

## WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY

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## KEEPING TRACK OF WILTSHIRE'S RARITIES

### Help needed !

Wiltshire is a favourite hunting ground for plant rarities. From the Flora we have at least 17 nationally rare species and 80 nationally scarce species within the county. There are many more which are rare at county or regional level.

Although much work was done during the Flora production to relocate old records, those for a considerable number of rarities go back to the early 80's, 70's or even earlier. Perhaps you already know the sites of some rarities and have thought it would be useful to collate information centrally.

The *Science Group* has recently been discussing how to keep track of these species, and with the Flora completed, the relocation of old records and more detailed recording, such as counts of flowering heads or mapping the spread of plants would be a valuable role for the Society. This type of monitoring is being used increasingly by nature conservation groups to focus their efforts and we hope we can harness the expertise and enthusiasm of the Society in some collaborative work with *Wiltshire Wildlife Trust* and others.

Some members already expressed interest at the AGM. We would like to hear from anyone else who would like to become involved with any of the following:

- Relocating former records of rare species
- Visiting sites of rarities on an annual/regular basis; or
- More detailed monitoring at suitable locations

*You may have a particular species in mind or you may wish to be targeted towards species close to you. We're also keen to hear from those of you who already check or see rarities at particular locations.*

*We'll ask you to fill in simple forms to ensure standardisation from one year/site to the next. Information will be collated annually and published in the Newsletter and/or Journal as timely and appropriate.*

Louisa Kilgallen

# Summer and Autumn Programme

Sunday 31st May 10.00am GR: ST854884

## **VANCELLETTE'S FARM, WILLESLEY**

Leader: Paul Darby

Species-rich hay meadows and pastures. Willesley is about 1km due South of the entrance to Westonbirt Arboretum and 2km North of Sherston. Park in farmyard on western side of the road opposite farmhouse.  
*Morning only*

Sunday 14th June 10.00am & 2.00pm GR: SU029826

## **GROVE FARM MEADOWS & GREAT WOOD**

Leader: Paul Darby

Species-rich meadows and ancient woodland. We will spend the morning in the meadows and the afternoon in the woodland. Turn South off the Dauntsey-Wootton Bassett road in Grittenham at SU030828. Follow the farm track south for 200m and then turn right towards a cottage set on its own. Trackside parking.  
*Bring lunch*

Tuesday 16th June 10.00am GR: ST844732

## **HONEYBROOK FARM, Slaughterford SSSI**

Leader: Sara Grinstead

Exceptionally interesting 'unimproved' neutral meadows with many good species. Leave the A420 at Ford for Slaughterford. Turn east just before By Brook. Do NOT cross bridge. Follow lane to farm; do NOT take left bend. Park in farmyard.  
*Bring lunch.*

Sunday 21st June 10am GR: SU150287

## **EAST HARNHAM MEADOWS**

Leader: Phil Wilson

By kind permission of the Hounslow family, a visit to some of the finest unimproved grassland in the valleys of the Avon system. Both the river and grasslands are now SSSIs but were threatened by the construction of the now-abandoned Salisbury bypass. The species include *Triglochin palustris*, *Menyanthes trifoliata* and *Dactylorhiza incarnata*. Meet at entrance to East Harnham Farm, Britford Lane, Salisbury. Park in nearby residential streets. Share transport if possible.  
*Bring lunch*

Wednesday 24th June 10.00am GR: SU028867

## **SOMERFORD COMMON**

Leader: John Grearson

We will record the western area of this exceptional woodland where there is a pond. Very good for butterflies and birds as well as flora. Meet in the Forestry Commission car park on East side of minor road bisecting the wood. *Morning only*

2nd July 10.00am GR: ST845370

## **KINGSTON DEVERILL**

Leader: Ann Hutchison

A recording meeting for Atlas 2000 in this under-recorded area which is potentially very interesting. Meet at Kingston Deverill Church. From the North turn west off the A350 at Longbridge Deverill onto the B3095. The church is on the north side of Kingston Deverill on the west side of the road on a bend. Park at the church.  
*Bring lunch*

