

Newsletter

Issue 14 January 1999

WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY



Winter/Spring Meetings 1999

Saturday 23 January 2.00 pm

Maureen Ponting

Talk and Slide Show

Flowers of the Burren

Tea and discussion afterwards

Marlborough College Science Labs:

Saturday 27 February 2.00 pm

John Presland

Talk and Slide Show

Wild Flowers of the Seaside

Tea and discussion afterwards :

Marlborough College Science Labs.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 6th March 2.00 pm

The Museum, Long Street, Devizes

After official business we will have a

short quiz/slide show conducted by

John Presland, followed by tea.

Parking behind the Museum

Marlborough College Science Labs: are 120m West of the bridge over the A4 at the West end of Marlborough: Turn South into the car park and our actual lab is immediately behind the large Memorial Hall:

Members' guests are welcome.

In this Issue

Last Summer's Meetings

Notes on Juniper

Management for *Paris quadrifolia*

also enclosed....

Calendar for this Summer's Meetings

WILTSHIRE BOTANY

... Second Issue imminent

The second issue of the Society's scientific journal will appear in February. Most members, it is expected, will get their free copy at the AGM in March. Further copies will be available for purchase at *Wiltshire Wildlife Trust* in Devizes.

This issue contains an account of the early history of studying brambles in Wiltshire by **Rob Randall**, an article about bryophytes in Wiltshire by **Rod Stern**, keys for identifying Wiltshire umbelliferae by **John Presland**, a study of Wiltshire river channel flora in the 1990s by **Jack Oliver** and a selection from our plant records for 1996.

It is hoped that *Issue Three* will follow a year later. Articles should be sent to **John Presland** by the end of September 1999 at the very latest, but in fact as soon as possible:

Advance notification would be helpful for planning purposes:

(John Presland 175e Ashley Lane, Bradford on Avon (01225 865125))

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 llama*, *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 (*Silau 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 Damselflies.

Diana Hodgson

Garston Wood, Sixpenny Handley, Dorset
20th May

Leader: Barbara Last

It was pleasantly cool in Garston Wood on a hot day in May when 9 Society members visited this RSPB Reserve just over the Wiltshire border. This meeting was led by **Barbara Last** who surveyed the flora in the wood ten years ago for the RSPB, and her intimate knowledge enabled us to see many of the interesting plants to be seen in this SSSI. The wood has 22 recorded species of native trees and shrubs, with many standard oak and ash trees. Since 1985, hazels in some parts of the wood have been coppiced regularly.

The bluebells were just over, but as we left the car park the path was lined with a thick growth of plants: Wood Spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum multiflorum*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*), Aquilegia vulgaris and Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*). There was also Common Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), the roots of which were once harvested commercially here for use as a sedative.

A short diversion off this path resulted in the discovery of a single spike of Bird's Nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) on the same site where Barbara had first recorded it ten years earlier. Four other species of orchid were also seen during the morning. There were numerous Early Purple Orchids (*Orchis mascula*) and also Twayblades (*Listera ovata*), Greater Butterfly Orchids (*Platantha chlorantha*) and a few Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), found throughout the wood, was particularly prolific in a recently coppiced area on the west side of the wood, and this led to a discussion about the edibility of the underground 'nut'. In the path on this side of the wood were several plants of *Alchemilla filicaulis* ssp. *vesitita* together with Corn Mint (*Mentha arvensis*), and to the side of the path, patches of Butcher's Broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*). Common Gromwell (*Lithospermum officinale*) and Bitter Vetch (*Lathyrus montanus*). It was here that a second Bird's Nest Orchid with four flower spikes was found and much photographed. Many plant species we found in Garston Wood are indicative of ancient woodland

Jennifer Acornley

Vancellette's Farm, Willesley

Sunday 31 May

Leader: **Paul Darby**

1 he last day of May saw a small group of members making their way to the far north-west of the county to visit these lovely hay meadows on Forest Marble Clay on a holding farmed without artificial fertilisers. We were welcomed by the farmer who must have been disappointed that more hadn't come. The month before had been the wettest April this century and the first three days of June turned out to be rainy, however we managed to pick out a fine day with swallows busily flying in and out of the old barns in the farmyard.

Paul Darby our leader knew this site very well but we managed to add a few 'new' species to the list for each of the fields, including a patch of Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) in one of the fields. Dave Green has seen Great Burnet in this vicinity in 1987 but in a different location. Dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*), not common on this site. was refound. Other species seen in the meadows included Saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Devil's Bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Spring Sedge *Carex carophyllea*.

A brief Historical note on Cranbourne Chase

Garston Wood is in the inner bounds of Cranbourne Chase, which from the time of William I, and probably before was a royal hunting chase.

