



## SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2020

### The Survey Recorders

In this survey, which commenced on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020, records were received from thirty-seven contributors. This is the first survey which SECOS has conducted during the summer months and was instigated as a palliative measure consequent upon the impact of the covid 19 virus, which restricted normal summertime activities for the whole of society. Fifteen survey members are not members of SECOS, but are very welcome contributors.

*Table 1* below lists the people who recorded for this survey together with their registration number.

**Table 1**

<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>
8502	Bryan Perkins	0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	8731	John P. Barker
1306	Roy Broughton	0334	Bill Bellamy
0107	Christine Howarth	0838	Richard Howells
1010	John Nixon	0639	Chris Parry
8511	Alan Soper	0341	Howard Nixon
1912	Anne Davies	0342	Brian Sankey
9813	John Thompson	0343	John & Wendy Fuller
9814	Colin Lythgoe	2046	John Kay
1215	Louise Adams	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey	1348	Graham Bailey
1919	David Sandall	2049	Martin Watson
0720	Rachel Heath	2055	Wray Douglas
1022	Mike & Christine Brooks	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	2057	Adrian Wright
1825	Kate Whittles	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright
2026	Andy Newall	2059	Graham Dodd
1727	Mike Tonks	2062	Francis & Alison Sanders

### The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, eighty-four different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. Two new species have been added to the list by this survey, the canada goose and swift.

**Table 2**

<u>No.</u>	<u>Bird Species</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Bird Species</u>
1	Black-headed Gull	43	Magpie
2	Blackbird	44	Mallard
3	Blackcap	45	Marsh/ Willow Tit
4	Blue Tit	46	Meadow Pipit
5	Brambling	47	Mealy Redpoll
6	Bullfinch	48	Merlin
7	Buzzard	49	Mistle Thrush

8	Canada Goose	50	Moorhen
9	Chaffinch	51	Mute Swan
10	Chiffchaff	52	Nuthatch
11	Coal Tit	53	Oyster Catcher
12	Collared Dove	54	Pheasant
13	Common Gull	55	Pied Wagtail
14	Corn Bunting	56	Raven
15	Crow	57	Red-headed Bunting
16	Dunnock	58	Red-legged Partridge
17	Feral Pigeon	59	Redpoll (Lesser)
18	Fieldfare	60	Redwing
19	Garden Warbler	61	Reed Bunting
20	Goldcrest	62	Ring-necked Parakeet
21	Goldfinch	63	Robin
22	Greater Black-backed Gull	64	Rook
23	Great Spotted Woodpecker	65	Siskin
24	Great Tit	66	Skylark
25	Green Woodpecker	67	Snipe
26	Greenfinch	68	Song Thrush
27	Grey Heron	69	Sparrowhawk
28	Grey Wagtail	70	Starling
29	Hawfinch	71	Stock Dove
30	Herring Gull	72	Swallow
31	House Martin	73	Swift
32	House Sparrow	74	Tawny Owl
33	Jackdaw	75	Tree Sparrow
34	Jay	76	Treecreeper
35	Kestrel	77	Water Rail
36	Kingfisher	78	Waxwing
37	Lapwing	79	White Wagtail
38	Lesser Black-backed Gull	80	Willow Warbler
39	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	81	Woodcock
40	Linnet	82	Wood Pigeon
41	Little Owl	83	Wren
42	Long-tailed Tit	84	Yellowhammer

### **The Current Survey**

Thirty-six participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 936 bird/week records (36 x 26 =936). 868 bird/weeks records were actually produced.

### **The “Listed Species”**

In *Table 3* below the species entered on the “listed species” section of the input forms “A1” & “A2” are listed in descending order of number of bird/week record occurrences, in column 3 as a measure of their commonality within this survey. The “listed Species” are those which over the duration of the winter surveys have proven to be the most common garden visitors.

Also shown in the table are the number of gardens visited, the highest single count recorded for each species and the registration number of the member(s) who recorded the highest count.