Friday 10th July 10.00am GR: SU222644

## **SAVERNAKE FOREST --- MOTHS**

Leaders: Henry Edmunds and Humphrey Kay

A lamp will have been set the previous evening to attract moths and they will then be identified. Meet at Little Leigh Hill: take the Marlborough-Burbridge A346. Turn east onto unsigned unmetalled road at GR 659645, about 100m south of the turn to the W signed Wootton Rivers (there is a 'private road' sign, but permission has been given). After 350m turn right and park after about 150m at side of road near a thatched house.  
*Morning only*

Saturday 18th July 10.00am GR: SU037857

## **WEBB'S WOOD**

Leader: Rob Randall

In the morning Rob will help us to identify some of the *Rubus* species. After lunch we will enjoy the general flora of this very interesting ancient wood. From B4042 Wootton Bassett - Brinkworth road take Wood Lane North at 035849. Take track off road to the East at 'bridleway' sign and bear left for parking.  
*Bring lunch, or meet for afternoon at 1.30pm at car park.*

Wednesday 22nd July 10.00am GR: SU044216

## **CHICKENGROVE BOTTOM**

Leader: Barbara Last

This is a downland slope just North of Vernditch Chase with hazel/oak woodland at the edges and an amazing number of ant-hills. We should see Sawwort, Betony, Autumn Gentian and many others.  
*Morning only*

Saturday 25th July 10.00am GR: ST913509

## **BRATTON**

Leader: Dave Green

A visit to see the largest population of *Cirsium tuberosum* in the British Isles in its ideal habitat, an area of Imber Ranges usually closed to the public. From the B3098 at Bratton, take a minor road South, then South-east for 1.5km. At ST927509 turn sharp West on track. After 1.5km park under beech trees.  
*Bring lunch.*

Wednesday 19th August 10.00am GR: SU123874

## **NORTH-WEST of SWINDON**

Leader: Jack Oliver

We will explore the old railway track, the banks of the River Ray and urban roadsides. There will be many aliens and adventures. Park either side of the road on the approach to the disused railway where it crosses Purton road B4534, just North of Sparcells and near Elborough Bridge.  
*Morning only.*

Saturday 10th October 10.00am GR: SU273649

## **CHISBURY WOOD - Fungus Foray**

Leaders: Peter Marren and Malcolm Storey

A change of venue for our Foray. The wood is NW of Great Bedwyn. The entrance is off the minor road between the A4 and Great Bedwyn; there is a wood- en bench on the verge. We hope to have the barrier down so that we can drive into the wood to park.  
*Morning only.*

Saturday 17th October 10.30am GR: SU250220

## **WHITEPARISH COMMON**

Leader: Neil Sanderson

This is a joint meeting with the Hampshire Flora Group to look at some exceptional ancient woodland, especially the Small- leaved Lime. Meet near junction of two minor roads just North of the A36.  
*Bring lunch, or there are some good pubs.*

Saturday 14th November 10.00am

GR: SU028867

## **SOMERFORD COMMON: BRYOPHYTES**

Leader: Rod Stern

We will find mosses and liverworts in the morning. In the afternoon we will examine the specimens at Marlborough College science laboratories. Meet in Forestry Commission car park on East side of minor road bisecting the wood.  
*Bring lunch.*

*We welcome members' friends to our meetings, beginners and experts alike .....*

## POINTS FROM THE AGM

- We are buying new computer software to enable our recording system to be fully compatible with systems in BSBI and in the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological records Centres.
- Several members have taken parts in Plantlife's project to map the location of *Gentianella anglica* in Wiltshire.
- A monitoring programme for rare species was announced (see separate article by Louisa Kilgallen elsewhere in this issue)
- Discussion on mapping Bath Asparagus, a nationally scarce plant of which Wiltshire is a major stronghold.
- Habitat Survey Update: over 300 valuable wildlife sites have been visited since it started in 1996 and the WWT is working with land owners to promote their continued management for nature conservation. Most volunteer work is now focussed on the By-Brook area.
- The Biological Records Centre need a Bryophyte Recorder, says Sally Scott-White
- Kew is expected to send a list of seed species that still need collecting. Anyone interested, contact Jean Wall.
- Barbara Last was elected to the Committee. five members re-elected; all unanimously
- The Society's accounts are healthy, so subscriptions stay at current rate!  
(see separate Treasurer's Report)

