

NEWSLETTER

Issue 16 August 2000

WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY

Autumn meetings

Sunday 1st October 10.00am

SU212682

Savernake Forest Fungus Foray

Joint meeting with WANHS

Leaders: Peter Marren and Malcolm Storey

We will explore a different area of Savemake Forest this year.

Approaching from the northwest, take Grand Avenue, which is 1.5 km east of Marlborough on the south side of the A4. It is the easterly of 3 unsigned very minor roads almost adjacent to each other. It is marked by stone columns inset at the entrance. Approaching from the southeast, Grand Avenue runs northwest from the minor Buthage/Little Bedwyn road. Park on the side of Grand Avenue about 150 metres from the N. entrance to the A4. Morning only

Wednesday 18th October 10.00am SU113243

Great Yews, near Coombe Bisset

Leader: Barbara Last

A fine example of an ancient Yew wood.

Leave A354 road south-west of Salisbury at Coombe Bisset. Turn east and road winds for about 0.5km. Take a very small track south at a chapel. Meet where the track forks and we will walk south to the wood. Muddy, so boots required. Morning only.

Annual General Meeting (advance notice)

Saturday 3rd March 2001

St Andrews Church Hall, Devizes

After the AGM there will be a slide show "Memories of Branton" by various members, followed by refreshments.

In this issue

- Talks:** ■ Orchids and other rarities of Southern England
■ Wild Flowers of Lowland Holidays
■ Botany, Butterflies and Dragonflies

- Visits:** • Oysters Coppice, Gutch Common
■ Wootton Bassett Mud Springs
■ Somerford Common
■ Sidbury Hill
■ Morgans Hill
■ Branton Burrows
■ Stourhead Estate
■ Clattinger Farm
■ Savernake Forest
■ Cholderton
and: ■ Lizard Orchids

Saturday 4th December 1999

Orchids and other rarities of Southern England

John Tucker

These days, owing to other pressures I do not attend many of our winter talks, but this one, given by John Tucker, was one I was pleased not to have missed. John has been interested in wild flowers since he was a boy and his enthusiasm impressed us all. He recounted how, when he was at school, there was a competition to see who could collect the most wild flowers. John came back with ten species of orchid amongst his collection.

There were slides of orchids in abundance including *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid), *Ophrys apifera* var. *trollii* (Wasp Orchid), Broad-leaved Helleborine taken at Clouts Wood and White, Red, Violet and Marsh Helleborines. John is interested in different varieties of orchids, such as the Wasp Orchid, and corresponds regularly with David Lang, author of 'Orchids of Britain'.

We heard several fascinating anecdotes of John's travels to look at and photograph wild flowers. His method of travelling by a combination of public transport and walking if necessary, from Chippenham, where he lives, to places as far apart as Kenfig Burrows and Morgan's Hill is a lesson to all on what can be achieved without a car.

Apart from John's slides of orchids we were treated to some of his other favourites, including the introduced *Tulipa sylvestris* (Wild Tulip) photographed at West Challow and Pasqueflower from Rodborough Common. He was pleased with his find of Pasque Flowers here as it may be one of the most westerly records in the country.

These winter talks are establishing a reputation for quality and are now popular events. In addition to the talks themselves, other essential ingredients for their smooth running and success are a good venue and dedicated organisers. We are lucky to have

Joy Newton and Malcolm Hardstaff to put it all together at Marlborough College.

Jean Wall

15 January 2000

Wild Flowers of Lowland Holidays

John Presland

John's theme – lowland holidays – included woodland and meadow, moor, fen, bog and marsh (with distinctions explained) open water and some man-made habitats. His photographs were a lesson in technique: his first slide would have great **depth of field** and would show us both the plant and **its habitat**. He would then move in to show **greater detail**, sometimes at greater than life size. **Purples** are not accurately shown by **colour film** and John sometimes corrected these **for us with a blue filter**.