**Table 3 – ‘Ranking of Listed Species’**

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records Out of 868</u> [1087]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 36</u> [44]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Highest Count</u>	<u>Member’s Reg. No.</u>
1	[1] Wood Pigeon	828 [1016]	36 [44]	15 [39]	2046
2	[3] Robin	778 [1020]	36 [44]	5 [9]	0758
2	[4] Blackbird	778 [995]	36 [44]	13 [12]	0838
4	[2] Blue Tit	722 [1028]	35 [44]	21 [14]	0838
5	[5] Dunnock	598 [867]	34 [43]	7 [14]	0342
6	[9] Magpie	575 [697]	36 [42]	8 [14]	8511
7	[8] House Sparrow	557 [710]	33 [40]	29 [25]	0720
8	[6] Great Tit	549 [824]	34 [43]	8 [11]	0756
9	[7] Goldfinch	543 [750]	35 [42]	20 [50]	2055
10	[11] Starling	360 [561]	30 [40]	35 [51]	9814
11	[14] Greenfinch	344 [457]	29 [35]	7 [12]	1010, 2026
12	[12] Collared Dove	329 [554]	25 [35]	7 [9]	1306
13	[15] Jackdaw	321 [453]	24 [29]	24 [41]	2055
14	[13] Coal Tit	313 [542]	31 [40]	4 [6]	9814, 2057, 0758
15	[18] Crow	302 [347]	29 [35]	5 [5]	2046
16	[17] Wren	201 [422]	25 [42]	4 [3]	0556
17	[10] Chaffinch	196 [576]	23 [41]	6 [18]	1919
18	[19] Nuthatch	179 [190]	12 [21]	4 [5]	0758
19	[16] Long-tailed Tit	163 [429]	31 [43]	11 [15]	0720
20	[20] Song Thrush	146 [129]	20 [26]	3 [6]	0342 ,0347
21	[22] GS Woodpecker	133 [112]	19 [14]	3 [3]	1919, 0838, 2055,
22	[21] Sparrowhawk	68 [120]	23 [26]	1 [3]	---

Brackets thus [ ], denotes figures corresponding to the previous 2019/20 winter survey for comparison.

(See *Table 1* for correlation of registration number to members’ names.)

This first summer survey, perhaps unsurprisingly, shows that the same species are the most common visitors as in winter and that the ranking order remains substantially the same, with only slight variations. The only bird which significantly changed in the rankings is the chaffinch, normally a top ten bird, but now way down at seventeen.

The wood pigeon phenomenon which has seen their rise to top spot over recent years has been perpetuated and would seem to be upheld throughout the year. Song thrush and great-spotted woodpecker records were proportionately greater when the reduced size of the survey is considered. Wood pigeon, robin, magpie and blackbird were recorded in every garden of the survey, with only one garden not seeing a blue tit or goldfinch.

Fifteen members recorded a highest or joint highest count for one or more species with member 2055 again having a highest count for three species.

### **The “Other Species”**

In *Table 4* below the species entered on the “Other Species” section of the input forms are listed in descending order of number of bird/week record occurrences, as a measure of their commonality within this survey. A further thirty-three species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-five species recorded in this summer survey from the eighty-four in the “all-time” list (*Table 2*). Any species recorded in the last (winter) survey, but not recorded in this survey, are included for reference.