Louisa Kilgallen

## WILTSHIRE BOTANY -- SECOND ISSUE PLANNED

Our new journal, *Wiltshire Botany*, was launched in November 1977. Its purpose was (and is) to include articles of a more technical nature than those in the twice-yearly Newsletter, though still of interest to the general reader. Following its success, a second issue is planned for November 1998.

Nothing has yet been finalised about its content but some or all of the following will be included:

- The genus *Rubus* (brambles) in Wiltshire
- River channel plants in Wiltshire
- A key to identifying Wiltshire Umbelliferae
- Survey work on the Early Gentian (*Gentianella anglica*)
- Survey work on Salisbury Plain by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology

## Finances are Healthy, but ..... .... says Treasurer

It is good to be able to report a healthy state regarding the Society's finances. As at 1st January 1998 our funds amounted to £814.84, more than half of which arose from membership subscriptions. As several members had taken out life membership during 1997 it is inevitable that income for this year will be considerably less.

It is vital that subscriptions are kept up to date - so easy I know to let this slip the mind when we are all so busy with other matters. But, if you haven't yet paid up for this year, please will you do so as soon as possible.

I think you will agree that for a very modest outlay we have a very good return : two *Newsletters* and two calendars a year, a varied programme of talks and outings, plus this year our first edition of the *Wiltshire Botany Journal*. Naturally, these do not arrive for free and our total expenses covering Newsletter and Journal production, postage and others (hiring of hall, exhibition material, group membership of BSBI etc) amounted to £446.00.

This year, we have additional expenses as we become computerised and will be able to link up with nationwide as well as county records -- so please do keep you subscriptions coming in !

*Individual membership* £5.00 per annum £50.00 for life membership  
*Family membership* £7.50 per annum £75.00 for life membership  
Gwyneth Yerrington

*A Standing Order form is enclosed with this issue; others are available from me*

- Some consultancy work on behalf of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Selections from the Society's records 1996 and possibly 1997
- Work of the Wiltshire Biology Records Centre
- Wiltshire Bryophyta (mosses and liverworts)
- Fungi in Wiltshire
- Early stages of planned or desirable local plant studies

*Other offers or suggestions welcome.*

*Deadline for submissions is August 31.*

*Written guidelines, advice and help are available for intending contributors from:*

John Presland, Editor , *Wiltshire Botany*

## Epiphytic Orchids of Northern India

10th January, Marlborough College

Assam, Sikkim, the Himalayas, the valley of the Brahmaputra, the Naga Hills and the ancient Khasia Hills: these were the romantic localities touched on by **Jeremy Wood** - the backdrop to his talk. Some aspects of the biology of the epiphytic orchids were covered. These includes the fusion of certain tepals within some genera; pseudobulbs, water and nutrient shortage; sympodial and monopodial types of growth and their influence on the diverse vegetative forms of orchid; profuse seeding, cultivation in nutrient agar jelly, and hybridization.

Most listeners would probably have been unfamiliar with more than a few of the genera discussed: *Aerides*, *Coelogyne*, *Cymbidium*, *Cyprigepedium*, *Dendrobium*, *Paphiopedilum*, *Rhynchostylis*, *Vanda*, *Vandopsis*, to name but a few. There are about 800 genera and 175,000 species in the Orchidaceae, with thousands more hybrids.

Most of us were aware of the fascination of Orchids, and from his days as a Tea scientist, Jeremy's commitment to the Assamese epiphytes will have increased our wonderment.

There were some specimens in flower for us to see, and the slides, from his garden in Assam or direct from the wild, were both nostalgic and illustrative of the beauty as well as the strangeness of these plants.