As a newcomer to the society, I had **not had** the John Presland treatment of quick-fire slides, often teasing us before eventually revealing the identity of the mystery plant. John was full of historical and herbal information, as with the Deptford pink, which never grew in Deptford, but was mis-named in herbalist confusion. We also know how to cure the canker, even if we do not know what it is. He treated us to the rare, like autumn crocus, wild gladiolus and yellow star of Bethlehem and the inappropriate, like the sea campion of Wiltshire. We learnt how the 200 year resident Giant Hogweed, which causes photosensitivity in susceptible people, has been banned as a plant to grow, whilst the native hogweed, which causes more cases, has not. Being a special audience, John gave us the extended slide show with extras like Island gardens in Docklands. Here grows the sinister henbane, which can cure pain and even life itself.

Richard Aisbitt

19th February 2000
Meeting at Marlborough College

Botany, Butterflies and Dragonflies

Steve Whitworth

Steve said that he was a jobbing naturalist, with no claim to being a lepidopterist or botanist. He showed us a great collection of interesting and unusual slides, with a most amusing commentary, causing great laughter.

We were shown a white *Ajuga*, which resembled an orchid at a quick glance; a blue pimpernel, anemones with a pink variant, one white one with six petals, purple toothwort, yellow star of Bethlehem, and *Hutchinsia* growing on Cheddar Gorge.

Steve then asked for suggestions as to why Herb Paris was so named. One good answer was that paris meant equal, which seemed very suitable, until someone said that it sometimes has five net-veined leaves.

Then on to butterflies and dragonflies - Steve said that identifying butterflies was challenging, but identifying dragonflies was even more difficult. The brimstone was the archetypal butterfly, the high brown the rarest, the delicate fluttering wood white the most difficult to photograph. Steve told us how the Glanville fritillary got its name, and can now only be found on the Isle of Wight. The marbled white, whilst common in Wiltshire, is quite rare above Gloucestershire. Sadly the marsh fritillary is in decline in our county. We saw the eggs of the green hairstreak, which lays its eggs on several hosts.

Dragonflies were beautiful, especially when they had just emerged. Some of the dragonfly photos were taken last June, when some members of the Society went for the weekend to the Gower Peninsular.

The day of Steve's presentation was a beautiful sunny day. When we arrived some of us thought we should have spent the afternoon out-doors. However, we had a fascinating and hilarious afternoon, learning

much about botany and the lives of butterflies and dragonflies.

Kay Nicol

8 March 2000

Oysters Coppice and Gutch Common

Leader: **Barbara Last**

On March 8 2000 our leader Barbara Last was joined by 11 other members of the Society for the first outing of the new year. It was an overcast, mild spring morning with a fairly strong southwesterly wind. The wood was muddy underfoot after all the recent rain, but we were rewarded by finding a number of clumps of Wild Daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) in full flower,

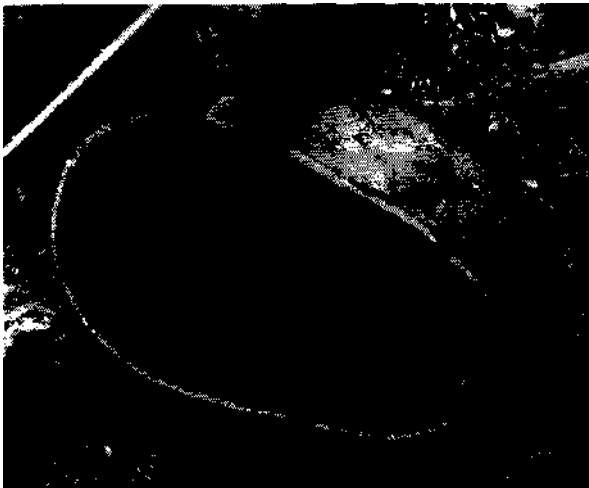


Wild Daffodils - *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*

Primroses, Opposite-leaved Golden -saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), Snowdrops just finishing flowering and the first Wood Anemones, Red Campion, Dog's Mercury, Yellow Archangel and Town-Hall-Clocks or Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*). The wood floor was covered in bluebells with promise of flowers in April. There were remains of last year's flowering stems of foxgloves and fresh shoots of Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*)

Ramsons and Pignut. Coppicing had started in the wood and several Pussy Willows (*Salix Caprea*) had been felled. Some of the surrounding hedges had been layered. There were numerous young hollies and a number of Alders with Oak, Ash and Birch all less than 100 years old.

