

GOSSAMER

by Kate Lock and Christopher Jessop

Unfortunately “Gossamer” is these days another of Britain’s lost Nature Words. Whilst artists, craftspeople, fashion commentators, and novelists quite often talk about fabrics or perhaps baby hair being gossamer-light, hardly anyone now realises that gossamer is a natural phenomenon. It is the result of money spiders climbing to high points such as gorse tops and spinning webs upwards into the breeze. Their intention is to be borne aloft like hitchhiking parachutists and carried long distances downwind – in other words, it is a mass migration strategy. Many many millions of spiders spinning webs all at once results in landscape features being draped in the very finest silk.

Just a few of us on the Marloes Peninsula were very lucky recently to witness gossamer serenely spread all across some meadows, and one could say swagged down the lane sides. Here are some photos and a poem.



GOSSAMER VISITATION

14th November 2020

At first, just a few fine threads of airborne silk:
Only noticed because their dalliances
Teased drifting glints
From blue-skied Musselwick's low November brilliance.

Minute spiders, riding across the bay:
Such brave migration, enormous the uncertainties –
Not only about where they might arrive
But whether, indeed, they would survive.

For the purpose of
Those sharp-beaked little birds I'd noticed, walking down,
Air-clustering darty above the cabbage jungle,
Was now so darkly clear.

Later, sharing news with friends, I heard from Sue
That she and Ria had sunsetted some Marloes clifftop pastures
So skeined by filmy drifts, even a hardened doubter
Might have believed in thread-spinning fairies.

Finally, best kept 'til last, came Martins Haven images
>From fast-paced Kate, who with careful afterlight camera
Had captured those stormblast hedgebanks
Swathed with myriad filaments of breeze-wafted gossamer.

Such a bless of luck, that day,
For those who looked, who saw...
And, appreciatively,
Thought all the more.

Chris Jessop