We all have our favourite aesthetic groups. Before this talk, I might have given the top three places to the *Iridaceae*, *Tiliaceae* and *Liliaceae* (especially the *Amaryllidaceae* sub-family). Since then, the *Orchidaceae* have challenged my rankings!

Jack Oliver

## FLOWERS OF ISRAEL

Barbara Last

14 February, Marlborough College

Barbara Last gave the 19 of us present a very informative and amusing commentary on her superb slides. Israel, we discovered, has a rich variety of colourful and shapely plants to adorn its rugged scenery. On a tour intended for birds Barbara soon became known as the 'bottomist', down among the herbs with her camera!

The rift valley of East Africa extends right up the Red Sea and through Israel and is followed by millions of migratory birds.

To mention a few of the memorable slides: there were *Cyclamen persicum* and *Limonium sinuatum* in a limestone gorge near the northern border and *Hyacinthus orientalis* on the Golan Heights. Near Mount Hermon was the

## Wiltshire Wild Plants in or near Water

John Presland

31 January, Marlborough College

There were ten of us attending **John Presland's** talk and slide show. As usual, his slides were excellent, with much detail and colour to help us with future identification. Also, it is good to see the common flora slides at this time of year to remind us what to look forward to in spring and summer. The first slide provided just that, as it was one of John's garden pond, complete with resident snake.

John continued with the flora of the various wetland habitats. To list a few: Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago aquatica*) Watercress (*Rorippa nasturtium*) Fools' Watercress (*Apium nodiflorum*) Amphibious Bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*) and Water Dock (*Rumex hydrolapathum*) but beware of the Greater Pond Sedge (*Carex riparia*) which is very invasive.

There were some particularly good slides of the various species of Water Crowfoot (*Ranunculus spp.*), some growing in the fast-flowing River Avon where stems can grow up to 7 ft long. Arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*) are also very varied. The slides of the leaf shapes at different levels in the water must have been quite difficult to take. Common Duck Weed (*Lemna minor*) is a purifying plant eaten by ducks and also known as Duck Meat.

Then we come to the confusion between Bullrush and Reed Mace, but I gather it is now known as Bullrush (*Typha latifolia*) as in the Bible. We had a second look at the Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudocorus*) - an old Wiltshire name for it was Sword Grass. Jack Oliver said it could have been the original French *Fleur de Lys*.

After questions and some discussion we all had a welcome cup of tea - thanks to Joy Newton.

Christine McQuitty

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deep blue *Lupin pilosus*, also *Anchusa hybrida*, *Euphorbia heirosolymitana*, many brilliant Anemones and *Asphodeline lutea*. On to Lake Galilee, the Judean Desert and the Dead Sea.

Continuing south into scorching arid desert, we saw *Acacia tortilis* with its fearsome thorns. Timna Oasis has date palm orchards and Tamarisk trees. Further south in the sands of Arena Valley we saw *Plantago cylindrica* and the swelling yellow fruits of the Bitter Apple; also *Abutilon fruticosum* and parasitic *Orobancha cronata*.

Finally, reaching Eilat we saw some of the amazing corals and brilliant fish of the Red Sea.

A most rewarding afternoon!

Philip Terry

# A Garden of Hellebores

Visit to Lower House, Whiteparish  
8th March

By serendipitous chance, the first outdoor meeting of this year was mild and quiet, and 28 members emerged from across the county to the outpost of Wiltshire on the Hampshire border to visit the garden of **Jeremy and Jane Wood** which is open for the National Gardens Scheme to display its remarkable collection of Hellebores. Jeremy maintains part of the National Collection of these spectacular plants.

There are 17 distinct wild species in this genus and an infinite number of hybrids. Two species are native to Great Britain, *H. foetidus* and *H. viridis*. Most of the rest are European, Balkan or from Asia Minor, but one, with white flowers, *H. thibetanus*, originates in China. These species and hybrids produce an amazing variety of form and colour, from pure white, green, yellow and delicate to dark purples, some with speckled markings. The petaloid structures are in fact sepals, the corolla forming a ring of tubular nectaries which may be green or black. Sometimes, doubles are produced when the nectaries are also petaloid and do not produce nectar.

