



# NEWSLETTER

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## WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY

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*Old Bristle Cone Pine Trees - photo: Barbara Last*

Sunday 23 October 2005

## Fungus Foray at Bedwyn Brail

Fifteen members met our two leaders, Peter Marren and Malcolm Storey, at Hillbarn Farm on an overcast Sunday morning in late October. We were greeted by Richard Charles, the owner, who is always very pleased for us to record on his land and welcomes the information which we can provide.

After an incredibly dry summer our expectations of woodland fungi were not great and indeed most of our three dozen or so finds were seen on rides and in grasslands. Our walk took us along the main track through Bedwyn Brail and right (eastwards) through a meadow and into a wooded valley along the edge of the estate.

Our first find was that of *Lyophyllum decastes* (previously *Clitocybe*), a large greyish toadstool which appreciates a high level of organic material and is often found growing in tufts in graveyards. Along side was the fairy bell, *Mycena vitilis*, which we could hear snap when the stipe was broken, and close by, the Clouded Agaric *Clitocybe nebularis* – a common, big, whitish toadstool with white spores and decurrent gills.

Moving into a wide grassy track (The Broadwalk) we found two puffballs; *Lycoperdon molle* and *Handkea* (previously *Lycoperdon*) *excipuliforme*. A small but attractive yellow toadstool proved to be *Bolbitius titubans* and growing close was another *Mycena*; *Mycena vitilis*. On the edge of the woodland specimens of *Ampulloclitocybe clavipes* and *Russula atropurpurea* were noted. Our next find was that of the false death cap *Amanita citrina* – the lime green tint of which send messages of evil, even though it is harmless. Two small fungi, *Lactarius quietus* – which supposedly smells of bed bugs – and the strongly striated *Galerina vittiformis* made a sharp contrast with

the very large tufts of honey fungus *Armillaria mellea* growing from old stumps. Also on dead wood we found the common sulphur tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare* and the green wood-cup *Chlorosplenium* (*Chlorociboria*) *aeruginascens*, which has been used in the production of Tunbridge ware, a form of marquetry.

Walking through the grasslands, but never far from the woodland edge, we were able to add the following to our lists; *Mycena rosea*, *Coprinus plicatilis*, *Marasmius rotula*, *Mycena galericulata*, *Amanita rubescens* and *Panaeolus fimicola*.

Entering the woodland strip at the eastern edge of Bedwyn Brail we spotted the amethyst deceiver *Laccaria amethystina* and the liberty cap *Psilocybe semilanceata*. The latter, with a small cap which resembles those worn by French revolutionaries, caused much interest since it is hallucinogenic and those who own a collection of dried material for scientific purposes could find themselves contravening the law concerning illegal drugs.

Retracing our steps, we were able to add the following to the list; *Panaeolina foenisecii*, *Lycoperdon pyriforme*, *Panaeolus acuminatus*, and *Lepista flaccida*, two forms of *Mycena galopus* (a greyish one and a pure white form), *Mycena haematopus* and a species of *Psathyrella*. On our return to the cars the most unusual find of the day was made; a colony of *Arrhenia rickenii* growing in the moss and gravel hard standing. That's life!

We are always very appreciative of the help of our two experts, without whom many of us find an annual foray into the world of fungi quite overwhelming. Our grateful thanks to both Malcolm and Peter.

Pat Woodruffe



Fungus Foragers - Peter Marren and Malcolm Storey on the left. Photo: Richard Gosnell



**Saturday 19th November 2005**

# **Salisbury Plain Life Project**

**Paul Toynton**

There was a good turnout for Paul Toynton's talk. Paul is an ex-employee of the Nature Conservancy and the Ministry of Defence, so was uniquely placed to oversee the Life Project, which ran from 2001 to 2005.

He gave some general background information first. The plain was 'created' as chalk grassland in the Bronze Age, mostly as a result of tree felling. The major part was ploughed up in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, becoming agricultural grassland.

Salisbury Plain was notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1993. The main threats then were agriculture, (fertilisers, winter-feeding with cattle), and lack of grazing. Disturbed ground (e.g. shell holes) is very important for invertebrates (by providing extra warmth) and for fairy shrimps and toads in the ponds.

