Butterfly Collecting – the Victorian collectors called themselves “Aurelians” after the rainbow goddess of the dawn, Aurora. I guess photography is the modern version of that. Over the course of the year, he refreshes himself and his relationship with his naturalist father but

it’s funny to read how his city slicker girlfriend initially is bemused then bored and finally frustrated at his seemingly “pointless” obsession.

### THE BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS OF NORTHERN IRELAND.

Robert Thompson and Brian Nelson.  
2006. National Museums Northern Ireland.  
ISBN-10: 0900761474.



Paperback. Out of print, available from [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk) around £50-90.

Over the last few years, I’ve made ultrasound recordings of 6 different species of bat in my back garden – what attracts so many visitors? The answer is Moths. Most of us only consider Moths when we encounter a stray inside our houses but they play an important role as pollinators and food for bats



**Figure 2:** A Peppered moth (*Biston betularia*) in the author’s garden. Often used to teach natural selection in schools. During the Industrial Revolution, darker variants were better camouflaged against sooty backgrounds and became more frequent. In the post-industrial 21<sup>st</sup> century, the predominant variety is once again, this light version.

and birds. Numbers have declined dramatically over the years – if you are of a certain age, you may remember the appearance of your car windscreen after a summer night’s drive- compare that with nowadays.

This is a lavishly illustrated guide to



the 1000+ species of Moth and 25 species of Butterflies resident in NI. Each entry comprises a distribution map gleaned from sightings recorded in the Biodiversity.IE website along with notes written by QUB entomologist Brian Nelson and photographs of the more interesting varieties by Robert Thompson. One for the enthusiasts only but a superb record of the wealth of biodiversity in our land.

### (R)EVOLUTION THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Gary Numan.  
2020.  
Constable.  
ISBN 978-1-47213-462-2.  
Hardback.  
RRP £20  
Signed by Author.



I was very thoughtfully given a number of signed music autobiographies for my birthday (It had a zero in it). This was the first one I read – I was aware of Gary from his Tubeway Army days in the late 70s and the occasional brief foray into the lower end of the charts in the 80s. I have to say I really enjoyed this book. Gary had a conventional enough working-class London upbringing but probably had an Asperger's type disorder which wasn't realised until decades later. His favourite childhood toy was a wooden box built by his father, fitted with dials and knobs which turned but didn't do anything – it was perfect way for him to imagine driving cars, planes and spaceships anywhere his imagination could take him. He initially did well at school but his very rigid insistence on rules being applied fairly and knowing exactly why things had to be a certain way exasperated his teachers and he left school without qualifications. He joined a few punk bands but had a "Road to Damascus" moment when he saw a synthesiser with lots of knobs and dials at a recording studio – just like his childhood toy. With no formal musical training, he just made songs that sounded right to him and had early worldwide success with "Are Friends Electric?" and "Cars". He soon became passe and was criticised for his robotic

appearance and stilted interviews – again his underlying condition was not recognised. He struggled away for many years but built up a loyal cult following.

He never saw the point of taking drugs but suffered from significant depression for some years – he found that drug therapy for the depression zombified him and left him unable to write – he was better off without treatment and he gradually recovered.

Many other artists covered his songs and royalties from "Cars" (used by nearly every auto manufacturer and dealership in the USA) and Basement Jaxx's "Where's your head at?" (in reality, just two Numan tunes jammed together) kept him afloat.

Lately, he has been recognised as an elder statesman of industrial electro-pop and his dark songs of doom and destruction have become popular again. I'm hoping to see him in May when he plays in Belfast.

### SALAD DAZE

Wayne Hussey.  
2019. Omnibus Press. ISBN 978-1-78760-251-9. Hardback.  
RRP =£19.  
Signed by Author.



Written in a conversational style and featuring a lot more drugs than Gary Numan's book, this is mostly about the dynamics of working in a band and how having a good network of friends can lead to creative possibilities.

Born in Bristol, Wayne had quite a religious upbringing in a Mormon household. He hoped to be a footballer but seeing Marc Bolan and T-Rex perform on Top of the Pops one night changed his focus and he left home with his guitar to join the music scene in Liverpool. There were many like him looking to make names for themselves – bands would form and break up every week. Holly Johnson and Boy George were there in early versions of their later personas.

Wayne developed a reputation as a good guitarist and joined Pete Burns's "Dead or Alive" in their early goth phase, leaving before they had their "Spin you round" pop hit.

He auditioned for another famous goth band – "The Sisters of Mercy" – the audition consisted of splicing lines of amphetamine for them rather than displaying any musical talent. The band was extremely dysfunctional in the recording studio with other members not speaking to each other and the lead singer coming in at the end to record his parts over others prized work. Despite this, they all got a buzz (literally) out of playing live and touring. The squalor and sleaze of two American tours is described in detail. Eventually tensions within the band, drive Wayne out and he forms his own band – "The Mission" which goes on to great success. The book ends around the time of The Mission's formation.

Interestingly, each chapter of the book is accompanied by a downloadable Spotify playlist so you can listen to the pieces referred to or around at the time of the events in the chapter. I think The Mission are also playing Belfast in May – tempting, but I prefer Gary Numan.



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