They are normally pollinated by both bumble bees and honeybees, which may haphazardly result in unknown hybrids. To be certain of seed origin, Jeremy pollinates by hand, subsequently labelling the flower-head so that the authenticity of the seed produced is known. As they are protogynous, a bud is carefully opened when the stigmas are ripe and pollinated with stamens from a known flower. Care is taken to treat all three or four stigmas; if one is missed, it will subsequently be pollinated by a bee with pollen from an unknown source and the resultant seed impure. Seed is collected when black, just before the capsule sheds, and sown straight away into labelled pots of suitable compost and Cornish grit. The pots are covered with glass till they germinate in November, when the seedlings are grown on in a greenhouse.

Jeremy explained that they were reluctant to propagate by cuttings, but he divided the plants carefully, first washing off the soil and separating each growing shoot with a knife. Although this can be done in Autumn, Jeremy does it in Spring when the plants can be identified with confidence from the flower.

A fascinating inspection of the garden was followed by an invitation to tea when we were shown further delights: a collection of *Cymbidium* and other orchids.

We are all most grateful to Mr and Mrs Wood for their hospitality.

Barbara Last

First meeting of the Summer Season  
**CLATTINGER FARM, MINETY**  
16th May

Dave Green

On a beautiful sunny morning, 18 of us including one very young member assembled with the Reserve Warden for a fascinating walk through the old hay meadows which were still spongy and wet with dew. Our first find was Upright Brome (*Bromus erectus*) and we compared its characteristics with those of Meadow and Smooth Brome (*B. commutatus* & *B. recemosus*). It was seen to have a slenderer head and to be less heavy-leaved.

It was especially a day for improving our recognition of the Sedges: Glaucous, Distant (with its spaced-out spikes) Hairy, Common, Spring and Carnation (*Carex flacca*, *C. distans*, *C. hirta*, *C. nigra*, *C. caryophyllea* and *C. panicea*). The latter, we learnt, has its own particular, easy-to-identify characteristic! However, the undoubted star of the show was downy-fruited Sedge (*Carex tomentosa*, a British Red Data Book species, found in only 15 sites in the country), which was growing in its original location but was also identified slightly to the north and again to the south. We noted its leaf-like bract and that it would have a small, very downy fruit.

Moving along westwards we found Twayblade (*Listera ovata*), and in a damp area, two attractive clumps of Marsh Valerian (*Valeriana dioica*) and, dotted around, some specimens of Marsh Bedstraw (*Galium palustre*). There was a fair sprinkling of Adderstongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*), as well as collections of Green-winged and Early Marsh Orchids (*Orchis morio* and *Dactylorhiza incarnata*) but as yet only the basal leaves of Common Spotted Orchid (*D. fuchsii*) were appearing.

Later in a field further to the south we saw Pepper-saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*), Dyer's Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*), Common Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*), the dried heads of *Fritillaria meleagris* and a very handsome Black Poplar. On our way back we came across the basal leaves of Meadow Saffron (*Colchicum autumnale*) and, to our delight, a fairly substantial colony of young Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*).

It had proved to be an exciting site which was enhanced by a fascinating display of aerobatics from numbers of beautiful Common Blue Damsellies.

Diana Hodgson

# Poor Man's Baccy

one of an occasional series by **Barbara Last**  
reprinted from 'Wiltshire Life'

One of the earliest flowers to appear is Coltsfoot, flowering in February and March, frequently on waste ground, embankments and quarries, preferring heavy clayey soils. As the flowers arise before the leaves, it has been called 'son before father'. The daisy-like flowers are bright yellow on felted stems. The large felted leaves grow later after the flower has seeded and disappeared. The shape gives rise to the name 'Coltsfoot'. Other old names include Bull's Foot, Foal's Wort, Horse-hoof, Coughwort and Baccy plant. As some names implied, the dried leaves were made into a herbal tobacco and smoked. This is curious as the Linnaean name, originating from Pliny, is *Tussilago*, from the Latin, meaning a cough. It seems more likely to promote a cough then to cure it, as recommended in many of the old herbal remedies. Its medicinal use is well known, originating among the ancient Greeks for pulmonary complaints. *Culpeper* suggests that the juice from fresh leaves formed into a syrup is good for a hot dry cough, wheezings and shortness of breath and bronchitis. The dried leaves and root are again recommended for a tobacco to cure coughs. The distilled water from the leaves, with Elderflower and Nightshade, is a singular remedy for hot agues. This is applied externally and "also does much good to hot swellings; it helpeth St Anthony's Fire" (*Erisipelas*) "...and the burning of piles or privy parts, cloths wet therein being thereinto applied".