The Life Project began in 2001 – combining the forces of English Nature, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Butterfly Conservancy and, last but not least, Defence Estates. There was European Union funding. The year before, Nature 2000 had proclaimed that the main target species should be Stone Curlew, Juniper and Marsh Fritillary.

The project targets were as follows:

- to remove the majority of plantations
- to manage 41 Stone Curlew plots and create a further 25
- to clear scrub and to restore and maintain grazing
- to produce newsletters giving details of local events, workshops etc.

Paul thought the future looked good because military training and nature conservation were positively 'symbiotic' – the military like the downland with occasional scrub, and the conservationists like the lack of public access and the ground disturbance (within limits!). He thought the presence of the army and the need for extensive farming would ensure the conservation of a unique landscape.

*Simon Young*





Saturday December 10th 2005

## Wild Plants in Scotland

John Presland



*Cirsium heterophyllum* (Melancholy Thistle)

John began by showing a very appreciative audience a map of Scotland, on which he had divided the mainland into five different regions and had highlighted five of the most important islands. It became clear that he had visited all of these during his many trips to Scotland, and his slides emphasised the effect that habitat, as well as geographical region, can have on the flora.

One tends to think of Scotland as being mainly mountainous, and indeed we were shown many slides of the very special and often very rare plants that are such a feature of Scottish mountains. But in the Southern Uplands are such unfamiliar plants as *Rosa sherardii* (Sherard's Downy-rose), *Rosa mollis* (Soft Downy-rose), *Campanula latifolia* (Giant Bellflower), and *Cirsium heterophyllum* (Melancholy Thistle). Examples of plants in an aquatic habitat were *Myriophyllum alterniflorum* (Alternate Water-milfoil) and *Carum verticillatum* (Whorled Caraway), while around coasts can be found *Ligusticum scoticum* (Scots Lovage) and *Mertensia maritima* (Oyster Plant). A rampant plant that has been introduced and has spread widely on the Isle of Arran is *Rubus spectabilis*



*Campanula latifolia*

(Salmonberry or Arran Raspberry). Pinewoods have their own particular flora, including *Linnaea borealis* (Twinflower) and *Moneses uniflora* (One-flowered Wintergreen or St. Olaf's Candle).

Some of the most sought-after plants are to be found on Scottish mountains, and John showed us a wide selection. It is not intended to reproduce his entire list, but here are some notable examples. On Ben More (Isle of Mull) the leaves of *Oxyria digyna* (Mountain Sorrel) are rich in vitamin C, and there is evidence that, in the past, the plants were used to prevent scurvy; while *Alchemilla alpina* (Alpine Lady's Mantle) has to rely on apomyxis for reproduction owing to the scarcity of pollinating insects. *Loiseluria procumbens* (Trailing Azalea) and *Epilobium anagallidifolium* (Alpine Willowherb) both grow on The Cairnwell. Ben Lawers is probably the mountain most noted for its alpine flora, and we were shown slides of *Thalictrum alpinum* (Alpine Meadow-rue), *Lycopodium clavatum* (Stag's-horn Clubmoss), *Silene acaulis* (Moss Campion), *Saxifraga cernua* (Drooping Saxifrage), *Sedum rosea* (Roseroot), *Gentiana nivalis* (Alpine Gentian) and *Myosotis alpestris* (Alpine Forget-me-not).

It is always an education to watch one of John's slide shows, because for nearly every species he starts by showing the type of landscape in which it grows, then the detailed habitat, such as a rock crevice or cliff face, after which he homes in on the plant, and concludes with a series of close-ups of ever-increasing magnification. He also explains the purpose of any





*Silene acaulis* (Moss Campion)

special features of a plant: for instance, the pubescent stems of *Cerastium alpinum* (Alpine Mouse-ear), found in the Caenlochan Glen, protect the plant from cold and drought, while in a somewhat similar manner the leathery leaves of *Saxifraga nivalis* (Alpine Saxifrage), which he photographed on Meall na Tarmachan, protect it from generally harsh conditions. Another interesting little detail was that Moss Campion is pollinated by butterflies and moths.

How good it was to be transported from a cold December afternoon in Wiltshire to the wonderful scenery and plants of Scotland, particularly for some of us who may be thinking of a Scottish holiday next summer.