From the 12th century the Chase was held by the Earls of Gloucester and temporarily by King John as husband to the heiress of a Duke of Gloucester. Ownership was never far from the Crown till James I gave the Lordship of the Chase to to Robert Cecil, later Earl of Salisbury. In the Chase, the deer and the vegetation they fed on and sheltered in were heavily protected to the detriment of local agriculture as straying deer frequently destroyed crops. There were many complaints about officers of the Chase over- stepping their authority with on the spot fines and violence, and also violent affrays between deer poachers and gamekeepers. From earliest times legal attempts were made to limit the bounds and restrict the rights of the Chase, but it was not till 1830 that the Chase was abolished by Act of Parliament. All was peaceful in the wood for our visit

J. A.

Seven ponds on the farm were also looked at. one of these being fairly large, where we saw a clump of Celery-leaved Buttercup growing in the water with a wonderful show of its floating leaves. Other species observed in the various ponds included Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*). Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) and Plicate Sweet-grass (*Glyceria notata*).

Jean Wall

Grove Farm Meadows and Great Wood, Grittenham

14 June 1998

Remember June - that rather wet month this year ? For the eight people who attended, the morning's weather was certainly better than the afternoon's !

The displays of flora however were spectacular - particularly when we arrived at the most flower-rich hay meadow - our destination for the morning. Heath-spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza maculata*) were seen in abundance and the time was perfect for the large patch of Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*) which was in flower. The added bonus here was a Forester Moth (*Adscita statites*), nectaring in one of the blooms.

Among the other typical 'all-meadow' plants seen were Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) and Pepper Saxifrage (*Silene acaulis*).

The ridge and furrow system of the field provided an interesting contrast in flora, as did. the slightly acid nature of the soils in the southern parts of the field compared with the northern part. Several grassland plants not recorded before in this meadow were noted, including Changing Forget-me-not (*Mvosotis discolor*) and Quaking Grass (*Briza media*).

The pond and its margins provided some additional species, including a variety of shrubs. After a rain shower, an opportune 'window in the weather' enabled us to have lunch in the sunshine sitting beside the pond in Great Wood, which lies . immediately adjacent to Grove Farm meadows. The wood is varied and fairly rich botanically, but after a promising start, seeing Common Cow wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*), Pale Sedge (*Carex pallescens*) and Bitter-vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius* var. *montanus*), the weather closed in, dampening the proceedings a little.

A fruitful and enjoyable day out was had by all in an area which undoubtedly has further wildlife riches just waiting to be discovered !

Paul Darby

HONEYBROOK FARM

16 June

Leader: **Sarah Grinstead**

Eleven members gathered at Honeybrook Farm in the beautiful wooded Lagger Valley near Slaughterford, **Sarah Grinstead** of the Wilts Trust and the farmer showed us round. In the morning we saw extensive, totally unimproved water meadows along the By brook. Good plants included *Thalictrum flavum*, *Silene silaus*, *Scirpus sylvaticus* and *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and *incarnata*. The farmer told me that Hayrattle is known locally as fireweed, because if too much was included in hay bales they tended to ignite spontaneously ! A twenty year old trout lake afforded a *Salix sally* for Jack Oliver, but he didn't walk in after the *Potamogeton* ! Rain coincided with lunch and then we were off up the slopes of limestone grassland. This was cropped by cattle, but with minimal apparent damage. *Ononis spinosa* (the one with hairs all round the stem and with or without spines) was common, Also present were *Geranium columbinum*, *Linum catharticum*, *Blackstonia perfoliata*, *Carduus nutans*, *Cirsium eriophorum* and *Polygala vulgaris*. Altogether a marvellous farm, more reminiscent of the 1940s than the 1990s.

Simon Young

SOMERFORD COMMON

June 24

Leader **John Gearson**

John Gearson took us to a different area of Somerford Common this year. There were plenty of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted Orchid) and *D. maculata* (Heath Spotted Orchid) and hybrids: *D. x transiens*. John had counted 142 *Platanthera chloranantha* (Greater Butterfly Orchid) two weeks previously - a vast increase on the usual number. Perhaps they liked the wet spring.

We reached a very large pond, dug only two years ago on the site of an older one which had been invaded by willows. The main colonist round the edges was *Glyceria x pedicellata* (Hybrid Sweet Grass). There were some dragonflies and damselflies, even without the sun and slots in the mud showed how the Muntjac and Roe Deer were using it.

We found the hybrid Hawthorn, *Crataegus monogyna x laevigata*, *C. macrocarpa* and the hybrid oak, *Quercus robur x Quercus petraea - Q. rosacea*. All in all, it was quite a day for hybrids !