In the past, the woolly hairs on the underside of the leaves were rubbed off and dried, mixed with saltpetre and used as tinder before the days of matches. The species name *farfara* comes from a Greek name for White Poplar whose leaves are also downy on the underside. The downy fluff was also used to stuff pillows and beds, but it must have been an unimaginable labour to collect sufficient for the purpose! The papussus of the fruits (like dandelion clocks), are taken by goldfinches to line their nests.

The flower heads have been used to make coltsfoot wine. This involves gathering two quarts of flower heads. Also 1lb of sultanas, 3 lb sugar, 4 oranges, one cup of tea (no milk) and wine yeast. The flowers should be washed and the green involucres removed and put in a bucket with the sugar, minced sultanas, orange juice and tea, and covered with 6 pints of boiling water.

When cooled to blood heat, add the yeast,

## NORTH AMERICAN ASTERS IN WILTSHIRE

Only two members of the very large and complex Aster genus are native to Britain, and none to Wiltshire. The tall Asters introduced from Canada and the USA from 1710 onwards are the plants known in Britain as Michaelmas-daisies. The *Wiltshire Flora* did not deal adequately with Asters in Wiltshire because of the very great problems in identification of species and hybrids, under-recording due to late flowering (the mapping project cards were handed in each year on 1 October for every year of the Project) and the mistaken assumption that all the clumps recorded were localised or transient escapes.

Spread of the species *Aster lanceolatus*, (the Narrow-leaved Michaelmas-daisy) into the wild in Wiltshire should not automatically be attributed to past horticulture. Its main concentrations in Army areas in the county could indicate chance arrival of seed with tens of thousands of Canadian and American troops and their vehicles during the two world wars.

From 1992-1996, members of our Society were asked to keep a look-out for Aster clumps, and NOT to cease looking after September.

Jack Oliver produced a paper on this interesting subject for the *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*. Copies are available for the price of a SAE from him or from the Editor.

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cover and allow to ferment, fitted with an air-lock and left to complete the fermentation. I have found another old recipe that adds a pint of brandy, but this seems to me to be rather over the top ! There is a similar recipe for making dandelion wine.

Coltsfoot is closely related to Butterbur which also flowers early in the Spring and again produces huge leaves after the flowers have finished. Formerly, these were used to wrap foodstuff such as butter or sandwiches before polythene bags. Butterbur grows in damp situations, often by streams. It is a rich source of nectar, especially valuable to bees at this time when not much else is available to them. It was an old remedy for the plague and the root has been used for neuralgia.

**Barbara Last**

## Are Garden Weeds Under-recorded ?

We moved to our present house when it was built in 1979. There was a bramble in a fence which seemed to have good fruit. I now train it on a neighbour's Leyland cypress hedge which has reached about 8 ft. The bramble is vigorous with rather vicious thorns but gives a good crop. David Allen has confirmed it is *Rubus cardiophyllus* and has never seen it cultivated for fruit before. In another fence we have *Rubus surreyanus* and *R. norvicensis* which are common around here. I would get rid of them if I could !