There was a pond surrounded by a number of species of *Ranunculus* and Pendulous Sedge, which was one of several Ancient Woodland Indicator species. Ferns included the Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) and Male Fern, whose fronds had been broken down perhaps by the stormy weather. There was no trace of sori on the leaves. There were a few plants of Hard Rush (*Juncus inflexus*). One or two plants, including *Pulmonaria* and *Ribes* had perhaps escaped from near-by gardens although they sometimes occur naturally in wet woods. There were several bright cups of the Scarlet Elf Cup (*Sarcoscypha coccinea*) and various conspicuous Bracket Fungi on dead wood.



Scarlet Elf Cup - *sarcoscypha coccinea*

As we entered the wood we heard a Great Tit. Some also heard a Great spotted Woodpecker and there were signs of Badger tracks leading in from the surrounding fields.

The whole of the 35 acres of Gutch Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Oyster's Coppice is a reserve of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and lies in the spectacular Wardour Valley 6km SW of Tisbury and north of Donhead St. Mary. We later explored another area of the common with mature holly trees

where the wood floor was totally devoid of a layer of herbaceous plants. There were some old apple trees apparently growing from the base of pollarded oaks which had since regrown. There we also found growing the graceful moss *Thuidium tamarascinum* and the liverwort *Metzgeria furcata* on the trunks of old holly trees. In the copse and also in the lane were some specimens of a conspicuously large flowered variety of the Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) which were later identified by our leader as subspecies *crisocephalus*, a polymorphic subspecies from the Eastern Mediterranean which has flowers 3-5 cm in diameter and bears fertile fruit.

Some of us enjoyed a very good lunch in the welcoming atmosphere of the pub in Semley after our walk. We will have happy memories not only of the daffodils but also of the primroses growing in the unspoiled lanes and the massive golden celandines.

Phiffida Sneyd

1 April 2000

Wootton Bassett Mud Springs

Leader: **Richard Gosnell**

Under Richard's expert guidance, 25 adults and two small children visited the mud springs, most of them also making it to the Wootton Bassett Library afterwards to look at explanatory charts and fossils. The mud springs are an unusual geological phenomenon. The land here consists of clay layers on top of limestone. The limestone is in a descending water-retaining bed, whose highest point is above the level of the soil surface at the mud springs site. This results in pressure which forces water up through the mud wherever it can go. The unusual feature at Wootton Bassett is that, instead of just a freshwater spring emerging, the water brings up clay with it, so that a grey mud oozes periodically from the soil. The scientific importance of the phenomenon is increased by the presence in the flow of numerous Jurassic fossils (165 to 150 million years old) which

Richard Gosnell and Eileen Rollo examine a fossil

would otherwise remain underground in the clay layer. The springs have now been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

At the time of our visit, the mud flow was well below its most dramatic, but we were able to get to close quarters with one conspicuous area of exposed mud. As we bounced nervously up and down on the surrounding ground, it moved up and down because of the reservoir of mud below the surface, and more mud oozed out. Fortunately, no one was lost - apparently cattle have been known to disappear. In one area, a past mud spring had flowed into the adjacent stream, which



Richard Gosnell and Eileen Rollo examine a fossil

had carried away the mud, leaving fossils on the bed. By taking handfuls of material from the stream bed and tipping them on to the bank, we were able to identify a fair number of fossils. They included bullet-shaped belemnites (part of the internal skeleton of a cuttlefish relative), oysters, large molluscs with a two-valved shell and ammonites with a colour and texture like burnished copper.

Thanks to Richard for a really fascinating morning.

John Presland

11 May 2000

Somerford Common

Leader: **John Grearson**

Ten of us met at Somerford Common on a cold windy day. Storms were promised and we were dressed for a winter's day. Lots of coppicing had been done with butterfly conservation in mind and there was plenty of Devil's Bit Scabious for the Marsh Fritillary. All that was needed was a warm spring.