**Table 4 – ‘Ranking of Other Species’**

<b>Rank No.</b>		<b>Species</b>	<b>Number of Bird/Week Records Out of</b>		<b>Number of Gardens Visited Out of</b>		<b>Highest Single Count</b>		<b>Member’s Reg. No.</b>
			<b>403</b>	<b>[483]</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>[44]</b>	<b>Highest Count</b>		
1	[1]	Bullfinch	106	[104]	10	[16]	5	[6]	0639
2	[2]	Stock Dove	96	[98]	10	[12]	9	[16]	1306
3	[6]	Feral Pigeon	77	[61]	7	[4]	8	[6]	0720
4	[7]	Jay	65	[57]	10	[9]	3	[7]	0639, 2049
5	[0]	House Martin	64	[0]	10	[0]	20	[1]	0758
6	[0]	Swift	57	[0]	13	[0]	30	[1]	0316
7	[0]	Swallow	43	[0]	12	[0]	15	[1]	0734
8	[15]	Chiffchaff	35	[11]	7	[5]	1	[1]	#1
8	[4]	Pheasant	35	[80]	4	[8]	5	[3]	1306
10	[12]	Blackcap	33	[25]	4	[14]	3	[3]	1825
10	[20]	Mallard	33	[8]	6	[1]	9	[6]	0556
12	[10]	Goldcrest	31	[32]	8	[8]	2	[2]	0639, 2057
13	[15]	Buzzard	28	[11]	8	[2]	2	[2]	#1
14	[5]	Rook	17	[68]	3	[4]	10	[35]	0734
15	[13]	Mistle Thrush	15	[22]	5	[6]	6	[3]	0639
15	[3]	Pied Wagtail	15	[86]	6	[13]	3	[3]	9923
17	[9]	Black-headed Gull	10	[34]	5	[10]	10	[15]	9912
18	[17]	Grey Wagtail	6	[10]	5	[4]	2	[1]	0556
19	[19]	Grey Heron	5	[9]	3	[5]	1	[1]	---
19	[17]	Treecreeper	5	[10]	4	[5]	1	[2]	---
21	[14]	Reed Bunting	4	[12]	2	[3]	2	[4]	1215
22	[0]	Canada Goose	2	[0]	1	[0]	20	[1]	0334
22	[0]	Green Woodpecker	2	[0]	1	[0]	1	[1]	---
22	[21]	Herring Gull	2	[7]	1	[3]	1	[3]	---
22	[22]	Lesser b-b gull	2	[1]	1	[1]	1	[1]	---
22	[0]	Willow Warbler	2	[0]	2	[0]	1	[1]	---
27	[0]	Kestrel	1	[0]	1	[0]	1	[1]	---
27	[0]	Linnet	1	[0]	1	[0]	1	[1]	--
27	[0]	Moorhen	1	[0]	1	[0]	1	[1]	--
27	[0]	Oystercatcher	1	[0]	1	[0]	1	[1]	---
27	[0]	Ring-n’kd Parakeet	1	[0]	1	[0]	2	[1]	---
27	[21]	Siskin	1	[7]	1	[4]	2	[3]	---
27	[24]	Tawny Owl	1	[4]	1	[1]	1	[1]	---
0	[26]	Brambling	0	[2]	0	[2]	0	[1]	---
0	[11]	Fieldfare	0	[27]	0	[12]	0	[12]	---
0	[28]	Greater b-b Gull	0	[1]	0	[1]	0	[1]	---
0	[21]	Lesser Redpoll	0	[7]	0	[2]	0	[2]	---
0	[25]	Raven	0	[3]	0	[2]	0	[1]	---
0	[8]	Redwing	0	[38]	0	[15]	0	[18]	---
0	[26]	Tree Sparrow	0	[2]	0	[1]	0	[1]	---

#1 – Members Reg No 1919, 1825, 0234, 0639, 0556

Brackets thus [ ], denotes figures corresponding to the previous [2019/20] winter survey for comparison.

(See Table 1 for correlation of registration number to members’ names.)

Thirty-three species of birds, which are less frequent visitors to gardens, (other species) were recorded from thirty-six gardens. From the 868 total number of bird-week records submitted, 403 bird-week records were produced.

As expected, the migrant thrushes, fieldfare and redwing, which seek refuge in Britain from the harsh winters in the far north, had returned north by the time that this survey started in April and thus were absent. Redpoll and brambling tend to be winter visitors also and they too were not recorded, as is the case for greater black-backed gull, raven and tree sparrow.

Incoming summer migrants, swallow, swift and house martin were well recorded. Bullfinch and stock dove occupied the top table positions, which has been the case for numerous recent winter surveys, now perpetuated in this first summer survey.

Buzzard records were greatly increased as garden visitors (not over-flying I hope).

Kestrel, linnet, moorhen, oystercatcher and ring-necked parakeet have not been recorded recently in our surveys. The Canada goose record was a first-time inclusion in our surveys.

Twelve members recorded the highest count for at least one species but member 0639 had the highest or joint highest count for four species. (Not included where only one garden was visited or single bird counts applied.)