Jeremy Wood



*Campanula lactiflora*



*All photos by John Presland*

*Moneses uniflora* (One-flowered Wintergreen)



Saturday 14th  
January 2006

## Journey to the oldest trees in the world

Barbara Last

The January skies were dull and grey when a roomful of botanists were taken on a journey to California, enduring arid conditions with summer temperatures of over 100°F. Our journey was led by Barbara Last who, with her excellent presentation, transported us up the Sierra Nevada mountains in search of the Bristle Cone Pines, but like all good journeys there was plenty to see on the way!

The Sierra Nevada Mountains were formed as a result of the subduction of the Pacific tectonic plate as it meets the North American plate, the resultant heat and pressure forcing up the range which is composed of granite in various stages of erosion. The Eastern side is in a rain shadow and so is very dry and it is fascinating to note the ways in which plants are adapted to survive in such conditions. The predominant plant is Sage Brush *Artemisia tridentata* with a spreading root system and small, grey leaves that are lost in the summer to reduce water loss. Sharing this habitat are Creosote Bush, *Larrea tridentata* and *Halogeton glomeratus*. The former spread out and produce many plants vegetatively, possibly making it the oldest clone in the world. The Rabbit Brush, *Chrysothamnus nausiolus*, was used by

native Indians as a source of latex and *Ephedra* was used as a source of the amphetamine, ephedrine. The Mormons referred *Ephedra* to as "Indian Tea", whilst the Indians called it "Mormon Tea"!



Donner Pass



Joshua Tree



White Mountain

The Joshua Tree, a tree-like lily, is pollinated only by the yucca moth and the caterpillars feed on the developing seeds so they co-exist. Other animals avoid the plant as a food because of its spines, but shelter in it, producing nitrogenous waste that feeds the plant.





*A bristly cone from a Bristle Cone Pine*

Moving up the mountain to the lower montane community the spine theme continues as pine trees produce spines to protect themselves, such as *Pinus jeffreyi* and *Pinus ponderosa*. There is an under storey of Bitter Brush, *Purshia tridentata* which as it is nitrogen-fixing is able to live in the poor soils. Other characteristic plants of this area are the extremely prickly Sierra Currant, *Ribes nevadense*, the saprophytic Coral Root Orchid, *Corallorhiza maculata* and the extremely useful *Helianthus annuus*, which has been used by the Indians to make fibre, coffee, honey, dye, anti-malaria tea, and as an antidote for snakebite and poison ivy.

Moving up to 8000 feet, the high Chaparral, the Lodgepole Pine, *Pinus contorta* has tightly closed cones that need the heat of a bush fire to open and germinate. The herbaceous plant, Mule's Ears *Wyethia mollis* is adapted for hot days because it is furry to cut down transpiration and the leaves stay upright so that it does not get the full blast of the sun's rays, as the day cools the leaves flatten out. Apart from these curiosities, there are the eye-catching colours of the Penstemons, particularly the golden



*Calothortus leichtlini*

buds of *P. asureus* which open out to blue flowers. We were also able to admire Golden Star *Triteleia ixiodes* and the alpine lilies, *Lilium parvum* and *L. kellyanum*.

At this altitude were wet meadows that had an abundance of flowering plants, many from these genera will be familiar to gardeners, *Iris misuriensis*, *Erygonium* sp., *Sidalcea oregana*, *Lupinus polyphyllum*, *Aquilegia formosa* and the Rien Orchid, *Platanthera leucostachys*. The Corn Lily, *Veratrum californicum* is very poisonous but was boiled up by the

Indians to make a contraceptive but the dose is vital, too much and the woman becomes permanently infertile.

The sub-alpine community, at 9000 feet is very cold for most of the year but is extremely hot in the summer; plants able to survive such conditions include *Juniperus occidentalis* and the little *Sedum stenopetalum*. This contrasts with the Green Gentian, *Swertia radiata* that is 4 foot high!



*Lilium kellyanum*

Finally, we reached our destination, the Alpine Community at 11,000ft and view the contorted, stunted but live Bristle Cone Pines. They have small leaves to preserve water, very ferocious bristles on the cones and are often missing large sections of bark because of lightning strikes, but at 5000 years old that is to be expected! We were pleased to learn that there are plenty of seedlings and so hopefully younger trees will replace them.

A fascinating climax to an excellent talk.