John helped us differentiate between hoverflies and sawflies and we heard goldcrests and long-tailed tits: Altogether an extremely varied and productive morning:

EAST HARNHAM MEADOWS

Sunday 21 June

Leader: **Phil Wilson**

The day dawned sunny and warm and we were greeted at East Harnham Farm with scudding clouds and blue sky, However, it was immediately apparent that boots would be the order of the day a plenty of rain had fallen in the previous week. Our party was augmented by a number of enthusiastic folk from the Hampshire group and we totalled about 15:

Phil Wilson who was leading us suggested that the main area of interest would be a long isthmus of marshy land between the River Avon and a navigation channel. This area was reached by a long rickety bridge, partly constructed from the rusty remains of a caravan trailer planked with splintered and greasy timbers. It would have challenged the SAS. swaying alarmingly at every step: During crossing, Jack Oliver paused in the middle, and, leaning over to identify a *Potamogeton*, came perilously close to joining it. Two members completed the crossing on all fours, one pretending to be engrossed in a Bittercress growing between the boards: Phil told us that the bridge had never been a problem and we were greatly reassured. The marsh itself was divided by a number of shallow ditches or rhines, crossed by low stone bridges. In the first we found the hybrid Water Speedwell *Veronica anagallis aquatica x catanarta* growing at intervals along the water margin, Great Water **Dock** *Rumex hydro-lapathum* was also fairly frequent and just coming into flower, as was Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*. After some searching we found an area of Bogbean, *Menyanthes trifoliata*, but not in bloom. Phil commented that he had never seen it in flower at this location. Two pure white specimens of Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* caused some interest and were worth photographing along with the more typical purple forms. *Thalictrum flavum*, *Galium palustre* ssp: *elongatum* *Senecio aquatica*, *Geum rivale*, all abounded:

Lychnis flos-cuculi appeared spasmodically all over the area but seemed somewhat diminutive in stature. Much interest was shown in a Marsh Horsetail *Equisetum palustre*.

The afternoon concluded with a visit to the haymeadow at the far western end of the Reserve: The weather had been kind and a rewarding day had been shared by all

Ron Hurst

North-west Swindon

19 August 98

Led by Jack Oliver, fourteen of us enjoyed a morning of brilliant sunshine.

The disused railway track stretches along an interesting green belt, north and south of the north Swindon - Purton road. Plant life along the path edges (going south) was lush and varied, with fine spikes of *Verbascum nigrum* and the introduced but attractive *Salix eleagnos* both identified. Nearby were *Reseda luteola*, *Clematis vitalba* in full bloom, *Viburnum opulus*, *Cornus sanguinea*. *Rubus caesius*, *Salix fragilis* and other willows: Speckled Wood butterflies were playing overhead: The path soon became an embankment. We found *Hypericum perforatum*, *Picris echioides*. *Leontodon autumnalis*, *L. saxatilis*, *Equisetum* hybrids, *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Melilotus altissimus* and *M. alba*, *Conyza canadensis* and a solitary Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*):

There were a few *Clinopodium vulgare* and a huge spreading *Brassica nrga*. We also saw *Symphytum officinale*, *Epilobium hirsutum*, *Sisymbrium officinale*. *Lactuca serriola*, *Eupatorium cannabinum*, the hybrid grass *Festulolium*, *Leontodon saxatilis* and many other species:

Now crossing the road and heading north, we entered a cutting with tree-covered, then grassy banks: A good debate on various *Epilobium* species and their hybrids, then on Ragworts, ensued: We came across another *Melilotus* - this time *M. officinalis*: Among *Daucus carota*, *Knautia arvensis*, *Galium verum*, *Centaurea nigra* were the attractive Common Blue butterflies. *Brachypodium pinnatum* flourished on some banks, with several clumps of a very large aberrant form: *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Arctium minus*, *Pulicaria dysenterica*, *Lathyrus pratensis* and massed *Chamaenerion augustifolium* delighted the eye as we retraced our steps:

Philip Terry

Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine

This journal of the Wilts Arch. and NH Society is still about 95% archaeology and 5% natural history:

Dr Chandler (8 Portway House, 33 Portway, Warminster BA 12 8QQ) would welcome submission of more natural history articles:

Requirements are scientific accuracy and relevance, with some originality - not just lists, however interesting, nor material reworked from other authors or publications:

FUNGUS FORAY

Chisbury Wood Great Bedwyn

10 October

Leaders: Peter Marren & Malcolm Storey

Chisbury Wood was a new venue for the Botanical Society foray. In a relatively small area the habitat varied from an open grassy clearing with old stumps and logs, to beech, oak, silver birch and larch woodland, so providing an interesting variety of fungi, if not quite the number of species hoped for by the leaders, Peter Marren and Malcolm Storey.

On the grassy track we found *Hebeloma sinuosum*, identified by Malcolm, who cut it in half to show us the 'wick' hanging down in the tip of the stem: *Lepiota sp.*, *Coprinus comatus* and *Melanoleuca sp.*

The broad-leaved woods were more fruitful: Perhaps the most attractive, albeit very common fungus was *Laccaria amethystina*, fresh specimens, growing in abundance and not obscured by fallen leaves: The Death Cap, *Amanita phalloides*, was prolific under some beech trees, forming a ring round one of them:

Other *Amanitas* seen were *A. citrina*, *A. fulva*, *A. muscaria* and *A. rubescens*: The most exciting find of the day was the strange-looking *Helvella sp.* Altogether over 60 species were found:

Our expert leaders not only identified them but with all their additional information and hints, not easily found in field guides, name derivations and anecdotes, inspired at least one amateur to spend more time fungus hunting:

Lesley Balfe



Coprinus comatus
"Shaggy Cap"

MOTHS IN SAVERNAKE FOREST

10th July

Leader Humphrey Kay

To attract moths for our meeting, Humphrey Kay set up a trap the night before, consisting of a mercury vapour lamp surrounded by baffles. Attracted by its ultra-violet light, the moths would crash into the baffles and fall into a box below to settle down quietly on egg boxes.