We noticed Velvet Bent in the newly coppiced area. False Oxlips were there in profusion and very fine. Bitter Vetch was well in flower and

so was Twayblade. Butterfly Orchids were there in good numbers but not quite out. Bugle put on a brave show. We decided most of the violets were *Viola riviniana*. John managed to find some sawflies of interest. Oak Apples, sometimes called King Charles' Apples as they were growing about the time he returned from exile, May 26th 1660, were about on the trees. They are caused by *Biorhiza pallida* (one of the many oak cynipids or gall wasps).

We didn't manage to find the pale sedge (*Carex pallescens*) but did see *C. remota*, *C. caryophylla* (Spring Sedge) and *C. sylvatica*. We found a hybrid of Midland Hawthorn, but, for me, the surprise of the day

was a patch of Lousewort in flower, suddenly appearing on the path.

Muntjac tracks, a thrush's egg shell, the songs of a bullfinch and willow warbler and the call of jays added to the interest of the day and we got back to the cars without the threatened storm. Thank you John!

Marjorie Waters

25 May 2000

Sidbury Hill

Joint meeting with Salisbury Plain Training Area (Bulford) Conservation Group

Leaders: **Pat Woodruffe and Audrey Summers**

Twenty-one people were undaunted by showery weather. We were drenched by a squall at one stage and there was a fierce, piercing wind of unseasonable chilliness. However, Sidbury Hill is an enchanted place, well worth the dampness and muddy boots.

The lower slopes are planted with mixed woodland including alien conifers (muttered disapproval) but the fort on top is a magical world of ancient trees, many with epiphytes. The recent clearances have been done with great sensitivity; there was much praise and appreciation. The surrounding ramparts, where grazed by rabbits, held our familiar chalk hill sward which included the jaguar-spotted basal rosette of Southern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, subsp. *junialis*).

We did what we always do: sometimes we were in a straggling line with the back markers busy with liverworts; sometimes we spread out hunting for another fern which should be hereabouts, but where? and sometimes we were in a tight bent-over bunch admiring Adder's Tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) doing its absolute bestest, all three inches of it.

We struggled to see and remember that Male Fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) has kidney-shaped sori, whereas Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) has comma-shaped sori. The epiphytic Polypody (*Polypodium spp. vulgare? interjectum?*) was new to some of us and the fungus *Auricularia auricula-judae* was especially luxuriant.

The trees included a gigantic ash to be admired, measured (5.5m diameter) and recorded, the biggest hazel most of us had ever seen and many other delights, not least hundreds of very old hawthorns.

Pat Woodruffe and Audrey Summers were splendid supervisors of this happy and rewarding trip. Pat, who keeps a compass laced to her boot (very classy) found a miniscule egg of Orange Tip Butterfly on a petiole of *Cardamine pratensis*.

Rosemary Duckett

6th June 2000

Morgans Hill.

Leader: **Christopher Perraton.**

Twelve of us climbed the track to the reserve's West gate, passing a hybrid Oak above a narrow coomb where Christopher pointed out the remnant of a Three Field System. The rain had obligingly cleared to leave a cool, cloudy day. In the ditch of the Wansdyke one of the old Juniper bushes had died, perhaps trodden on by many passing feet. There were many Common Spotted Orchids here but very few in bloom yet. We soon emerged into the high chalk grassland grazed by Dexter cattle. The delicate creamy-white blooms of *Plantathera bifolia* (Lesser Butterfly Orchid) appeared, along with *Gymnadenia conopsea* (Fragrant Orchid) and the song of Skylarks filled the air.

Approaching the highest part of the ridge we learned that the summit is capped by clay-with-flints (planted with wheat at present - it is a triple watershed for three river systems). We turned downhill as we entered the second enclosure of the reserve and the slope became progressively steeper. Here was the attractive *Saxifraga granulata* (Meadow Saxifrage) with *Poterium sanguisorba* (Salad Burnet), *Plantago media* (Hoary Plantain), *Leontodon hispidus* (Rough Hawkbit) and *Rumex acetosa* (Common Sorrel). There are nice anthills in this meadow.