The garden of member 0639 was visited by seventeen "other" species followed by those of 0734 with thirteen and 0556 with twelve.

### **News from the Comments Column (Section "B1" & "B2" of the input forms)**

#### **Breeding Comments**

A group of five adult great tits was paired with four juveniles.

A juvenile goldfinch was noted in July with a blue ring.

A nest box camera recorded seven blue tit eggs, of which four fledged.

A blackbird was noted to have three broods..

Two blackbird juveniles were found to have drowned in a garden pond.

A mallard hatched eight young, of which seven survived.

Juveniles mentioned visiting gardens often accompanied by adults included robin, blue tit, great tit, coal tit, long-tailed tit, blackbird, mistle thrush, starling, wren, house sparrow, jackdaw, dunnock, greenfinch, goldfinch, bullfinch, jay, nuthatch, great-spotted woodpecker, wood pigeon and magpie.

#### **Feeding Habits Mentioned.**

Mountain ash berries proved attractive to blackbirds.

An influx of flying ants were taken by gulls on the wing.

A robin took a broad bodied dragonfly in mid air.

Sunflower heart feeders attracted goldfinch, robin, dunnock and other finches.

Black sunflower seeds attracted finches.

Peanuts feeders attracted robin.

Dried fruit attracted magpie.

Fat balls attracted starlings, jackdaws, rooks and crows.

Mahonia bush berries attracted mistle thrush, song thrush and blackbirds.

Suet pellets attracted starlings, jackdaws, mistle thrush, song thrush and blackbirds

Kibbled peanuts attracted great-spotted woodpecker.

A blue tit pair fed on separate seed feeders, but the male was noted flitting to feed the female.

A greenfinch was noted feeding two chicks.

#### **Strange human behaviour.**

A recorder's neighbour attached spikes to the top of a garden fence to deter birds from perching and leaving droppings. He was eventually persuaded that it was normal in rural areas and commendably removed the spikes.

#### **Less usual Events**

A house sparrow was recorded in one garden for the first time since January 2018.

A little egret was noted overflying, elsewhere a red kite was similarly noted.

A first sighting of a swallow for one garden was recorded on the 26<sup>th</sup> April.

A first house martin in five years was noted.

A cuckoo was heard!!

Two wood pigeons fatally hit a window.

#### Sparrowhawk Kills

A starling kill was filmed and blue tit, woodpigeon and blackbird kills noted.

#### Weather Conditions

Table 5 provides a brief overview of weather conditions for the survey period, which, as usual, is provided courtesy of John Barker's detailed records.