Humphrey came back at 4am to cover them so they did not get agitated and damage themselves in the dawn light: There were many species waiting to be shown when we arrived: I noted the names of 42 as Humphrey described them for us: We were very grateful that most moths seem to have descriptive names, like the Blotched Emerald, and the Common White Wave with lovely wavy lines: The four different species of Footmen were smart in their livery. And we were thrilled by the Burnished Brass, with its lovely golden sheen and the Mother of Pearl was genuinely pearl-like.

The giants of the moth world were also very beautiful: These included The Privet Hawk Moth, the Poplar Hawk Moth and especially the Elephant Hawk Moth with its subtle pink and sage green colouring.

At the end of our visit, Humphrey released the moths safely into a hedge to avoid the attentions of birds. We much enjoyed touching on the edge of a new area which has such a close relationship with botany.

Joy Newton

Chickengrove Bottom

July 28

Leader: Barbara Last

Twelve members and friends joined this meeting of the Society under the expert leadership of **Barbara Last**. Chickengrove Bottom, which lies just short of Vernditch Chase, is a downland slope intermittently grazed by cows and managed with advice from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. It is an Environmentally Sensitive Area and under both the Countryside Stewardship and Countryside Access Schemes: The wild flowers and grasses were prolific, with encroaching hazel and oak. No Autumn Gentians were seen, but Betony (*Betonica officinalis*), Sawwort (*Serratula tinctoria*), clustered Bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*), Harebell (*C. rotundifolia*), Zigzag Clover (*Trifolium medium*) as well as Dwarf Sedge (*Carex humilis*) were shown:

Imber Ranges, Bratton

25 July 1998

Leader: **Dave Green**

There was a good turnout for this trip led by Dave Green to Imber Ranges on Salisbury Plain to look at Britain's largest population of Tuberous Thistle (*Cirsium tuberosum*): After being reminded of various safety hazards on the Plain, including the need to avoid picking up metal objects (!) we set off across the spectacular, wild landscape:

Tuberous Thistle were not hard to spot, growing on steep, tussocky grassland with some plants more than a metre high: En fact, on occasion, Joy Newton almost disappeared from view: This is in contrast to the Dwarf Thistle (*Cirsium acaule*), which barely protrudes above the ground. Given the opportunity, the two species will hybridise, and there was a fair amount of discussion during the walk on separating the different types. We learnt that the Tuberous Thistle can survive in rougher, grassland than the Dwarf Thistle and that leaving an ungrazed buffer zone around a sensitive population can help prevent hybridisation:

Moving on, we walked along a dry valley with rich chalk downland flora on either side, including plenty of Small and Devil's Bit Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria* and *Succisa pratensis*) and highlights such as Autumn Gentian (*Gentianella amarella*), Hawkweed Ox-tongue (*Picris hieracioides*) and Basil Thyme (*Acinos arvensis*). A picnic lunch in the sunshine made it a perfect outing.

Sarah Grinsted

The hillside was dotted with large anthills covered with mats of herbaceous plants. A Dark Green Fritillary was seen, wings outstretched in the sunshine, feeding on wild Thyme blossom. Silver-washed fritillaries darted and swooped at the wood edge, while Large and Small Skippers, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Marbled Whites and Ringlets fluttered over the downland plants: A Ragwort plant was covered with the brightly striped caterpillars of the Cinnebar Moth and we saw several specimens of the White Plume Moth, grasshoppers and hoverflies including the Drone Fly (*Eristalis timax*) which imitates a bee; and nests of spiders.

A Green Woodpecker was heard and the dogs were suspected of having disturbed two nests of adders, but luckily we didn't know about that until we escaped from the tall grasses, just as the first rain began to fall

Phillida Sneyd

Whiteparish Common

17th October

Leader: Neil Sanderson

Around twenty two people gathered for this joint meeting with the **Hampshire Flora Group**. Despite the indifferent weather forecast, the morning proved sunny and mild, indeed a very pleasant autumn day for a woodland walk.