Continuing down the hill we saw *Listera ovata* (Twayblade), *Cerastium holsteoides* (Common Mouse-ear), *Briza media* (Quaking grass) and *Tussilago farfara* (Coltsfoot). The slope became very steep with many hollows cut into the hillside. In the short turf were *Polygala calcarea* (Chalk Milkwort) and *Galium verum* (Lady's Bedstraw). Exploring the banks involved a steep climb; the tiny *Carex pulicaris*

(Flea Sedge) was an unexpected find here. There were also many *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) and *Epipactis palustris* (Marsh Helleborine) - each with a distinctive leaf-rosette but no flowers et.



Marsh Helleborine - *Epipactis palustris*

Several *Ophrys insectifera* (Fly Orchid) with their strange little blooms were discovered.

We returned along a section of the Roman road, coming across more *Plantathera bifolia* in the first meadow. Christopher had given us a fund of geological and historical background to add to a rewarding and enjoyable visit.

Philip Terry

9 –11 June 2000

Branton Burrows

Leaders: **Joy Newton and Barbara Last**

On Saturday morning the group, all 29 of us met the warden, John Breeds, at Branton Burrows. He told us that the Ministry of

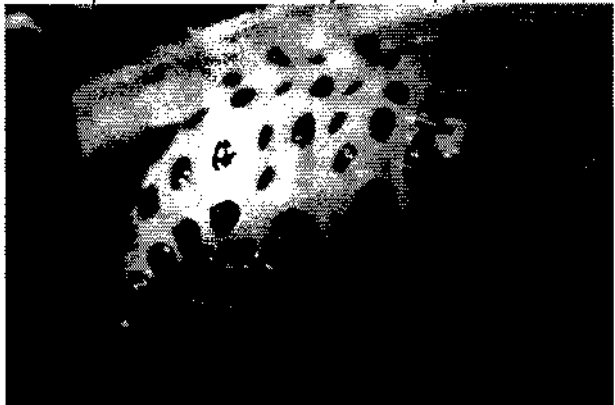
Defence now managed the Burrows, formerly managed by English Nature. A National Nature Reserve until 1996, it is still a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Since the decline in the rabbit population, a more active regime of scrub cutting and grass mowing is needed to prevent a coarse flora overtaking the preferred short turf.

Pheasants occur and there is a good reptile and butterfly presence. Among a variety of insects we were shown the Red Poplar Leaf Beetle, which smells of disinfectant, and a beetle, which predares snails. How useful, we thou • ht!



Red Poplar Leaf Beetle – *Crysomela populi*



and its grub

The warden's wife, Mary, leading part of the group, we set off across the dunes. The older dunes are the most flower-rich. Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) was everywhere, with clovers, Bird's Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Mouse-Ear Hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), various sedges and Creeping Willow (*Salix repens*) and many more making a carpet.

Groups of blue Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) were spectacular, as were Southern Marsh Orchids (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) and Early Marsh Orchids (*D. incarnata* ssp. *coccinea*). We also saw Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*), Pyramidal orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), *Linaria arenaria* (Sand toadflax) and *Rumex frutescens* (Argentine Dock).



Bee Orchid – *Ophrys apifera*

Moving nearer to the shoreline, the dunes are covered in coarser grasses. Here, one slope was festooned with red and pink Valerian (*Centranthus rubra*) and another with Mexican Fleabane (*Erigeron karvinskianus*).

Approaching the shore we saw more coastal species including *Euphorbia paralias* (Sea Spurge), *E. portlandica* (Portland Spurge), *Eryngium maritimum* (Sea Holly) and *Calistegia soldanella* (Sea Bindweed).

To round off the day, John and Mary showed us slides of the Burrows and its flowers.

Sunday morning was spent at Baggy Point, which is owned by the National Trust.