**Table 5 – Weather Summary**

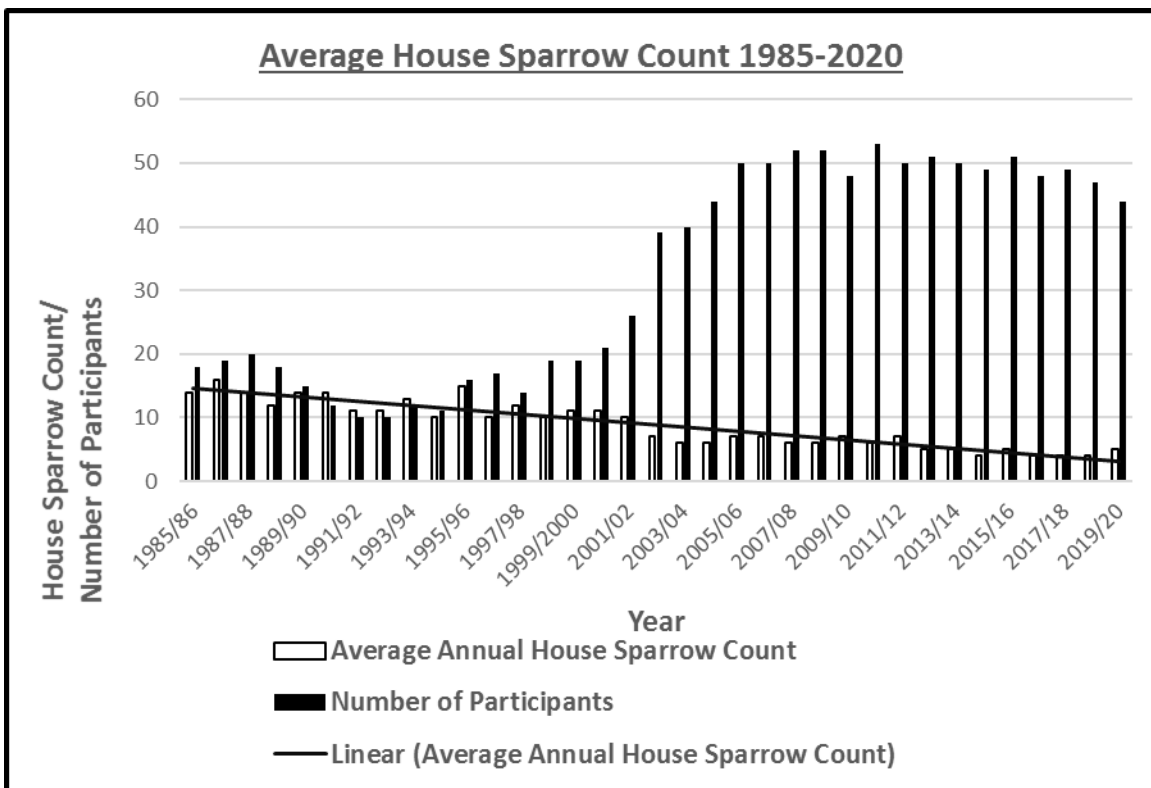
<u>Week No.</u>	<u>Number of Days</u>			<u>Inches of Rain</u>	<u>Temp. °F</u>		<u>Wind</u>		<u>One Word Notes</u>
	<u>Sunny Periods</u>	<u>Frost Snow Sleet</u>	<u>Wet cloudy</u>		<u>Max</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Direction</u>	<u>Strength</u>	
1	6	1F	1	0.04	70	32	W-SW	Light	Sunny
2	4	3F	3	0.31	67	25	NE-NW-SE	Light	Mixed
3	7	1F	0	0.0	69	31	SE	Light	Sunny
4	0	0F	5	0.90	70	33	NE-NW	Light	Cloudy
5	0	0F	1	0.07	80	33	SE	Light	Mixed
6	7	4F	0	0.04	60	25	SE-NW	Light	Sunny
7	6	0F	1	0.07	80	42	NW	Strong	Sunny
8	4	0F	0	0.0	78	39	NW	Light	Mixed
9	0	0F	3	0.85	76	37	NW	Moderate	Mixed
10	0	0F	4	0.68	72	41	NW-NE	Light	Cloudy
11	0	0F	5	0.66	73	44	SE	Light	Cloudy
12	0	0F	3	0.70	85	43	SW-S	Moderate	Cloudy
13	0	0F	5	0.53	74	47	NW	Strong	Cloudy
14	0	0F	6	1.09	66	37	NW	Strong	Cloudy
15	0	0F	3	0.56	76	45	NW	Light	Cloudy
16	0	0F	3	0.42	79	40	NW	Light	Mixed
17	0	0F	3	0.46	50	26	NW	Moderate	Sunny spells
18	0	0F	3	0.14	84	42	SW	Light	Cloudy
19	0	0F	4	1.57	84	50	SE	Light	Mixed
20	0	0F	7	1.66	75	48	SE	Light	Cloudy
21	0	0F	5	1.80	68	34	NW	Light	Cloudy
22	0	0F	3	0.50	73	38	NW	Light	Sunny spells
23	0	0F	3	0.09	78	45	W	Light	Mixed
24	3	0F	0	0.00	81	40	NW	Light	Sunny
25	4	0F	3	0.30	72	34	E-NW	Light	Sunny spells
26	?	0F	?	?	?	?	?	Light	Showery

#### House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2020

Once more the two bar charts used in previous reports have been updated to include the latest data from this survey, which now extends over thirty-five years and are presented below.