The Common is an SSSI noted for its range of trees, in particular Smallleaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and Wild Service (*Sorbus torminalis*): Rights of common have not been exercised for some 50 years and so a considerable ground flora has developed beneath the canopy. There was some discussion about the history of the wood and I have since read that in Domesday times the rights of panage and estovers in Melchet Wood, of which the Common is part, belonged to the Abbess of Wilton,

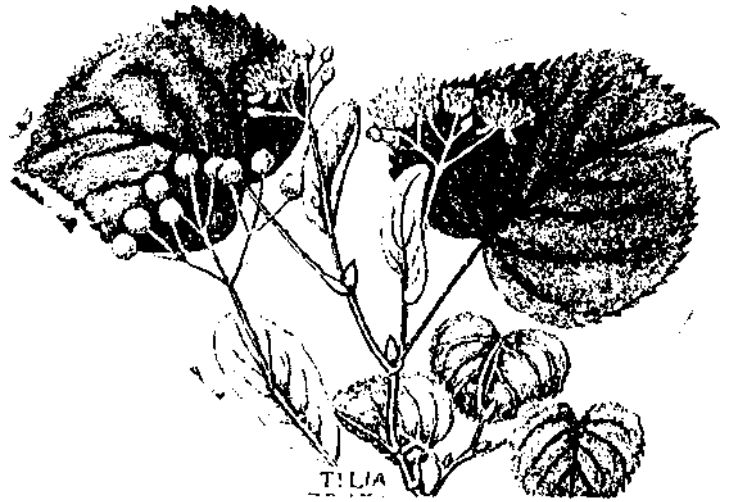
We parked alongside rows of Small-leaved Lime which grow on either side of a blind-ending track that used to be the main A36, prior to improvements in 1976. Our leader, **Neil Sanderson**, hoped to be able to relocate several specimens which he had seen previously and to find others. We were indeed successful in this mission, and it was particularly interesting to note that several generations of trees were present, often growing together: Of the older trees, both maidens and coppice stools were seen, Neil thought it was almost certain that none of the trees would have been planted since commercial supplies of *T. cordata* were unheard of until quite recently: It was suggested that identification depends not only on the size of leaves and the colour of hairs but also on the number of flowers per inflorescence and on the erect nature of the cymes. Limes were coppiced for their rope, made from fibres in the phloem and also for hop poles. Perhaps significantly, I live less than a mile away from the Common in a lane called 'Hop Gardens'.

While hunting for the limes we also noted a tall specimen of Wild Service, its leaves turning a delightful shade of bronze in the autumn sunlight: Later a sapling and a large coppice stool were found.

It was good to find both Broad Buckler (*Dryopteris dilatata*) and Narrow Buckler (*D. carthusiana*) growing alongside one another: also to find two microspecies of *D. affinis*. Other ferns that were noted included *Blechnum spicant*, *Polypodium interjectum* and *Polystichum setiferum*.

In all a good morning, with some mosses, lichens and fungi also noted, Many thanks to the Hampshire Group:

Pat Woodruffe



SOMERFORD COMMON

14 November

Leaders: **Rod Stern** and **Paul Darby**

The weather remained fine for this visit, though it was very wet under foot. Bryophytes are best seen when wet, but some were so wet as to look unfamiliar: Part of the Wood is a Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Reserve: We were fortunate in having two leaders. **Rod Stern** is an international expert bryologist: **Paul Darby** is the Trust warden and he was able to guide us to the best parts of the wood, though he was not expecting to have to find a patch of Sphagnum which he had seen several years previously and could not refind. He showed us plenty of other interesting areas. Five more people made up our party: We arranged to meet back at the car park at 1pm for lunch, but Rod said we couldn't eat till we had found 45 bryophytes: We soon found half this number. The moss *Thuidium tamariscinum* was soon seen in more abundance than elsewhere in Wiltshire. Most other bryophytes were relatively common though some which do not often fruit were seen with capsules or perianths: There were good specimens of the liverwort *Radula complanata* with perianths, and the liverwort *Lejeunia cavifolia*. This may well be its most easterly station in Wiltshire: The far commoner *Lejeunia ulicina* was not seen. With 1pm fast approaching, the total had reached 44 and we were going to eat, notwithstanding; then, a few yards from the car park, two more were found.

After lunch we went to Marlborough College where Malcolm Hardstaff had arranged the lab and one more member joined us. We were able to examine specimens at leisure under Rod's guidance to end a most rewarding and enjoyable day:

Roger Veall

Juniper

... notes by Barbara Last

One of the three native conifers (the other two are Scots Pine and Yew), the Juniper is a predominantly Wiltshire tree. Although widespread in the northern hemisphere from Alaska to Siberia, its principal localities in this country are on the chalklands in the south and especially on MOD protected lands. Some occur on northern limestones and surprisingly on shallow peat soil in north Scotland.