Near the car park were some colourful garden escapes – *Gladiolus communis* (Eastern Gladiolus) and *Carpobrotus edulis* (Hottentot Fig) – and *Lavatera arborea* (Tree Mallow). Further along, gorse and heather-covered slopes went down to steep cliffs. Noteworthy were *Anthyllis vulneraria* (Kidney vetch) in all shades from cream through yellow to orange-red, *Jasione montana* (Sheep's Bit), a 'cushion' of *Trifolium arvense* (Hare's Foot Clover), *Silene uniflora* (Sea Campion) and a dry stone wall covered with *Umbilicus rupestris* (Navelwort) and *Sedum anglicum* (English Stonecrop) fronted by *Digitalis purpurea* (Fox • loves).



Round leaved wintergreen *Pyrola rotundifolia*

A most enjoyable weekend, well organised and researched by Joy Newton and Dick and Barbara Last.

Vera Scott

18 June 2000.

Stourhead Estate,

Leader: Phil Wilson

The National Trust property at Stourhead is justly famous beyond the confines of Wiltshire, but Stourhead also holds another, less well-known treasure. The grasslands and wet pastures of the Stourhead (Western) Estate

including *Nardus stricta*, *Hypericum humifusum*, *Polygala serpyllifolia* and *Pedicularis sylvatica*. Small numbers of the local speciality *Oenanthe pimpinelloides* were seen, and there were also fine displays of *Dactylorhiza maculata* and *Cirsium dissectum* in the Juncus-dominated flushes. Small areas were dominated by small sedges including *Carex viridula* ssp *oedocarpa* (better known as *C. demissa*), *C. echinata*, *C. panicea*, and *C. pallescens*. The presence of a small area of dry calcareous grassland dominated by *Bromus erectus* with several species more typical of the chalk downlands was a surprise.

The whole area was dissected by small



JoY Newton measures a hazel trunk

have recently been scheduled as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Twelve members of the WBS took the opportunity to visit them.

The whole area is managed traditionally under a low intensity regime of late hay-cutting and extensive cattle grazing, a type of farming that is increasingly under threat. This has permitted the survival of some very species-rich plant communities typical of flushed neutral to acidic soils. Several species which are relatively rare in Wiltshire were recorded

streams and substantial hedges, and there were also several parkland trees. A veteran oak received close scrutiny, as did two massive uncoppiced hazels.

All had a very enjoyable, rain-free day, and thanks are due to the estate and their tenants for allowing our visit.

Phil Wilson

24 June 2000

Clattinger Farm

Leader: Dave Green

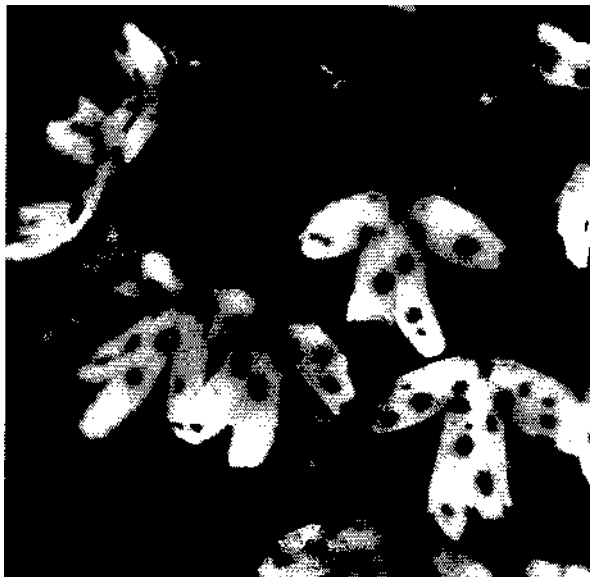
A cool week, following a very hot weekend, had left the hay meadows at Clattinger Farm at their best on June 24. First glance at the ungrazed fields showed a colourful mix of dog daisies, yellow rattle and knapweed and, in the first two damp fields, carpets of common spotted orchid. Thousand of neon blue damsel flies shimmered over the tops of the grasses. A solitary large brown dragonfly, *Libellula quadrimaculata* warmed itself prior to take-off. Red and black burnet moths settled on many of the knapweed heads.

A closer view revealed many rarities among grasses, sedges and flowers. Meadow bromes, *Bromus commutatus* and the long-stemmed *Bromus racemosus* were of interest, as was a rare appearance of *Danthonia decumbens*. Sedges proliferated, including *Carex distans*, *C. hirta*, *C. flacca* and the downy-fruited rarity *C. filiformis*.