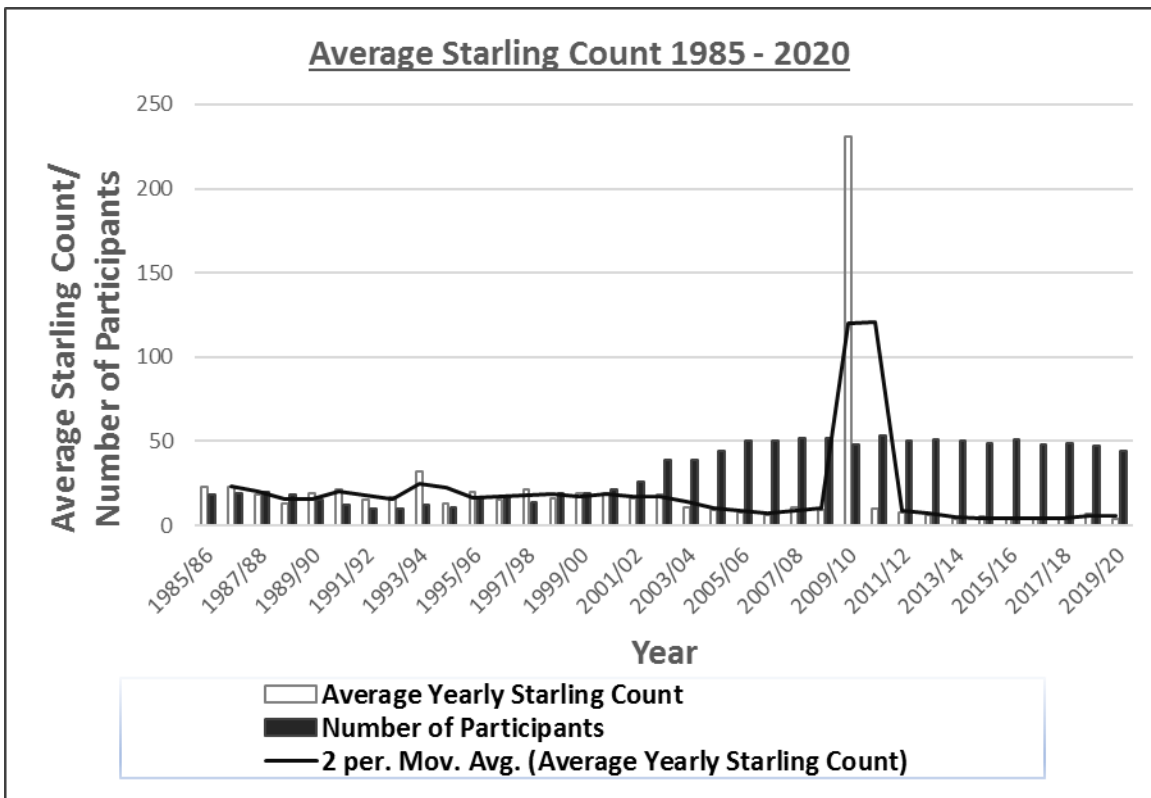
##### House sparrows

The declining trend for the house sparrow population remains the same. The trend line on the chart is unchanged for the summer months and shows that the house sparrow average count has declined from around fifteen in 1985 to a consistent four or five in recent years, actually five in this summer record as in the last winter survey. No sparrows at all were recorded in three gardens in this survey.



### Starlings

In 1985 the average starling count stood at twenty-three. Once more the trend line shows a moving average one, rather than linear, to accommodate the one-off distortion caused by a large roost in 2009/10. The average count for all gardens in this summer survey was five, which compares with four for the last winter survey. The spreadsheet data shows that starling numbers are significantly reduced in the second thirteen week recording period starting in July. Presumably chick feeding duties are beginning to decline by then. Six gardens didn't see a single starling!



The above data is contained in two Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, with pages for each year of the annual surveys, which can be made available to anyone who would like to perform more analysis.

Finally, I include the usual offer to anyone who wishes to perform a more detailed analysis of the 2019/20 survey data than is contained in this report (or previous reports). I can make all of the data available to them as a copy of the databases in Microsoft Access 2016 format, either as an e-mail attachment, memory stick or CD-ROM.

*Again, many thanks to all contributors.*

*Trevor Clowes.*

*6<sup>th</sup> November 2020*