Almost as soon as we had flower beds, *Veronica polita* (Grey Field-speedwell) and *Veronica agrestis* (Green Field-speedwell) appeared in abundance. I have noticed that the latter often flowers in Winter. When commencing recording for Atlas 2000 in SU32 I found it in a verge outside a Romsey garden on 28 Dec 1996, the first record for that hectad. On 29 Dec 1997 I found it in a verge outside a West Wellow garden. This is only about a mile as the crow flies but in a different hectad, SU21, and in a different vc (8, S. Wilts) though now in Hampshire. The Flora of Wiltshire gives it in only one tetrad in v.c. 8, near the northern border. Is this apparent rarity due to under-recording? It may be coincidence that I have found it in winter on two occasions, but it may be worth keeping one's eye open when wandering round the village or visiting friends' gardens in winter. These two Speedwells have become troublesome weeds.

Another weed which soon appeared and became troublesome was *Varianella carinata* (Keeled- fruited Cornsalad). After a few years *Echinochloa crus-galli* (Cockspur) attained a height of over 2ft by hiding between two rows of runner beans. The same year, *Digitaria sanguinalis* (Hairy Finger-grass) appeared. We have not had these lately but have had some other bird-seed casuals : *Synapsis alba* (White Mustard), *Thlaspi arvense* (Field Penny-cress), *Lepidum ruderales* (Narrow-leaved Pepperwort), *Triticum aestivum* (Bread Wheat) and *Linum usitatissimum* (Flax). I delay mowing a few of the last-named in the lawn until after flowering because we like the colour. *Helianthus sp.* (Sunflower) and *Arachis hypogaea* (Ground-nut) produce seedlings but do not usually attain sufficient size to need weeding. At the same time we had many seedlings appear in the lawn of *Daucus carota* (carrot). The tap roots of even very young plants had become swollen and they seemed to be *ssp sativus*. Our next-door neighbour seemed to have a similar invasion. I do not think this occurs in bird food and the origin is uncertain. Neither of us grows carrots.

Roger Veall

## Winsley Nature Reserve Update

Much has happened since this project was announced in the November *Newsletter*. The site for Murhill Bank, the name of the new reserve, has now been bought from the Health Authority by the parish council. The main aim is to develop the site as a parish nature reserve which local people can appreciate and enjoy within walking distance of the village of Winsley .

### Progress to date

During February and March this year 22 volunteers have worked a total of 225 hours. Off-road parking is now available and all necessary trees and scrub have been cleared. We have left a coppice with mature oaks with cherry and holly in the understory, a small area of young trees to the south of the coppice and a group of coppiced Ash and a Spindle tree. Among the grassland apple, pear and cherry plum have been left and also a fine Privet bush whose white blossom will attract butterflies.

Erecting the sheep fencing began next. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) guided us in the principles and practice, a fence was made at the western end and a start made at the eastern end of the grassland. Sessions have been made to continue the fencing.

### Future work

Other activities will be carried out as possible. Stumps of felled trees will need treatment to prevent regrowth. Surveys will be needed of plant life. Recording of plants is well advanced and recording of birds and butterflies is planned for this summer. The hedge along Murhill Lane will need controlling, possibly even laying. Dead trees and branches may need moving. Leaflets describing the site and its wildlife may be produced and applications for further grants may be made to the Rural Development Fund towards these activities .

With or without grants, there will be much to keep us busy for the next year or two.