A search of the fritillary field for seed heads (for the millenium seedbank) drew a blank, but sawwort (*Serratula tinctoria*) was just coming into flower. There was quite a lot of dyers greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*) and an interesting pink and white variant of knapweed nearby. A single plant of St John's Wort was identified as *Hypericum tetrapterum*. One large, oval patch of meadow thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*) was in full flower, while a second, smaller patch was going to seed.

Adders tongue fern enjoyed moist dips in the fields which had been flooded earlier in the year. Twayblade was quite common and a group of about 20 burnt-tip orchid was spotted near the end of the tour, followed by about a dozen bee orchids - a further nine were found near

one of the ponds, across the road at Swillbrook Lakes.



Burnt orchid - *Orchis ustulata*

A fine 8ft example of the great lettuce, *Lactuca virosa*, a rarity in VC 7, stood beside the gate to the lakes

Chris Wheare

4 July 2000

Savernake Forest

Leader: Jack Oliver

The ten attenders started by seeing some helleborines. One plant, probably *Epipactis purpurata*, had started in June as a clump of three completely transparent stems tinged with pink-lilac, comparable to Venetian glass. Between 24 June 2000 and 4 July 2000, the chlorophyll developed, albeit still lilac tinged.

The main part of the rest of the morning was principally concerned with oaks: *Quercus robur*, *Q. petraea*, *Q. x rosacea*, *Q. rubra*, and *Q. cerris*. The main focus was on ancient native oaks, including the original Queen Oak allegedly commemorating the marriage of Jane Seymour to Henry VIII. Vascular epiphytes were listed, the findings being much at variance with the publications. *Polypodium interjectum* (not *P. vulgare*) was very common. *Dryopteris dilatata* came next, but with much less

sporulation. *Rubus fruticosus* and *R. idaeus* had **sometimes** flowered and fruited, either **this year or in** previous years (or both). These **were noted from** four to forty feet up, not **always on** fractured dead boughs, but often **just on dead** bark. Of the eleven vascular **epiphyte** species noted, six had spored, **flowered or** fruited. We also saw the two main **make** Beech variants: the acute-angled, branching, tall Savernake Beech, and the **Savernake** Oak-barked Beech (rich in **epiphytic** bryophytes and lichens, and once **with an** epiphytic Ash seedling on the bark, very unlike the normal smooth Beech bark).

Four stayed on in the afternoon to hear the clear and masterly exposition by David Rose on the research into the current wave of Oak Die-back disease. We looked at examples in the Twelve O'Clock Drive affecting old and young *Quercus robur* trees, the other oak taxa not (yet at least) being affected. Findings from David Rose's department at the Alice Holt Research Institute indicate complex pathology, not in any way comparable with Dutch Elm Disease: there are no important vectors or new virulent pathogens. There may be three processes: general debilitation (**caused** by e.g. changed weather conditions), secondary pathogens, which normally would **only cause** temporary setbacks, followed by root pathogens such as *Phytophthora*. This may have been the first excursion by members of the Wiltshire Botanical Society into the difficult fields of plant pathology.

Jack Oliver

Lizard Orchids

The wet un-summery days of the earlier part of July were brightened for some of our members by a little summer magic! Where was this? Sorry to say, not in Wiltshire, but in Gloucestershire, but not far away. Not as you may imagine in some remote idyllic spot, but within yards of the Bristol Ring Road with traffic hurtling past. Unlikely though it sounds this is 'home' to a thriving colony of Lizard Orchids. On a steep and slightly wooded slope we counted about forty of these strange and unusual plants – some even growing on the footpath side of the barrier.