In the county, the biggest stand is on Porton Down and also on Beacon Hill on Salisbury Plain. There are notable groups near Great Ridge at the west end of Marlborough Downs, Morgan's Hill, Pepperbox and Dean Hill. Others are scattered, but it remains a rare tree and in decline, these being mere remnants of robust populations. The reduction in number is partly because of its very slow growth - only an inch or so a year and from competition with pines, but mainly because outside protected areas, any seedlings are demolished by rabbits. The old stands at Porton are not regenerating:

Some effort is being made by conservationists near Beacon Hill to fence an area to protect seedlings from grazing: There is a story I heard once of a landowner who initiated a clearance of a bank of old juniper, but whose tractor driver was thwarted in his work by two old ladies who staged a protest by lying across its maw. On reporting to the gaffer, the ladies cried "vandalism" & declared the rarity of these special trees: Whereupon the scales fell from the eyes of the landowner (who shall remain nameless) and who subsequently became a leading conservationist in the county and very proudly shows parties the remains of his precious junipers.

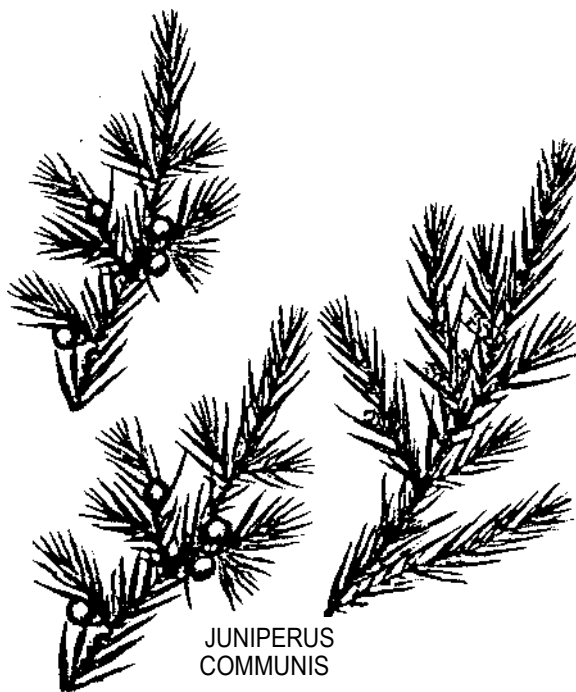
The fleshy cones resemble berries and take two or three years to ripen and turn from green to dark blue with a waxy bloom: The are noted for adding flavour to gin, although most used for this purpose are imported from Hungary. When crushed, they are an excellent stuffing for rich meats such as pork, venison or goose, or inserted under the skin of a ham before boiling, but it is an extremely painful process trying to pick your own !

A herbal tea from the berries has been used for rheumatism and inflammation of the urinary tract, but in excess may act as an irritant and turn the urine violet ! The berries have also been used to combat plague, to cure bites from

wild beasts and as an antidote to poison: They also yield a brown dye. An oil can be prepared from the resinous sap resembling turpentine, and this, along with other aromatic oils, was used by the ancient Egyptians for the preservation of their mummies: The oil has disinfectant properties and has been used in veterinary practice when mixed with lard to dress open wounds and keep flies away. Its leaves were burned in Medieval Europe to drive away evil spirits. The resinous foliage burns freely and is sometimes used for smoking hams.

The flowers are inconspicuous, with male pollenbearing catkins in separate trees from the female flowers. Wind disperses the abundant pollen: The ripe seeds are sought after by birds and thus dispersed: The mature leaves are protected by a thick waxy cuticle, evergreen and grown in clusters of spiky needles grouped in threes and forming a formidable triangle: Juvenile leaves on the young growths have a much simpler form: As the tree does not reach a great size, the timber is too small for much use except as tool handles:

Barbara Last



JUNIPERUS
COMMUNIS

Juniperus communis

Some Notes on the management of coppice for Paris Quadrifolia (Herb Paris)

Many people will notice that in Bentley Wood we have several good clumps of this plant. Most grow in the northern end amongst Hazel and Dog's Mercury where the soils are thin and chalky. For several years we have been considering coppicing the hazel, and last autumn obtained a 'Challenge Grant' to carry out this work: Fortunately, one of the stipulations is that the area is fenced to exclude deer: I make this point because my concern was that, if the hazel did not regenerate itself fairly quickly, the Herb Paris might suffer.

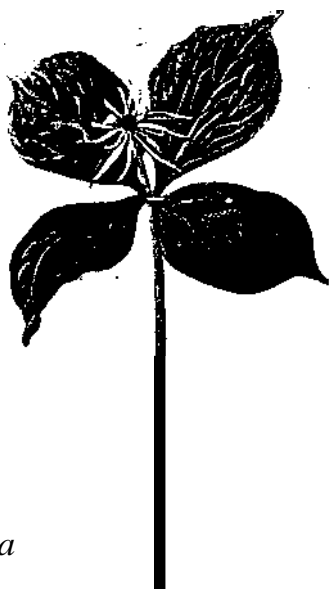
This spring we realised that we had a near-perfect controlled experiment. Two areas of Herb Paris were now growing out in full sunlight, two were in semi-shade and one was under a dense canopy of mature (40 year old) beech. All thrived till the hot sun of mid-May. Those in the full sun then quickly became chlorotic and their leaves died back. Those in partial shade fared better but those in full shade remained green for almost a month longer.

