

Ansty is in Cranborne Chase an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB) which has now become the 14th 'Dark Skies Reserve' across the globe. Cranborne AONB joins an exclusive club of International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Protected Areas to gain international recognition for our dark skies. The news was announced last year (2019) and represents a stunning achievement! Well done to all of the Cranborne Chase AONB officers who spent years putting the 'Dark Skies Reserve' bid together and then successfully campaigning throughout the area to persuade people to pledge their support for the bid.

## Enjoying our Dark Skies!

Alan Hardwick of Ansty has always been interested in astronomy and part of the reason for moving to live in Ansty was that his home looked across our renowned dark night skies and has unobstructed views.

From an amateur astronomer's point of view the moon can be a nuisance because it's reflected light from the sun tends to wipe out a lot of the less bright stars. That said it does make a good subject to photograph.

Alan uses his observing telescope fitted with a low powered eyepiece, then a tablet camera pointed down the telescope eyepiece. The camera is brilliant for this, as it has a wide field of view and can take very good quick shots.

It is also possible to use a mobile phone for the same purpose but Alan finds that his hand is not steady enough for this!

So in this first selection of photographs we have assembled some of Alan's moon shots (with one exception) and his captions.



The full moon never makes a good photo because it is so bright, but this one I like. This one was taken from our garden looking toward the chalk downs. The full moon is rising over the hill with two sheep silhouetted. The question is, is the sheep on the left looking at me or the moon? 21-06-2016



This photo shows just a part of the moon's surface using a more powerful eyepiece. The small bumps that you can see in the centre of the craters are what are left of the object that struck the moon to cause the crater. 14-08-2016



This photo is of the moon nearly full but still showing some detail. When the moon is like this or even more full we do not need lights on to move around our house. We have large windows facing the chalk downs to the south and the whole place lights up. 08-04-2017



Another study of the moon in its first quarter phase – often referred to as a half moon. 03-12-2019



Now for something very different. Our nearest star! This is the Sun showing six sunspots. These are areas on the Sun where storms are taking place that give rise to an even stronger solar wind that can disrupt communications etc. on Earth. This photo was taken using a filter that fits on the open end of the telescope. **Don't try it using anything else; it will be the last thing you will ever see!** 02-09-2017

It does not matter how big or small your garden is, you will always find that it is a haven for wildlife – if you look carefully! And you can always encourage more wildlife into your garden by growing a ‘wild patch’, creating a pond, planting nectar rich plants for butterflies and bees; constructing bug hotels or planting a mixed hedge or shrubbery. Then just sit back, observe – and enjoy!

## Enjoying wildlife in our gardens!

In this section photographer Alan Hardwick of Ansty has captured three great images of wildlife in his Ansty garden.

# Glimpses of wildlife in an Ansty garden...



This handsome creature is often in the garden, we sometimes see a younger one playing amongst the shrubs at night.  
Not one of those skinny town dwellers. We have had stoats, weasels and even had three polecats playing in the garden. 15-11-2019



This is a classic winter photo taken during the second 'mini Beast from the East' of 2018. Two short but exceptionally cold spells with snow (nicknamed 'beasts from the east') occurred in March – right at the beginning of the month and then again mid-month.

18-03-2018



We have two wild areas in the garden. In one of them we dug a natural pond. It is now populated by newts, toads and all things 'pondy'.

There are loads of dragonflies, this being one of the Boeing 747 variety! 25-05-2019

The big open skies of Ansty, largely south of the A30, allow folk to witness spectacular sunrises and sunsets and indeed other weather phenomena. Whatever the weather it defines the quality of the landscape we live in. The intensely bright sun of June highlighting all the colours can contrast sharply with the steel grey sky above a snowy landscape. The weather sets the tone, the mood and the lighting for all aspects of outdoor photography.

## Enjoying aspects of our weather in Ansty!

Here Alan has selected just a few 'weather' photographs he has taken from his garden in Ansty to show how you can picture the best of the endless possibilities that our weather can bestow.

# Stunning weather pictures...



This photo depicts a spectacular sunrise. The view is looking directly down our garden towards the chalk hills and the old herepath (byway) on a frosty late November morning. 30-11-2012



Looking west across to Copseside capturing this magnificent sunset. I posted this image on a recognised website specialising in sunsets. It was entitled "Sunset through the trees in Wiltshire England". It received plenty of likes and comments from around the world. 17-01-2020



Another sunset looking in the same direction but with a more dramatic sky 12-09-2016



I managed to capture this stunning rainbow with just the hint of the second reflected rainbow above it. As we could see both ends I sent my wife Helen off with a spade and I'm still waiting for her to come back!! The curves of the rainbow contrast starkly with the dark shadows of our house on the lawn. View looking south east towards Middle Down above Swallowcliffe. 20-06-2019