I understand that the colony has been known for some years and that the environmental department of the local authority keeps a protective eye upon it. It is hoped to make it into a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Gwyneth Yerrington

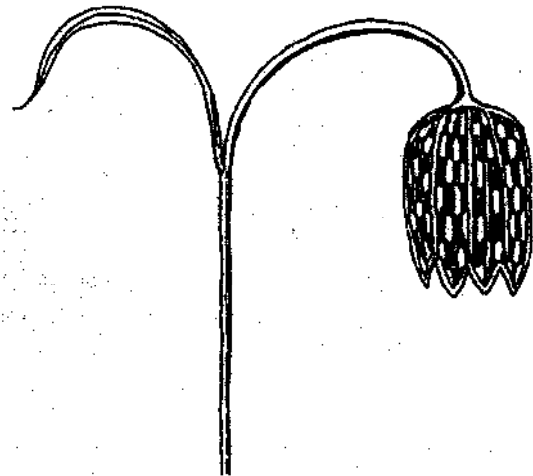
Thursday July 13th 2000

Cholderton

Leaders: **Audrey Summers and Henry Edmonds**

We met at Tank Crossing 00 at 3.00 p.m. on a sunny afternoon. There were seventeen people, a mixture of SPTA (Bulford) Conservation Group, Wiltshire Botanical Society and WWT. **We** drove to the top of a steep hill, a low-gear journey. After parking, we clambered over a barbed wire fence and found ourselves in a huge field, lying on a chalk slope.

About ten years ago it was growing corn with a full complement of herbicides and fertilizers. Henry Edmonds, the landowner, put it down to set-aside in the early nineties and now it is grassland pastures. He wanted a full record of everything in the field to assess how well the field had reverted (completely unaided) to chalk grassland from intensive arable production. We split up into groups and ranged across the field. The record was 115 species.



We moved onto an arable field, which had a two-metre arable-weed strip along the edge. It was amazing. It looked like a garden border. The most unusual were Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*), The weeds were so attractive but they had all grown quite naturally in this favourable habitat. Rough Poppy (*Papaver hybridum*), Prickly Poppy (*Papaver argemone*), mixed with Field Gromwell (*Lithospermum arvense*), Venus's-looking-glass (*Legousia hybrida*), Field Penny-cress (*Thlaspi arvense*), Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), Field Pansy (*Viola arvensis*), Fumitory (*Fumaria densiflora*) and many others. We sent away a sample of an unknown Umbellifer for identification.

We left with the sun still shining. A most interesting meeting

Eileen Rollo

Membership: We welcome new members, beginners and experts alike. If you would like to join, please complete the slip and send it to:

Gwyneth Yerrington
28 Meadowfield
Bradford on Avon

Subscriptions:

Ordinary Member-----£5.00 per year
Joint Membership -----£7.50 per year

Wiltshire Botanical Society

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WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY

COMMITTEE

Barbara Last	<i>Chairman</i>	01722 790368
Jean Wall	<i>Secretary</i>	01666 823865
Gwyneth Yerrington	<i>Treasurer</i>	01225 862740
Joy Newton	<i>Meetings Secretary</i>	01672 540356
Malcolm Hardstaff	<i>Plant Records</i>	01672 512029
Paul Darby	<i>Wilts Wildlife Trust</i>	01380 725670
Sally Scott-White	<i>Wilts Biological Records</i>	01380 725670
Phil Wilson	<i>Science Sub-Committee</i>	01725 510748
Louisa Kilgallen	<i>Minutes Secretary</i>	01225 887331
John Presland	<i>Editor/Wiltshire Botany</i>	01225 865125
Richard Aisbitt	<i>Editor/Newsletter</i>	01793 694680
Dave Green		01225 835227
Jack Oliver		01672 861251
Christopher Perraton		01225 703294
Maureen Ponting		01672'512361
Pat Woodruffe		01794 884436

The **Meetings Programme** for autumn and winter will be sent out soon.

Future meetings: Joy Newton welcomes suggestions. Contact her at:

1 Grasshills
Aldbourn
Marlborough SN8 2EH
(Tel. No. 01672 540346)

Editor's note: I am sure other members will join me in thanking contributors for their accurate, detailed and interesting reports of meetings. Please keep sending them to me at:

84 Goddard Avenue
Swindon
Wilts SN1 4HT

Please include photos or drawings if you would like to see them in the next newsletter (they would, of course, be returned).

You can also send your efforts by email to

Richard Aisbitt