It could be argued of course that those in the sun photosynthesised more efficiently and stored as much food reserves as those in the shade. My experiment didn't go this far. I'm sure that Herb Paris is able to tolerate full sun for several years without serious ill effects, but I feel sure that the hazel is regenerating well and will provide some shade next year.

I should be interested to know of anyone else who has experience of managing coppice which contains this plant.

It would seem all too easy to lose it through lack of coppice growth and/or invasion of other species such as brambles or even nettles.

Pat Woodruffe



Paris quadrifolia

Winter Lecture:

Friends and Foes in the Garden

5 December: Marlborough College

Slow-worms, bats, hedgehogs, earthworms and some birds are allies of the gardener, but the main content of **Barbara Last's** illustrated talk concerned interplays between invertebrate zoology, especially entomology and botany.

On the whole, the good guys are fast-moving (Ground-beetles, Centipedes, Hoverflies, Lacewings, Ladybirds), whereas the worst offenders tend to be sluggish (Molluscs, Caterpillars, Aphids, Scale Insects. Leatherjackets, Shield Bugs etc).

- Aphids, which can spread plant virus diseases, are mostly specific to the plant species. They are renowned for their astronomical birth rate, mainly parthogenic. This also applies to Vine Weevils. However, Ichneumons lay their eggs inside aphids and caterpillars, their tiny larvae consuming the living victims from inside. Aphids are eaten in huge numbers by Ladybird beetle adults and larvae, by Lacewings, by birds and many other creatures. Hoverflies and spiders are mainly allies. Barbara puts wasps and hornets as mainly friends of the gardener, on account of their predation on harmful insects. Ants help aphids, but eat caterpillars. Quite often the status of the invertebrate group or species is variable, complex or mixed as friend or foe. This point was brought out further during questions (even one aphid species, the Lime Aphid, may benefit in complex ways the growth of the Common Lime).

As with previous talks, Barbara's beautiful slides added greatly to the pleasure and interest of the subject.

Jack Oliver



Carabus auratus
x 1.5



Coccinella 7-punctata
7 - spot Ladybird

OBITUARIES

Brenda Chadwick

Brenda Chadwick, who died suddenly in Laverstock, Salisbury on 10 December, was a botanist, teacher and traveller with wide and varied interests. She was a staunch supporter of the Wiltshire Flora Mapping Project, the Wiltshire Wildlife Fund, and this Society:

Brenda read Botany at Nottingham where she met and subsequently married Noel (Chad) Chadwick. After their early teaching years in Southampton they moved to Salisbury, where Brenda taught at La Retraite School and at Salisbury Technical College.

During their holidays they travelled widely, pursuing mutual interests in geology, photography and diving as well as botany. At home they led Fungus Forays for the Salisbury Field Club and made visits to record nearby Redlynch specialities.

Barbara Last writes:

I knew Brenda and her husband for about forty years, first when she and I were both teaching at La Retraite, When I was chairman of the Salisbury branch of the Wiltshire Trust, Brenda gave invaluable help in arranging talks, plant stalls and other fundraising events, but her increasing immobility from rheumatoid arthritis restricted her field outings. However she was able to accompany us to some of the winter meetings of the Society.

In her last few years, a legacy enabled her to indulge her passion for travel again, and even though quite severely handicapped, she delighted in her trips to New England, the Rhine Valley and Belgium: Her keen interest in places, plants and people brightened her life and after each trip she produced a delightful album of records.

Ann Hutchison adds:

On retirement, they supported the Wiltshire Flora Mapping Project with a wholehearted commitment of time, talents and thoroughness. They provided systematic cover of tetrads, immaculate record cards -- and some specimens even before they were requested! The ten square kilometre Coordinators such as themselves made the Flora possible: On Chad's death at the end of 1987, John Ounsted, much to Brenda's pleasure, continued the fieldwork, with Barbara Last in charge of recording cards.

Barbara then moved from Redlynch to Laverstock where she soon started organising

her new home and garden for her different life. Here she enjoyed her conservatory and propagating plants for others.

Brenda was positive and resilient, even after 30 years of arthritis which did not mar her hospitality.

And finally, Pat Woodruffe:

I first met Brenda and Chad in 1969 when I came to Salisbury College as a lecturer, so we were colleagues for many years, Their knowledge and enthusiasm seemed to know no bounds, and in the lead up to Christmas when staff past and present met socially, so many recollections of them were shared.

After Brenda's funeral, a colleague commented on the wealth of knowledge that has been lost to us: This is undeniable, but fortunately there are many people, students in the widest and best sense, with whom Brenda and Chad shared their knowledge over the years and in whom their love of the natural world lives on.