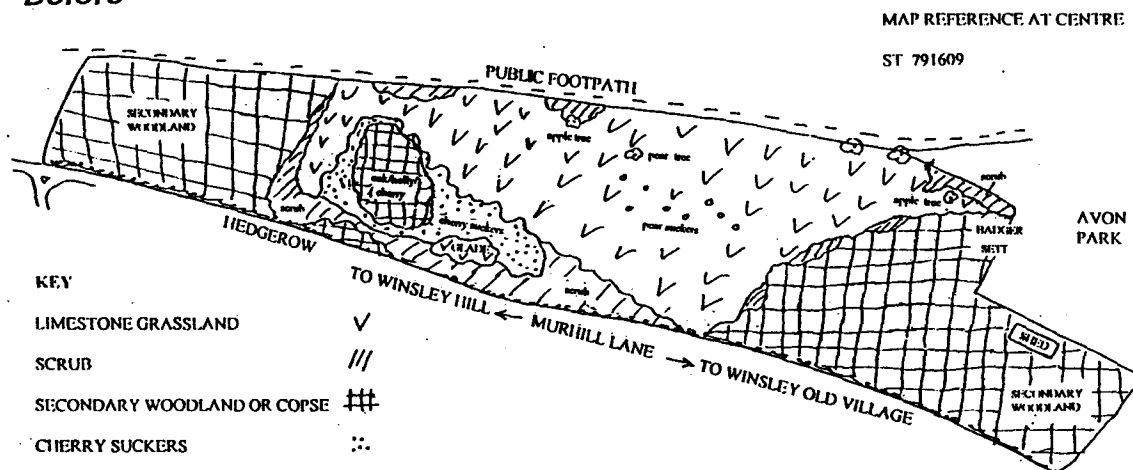
John Presland

**Ed. note:** anyone who would like to help in any way with this interesting project can get more information direct from John (phone number on back page)

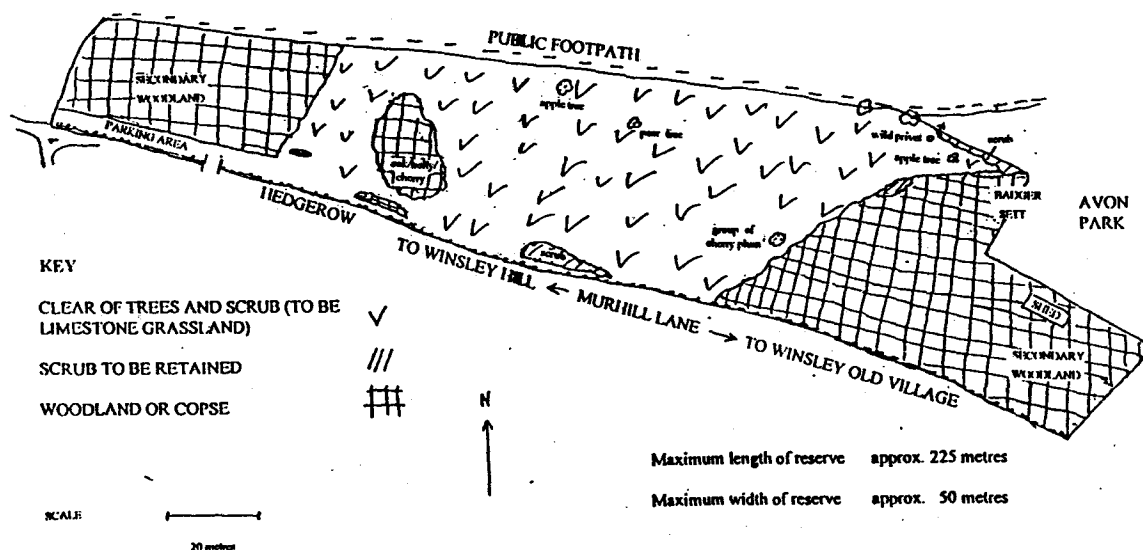


# Muirhill Bank Parish Nature Reserve (see p. 7)

**Before**



**After**



## WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY Committee

Dave Green	Chairman	(01225) 835227
Jean Wall	Secretary	(01666) 823865
Gwyneth Yerrington	Treasurer	(01225) 862740
Joy Newton	Meetings Secretary	(01672) 540356
Malcolm Hardstaff	Plant Records	(01672) 512029
Paul Darby	Wilts Wildlife Trust	(01380) 526228
Sally Scott-White	Wilts Biological Records	(01380) 727369
Phil Wilson	Science Sub-Committee	(01725) 51048
Louisa Kilgallen	Minutes Secretary	(01225) 867331
John Presland	Editor/Wiltshire Botany	(01225) 865125
John Harry		(01793) 534539

Barbara Last	(01722) 790368
Jack Oliver	(01672) 861251
Christopher Perraton	(01225) 703294
Maureen Ponting	(01672) 512361
Pat Woodruffe	(01794) 884436

Editor /  
Michael Ponting Old Post Office, Manton  
Technical Editor / Marlborough SN8 4HH  
Maureen Ponting (01672) 512361