David Blackford

David died of cancer in late January 1998

I hope I will never forget David's smiling face and gentle manner. If I remember rightly, David was on the first work party of conservation volunteers which I also attended in the late 70s. He was such an unassuming character, it was a matter of years before I became aware of his skills as a naturalist. He was of course involved in the Flora Mapping Project as well as butterfly recording and work for the Wilts Ornithological Society: Many will remember him for his Accomplished hedgelaying work and this legacy can be seen in a number of places in the north of the county. In more recent years I could chat with him at Ravensroot Wood volunteer tasks where he would be collecting material for his hedgelaying work. In the early years of the Wildlife Sites Project he was part of a small group of Botanical Society volunteers - himself, Diana Hodgson and Judith Robinson -who would venture out once a week when they could to continue their botanising - because they enjoyed it! This, surely, was part of David's philosophy a simple way of life with values on the right things: As his close friend Beatrice Gillam wrote " He was a kind and remarkable person who will not be forgotten by his friends"

Paul Darby.

Diana Hodgson writes:

David Blackford, who died last January, was a man of many talents who hid his immense knowledge under a shy and gentle manner. He lived his early life in Malmesbury where his father and grandfather were involved in farming and with a small business of their own as seedsmen. By the late 1950s the family had moved to Christian Malford and taken over a small dairy farm which David carried on till his retirement two years ago,

In my view, David personified the 'complete countryman': he knew every aspect of country life - flora and fauna, animal husbandry, hedgerow crafts, birds, insects and molluscs, so that even I became a little familiar with such things as copse snails !

We met in the very early days of the Wilts Flora Mapping Project and teamed up with Judith Robinson who was out tree and shrub specialist. We enjoyed many happy hours exploring the habitats of ST97, SU07 and, in the latter years, SU06. We made one very early exciting find at Sutton Benger that subsequently became an SSSI, and one late find last year of *Cirsium dissectum*, at Grove Farm, Tockenham Wick.

David worked as a professional demonstration hedge-layer for the Wiltshire Trust, and during the last 3/4 years spent many hours on bird surveys over much of North Wiltshire, as well as collaborating in a mollusc survey with Bea Gillam. In the middle of all this, we still managed to meet as a 'team' once a week, an outing which I always appreciated.

He was a voracious reader and never wanted to miss library day in the village. I often wondered how many people there were with whom I could have a debate about the Romano-Celtic tribes who lived in this area, I plumped for the Atrebates and David for the Belgii: David of course was right. Those of us who knew him well and were grateful for his knowledge will miss him very much:

DH

Book Review

Natural Woodland - Ecology and Conservation in northern temperate regions

by **George F Peterken**

484 pp 1996 Cambridge University Press

This is a worthy companion to the author's earlier book "*Woodland Conservation and Management*" (1981), now regarded as a classic:

George Peterken's latest work is described as 'An appreciation of the natural processes of woodlands -- how woods grow, die and regenerate in the absence of human influence'. This book has been six or seven years in the writing and is no coffee table offering with artistic colour photographs. There is a wealth of information here as well as philosophy (what do we mean by 'natural' ?),

To cover the subject as thoroughly as possible, Peterken has visited the USA, Poland, Sweden, the Czech and Slovakian Republics and Yugoslavia. Thus we are given insight into natural and virgin forests from a number of countries, how they are disturbed by natural forces and what the consequences are for their structure and composition. The final part of the book deals with British woodland, culminating in discussions on priorities for woodland nature conservation,

This is a book well-peppered with black and white photographs, diagrams and photographs, all illustrating particular points. Anyone interested in the subject should get their hands on this first class work.

Paul Darby



Aberrant Grasses --

---growing specimens needed !

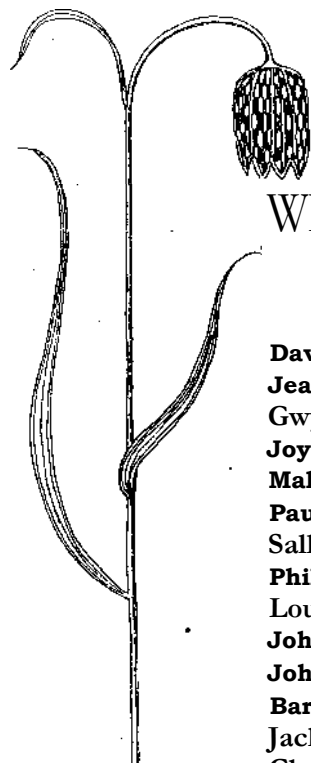
The *Brachypodium pinnatum* (Tor Grass) plants with complex inflorescences are still being studied. Growing specimens have been sent to Reading and Leicester Universities:

I should now like some growing specimens - or rooting fragments - of *Lolium perenne* (Rye Grass), or other grass species, with cristate or semipaniculate inflorescences, or other abnormal inflorescences giving fertile seed, to grow on and investigate further

Jack Oliver (01672 851251)

Subscription - Reminder

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 1999 are now due and should be sent to the Treasurer,
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28 Meadowfield Rd,
Bradford on Avon BA15 1PL.



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