*Carol Wood*

*All photos by Barbara Last*

## Sacred CoWS!

If only! The CoWS in question were the subjects of a presentation more properly entitled 'County Wildlife Sites – using botanical data to aid their designation'. If only their designation protected them rather more.....

botanically important sites), will be produced and their National Vegetation Classification assigned where possible and if there is sufficient justification, English Nature will be asked to verify the findings. CoWS which pass muster will then be added to Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre data-base and maps are updated and sent to Local Planning Authorities every six months to alert them to the special sites in their area.

The talk was finally illustrated with an examination of two case studies – Coate Water and Wheatley Barn. In the first case, there is a strong partnership of conservation bodies acting to influence projected development close to an SSSI and at least two CoWS





in the area. The successful outcome has been to define the boundaries of the development in such a way as to avoid disturbance of these areas. No doubt there will be a few careful eyes following the progress of this work. The second case concerns a site for mineral extraction in the Cotswold Water Park. The company involved is very sensitive to the issues surrounding the effect of their work on wildlife and is agreeable to building in protection where possible and to recreate habitat when extraction has finished, according to advice from conservation bodies. They are willing to allow time for organisations, such as the Cotswold Water Park Society, to raise funds to buy sites of interest when they are ready for disposal. The existence of CoWS has informed the process and greatly aided the success of this venture.

Sadly, it seems that there is very little prospect of any CoWS being designated as SSSIs, no matter how rich the wildlife. There is simply not enough capacity in the system, (i.e. English Nature), take on such a task, even though there would then be at least a legal basis for their protection. However, there is always scope for us to do our bit! We are to help survey an area around Cleveland Lakes later in the year, (16.08.06, I believe), and we shall be/will have been addressed at our forthcoming AGM by Gareth Harris, manager of this project.

Anyone interested in responding to the appeal for volunteers, or for further details on any of the above, should contact Amanda or her colleague, Rob Large, on 01380 725670 or check out the website [www.wiltshirewildlife.org](http://www.wiltshirewildlife.org)

*Ann M Clitheroe*

## Wildlife Sites - extra details from Amanda

Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites of wildlife importance recognised at a local level. They can be in any ownership and are identified using a set of agreed criteria based on the presence of important habitats to ensure consistency. Rob Large, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust project officer for Wildlife Sites, gathers the information on each site. The information and species records are stored in the Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre.

In Wiltshire there are currently over 1500 Wildlife Sites visited on a rolling programme. Landowners are given free advice on land management and agri-environment stewardship schemes or other grant opportunities.

Why are they important? They represent the majority of Wiltshire's best wildlife habitat, many are of similar quality to SSSIs and they are nationally acknowledged in Planning Policy Statement 9 (published in 2005) <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143832> as requiring 'criteria-based local policies against which proposals for development will be judged'.

So what do we do? WWT responds to all Local Authority Policy documents to endeavour to ensure that they include policies to protect Wildlife Sites as indicated in PPS9, as well as commenting on the general impacts on biodiversity, green space and sustainability. The aim is to ensure that all Wildlife Sites are also shown on Local Authority development proposal maps.

The WSBRC screens all planning applications in the county and identifies the presence of or the potential impact on Wildlife Sites and protected species. WWT uses this information to review such applications and offers advice or submits objections as appropriate to proposed development.

As the task is an enormous one, any information that can be provided to the project and the WSBRC to identify new Wildlife Sites or reinforce the importance of individual Wildlife Sites is always welcome. Over the next year the selection criteria will be reviewed and strengthened to ensure that we do not miss any important sites and to support our arguments for their protection at public inquiry if necessary. A part of this will be to identify populations of species in need of protection that may exist in areas which do not fit the current habitat-based criteria. If you know of any such populations please contact Rob Large at the Trust.

If you would like any further information about this or any other of the Trust's Biodiversity projects please contact me or the relevant Project Officer at WWT.

*Amanda Miller*



# Botanical Surveys at Cleveland Lakes and Wheatley's Barn Farm, Cotswold Water Park, 2006

**G Harris & M Millett, Cotswold Water Park Society**

**January 2006**

The Cotswold Water Park Society (CWPSoc) needs your help! The CWPSoc – a not-for-profit, environmental organisation with charitable status – are looking for volunteers to take part in the first botanical surveys of two sites within the Park, both sites having the potential for wonderful botanical interest. Would you like to get involved?

## Introduction

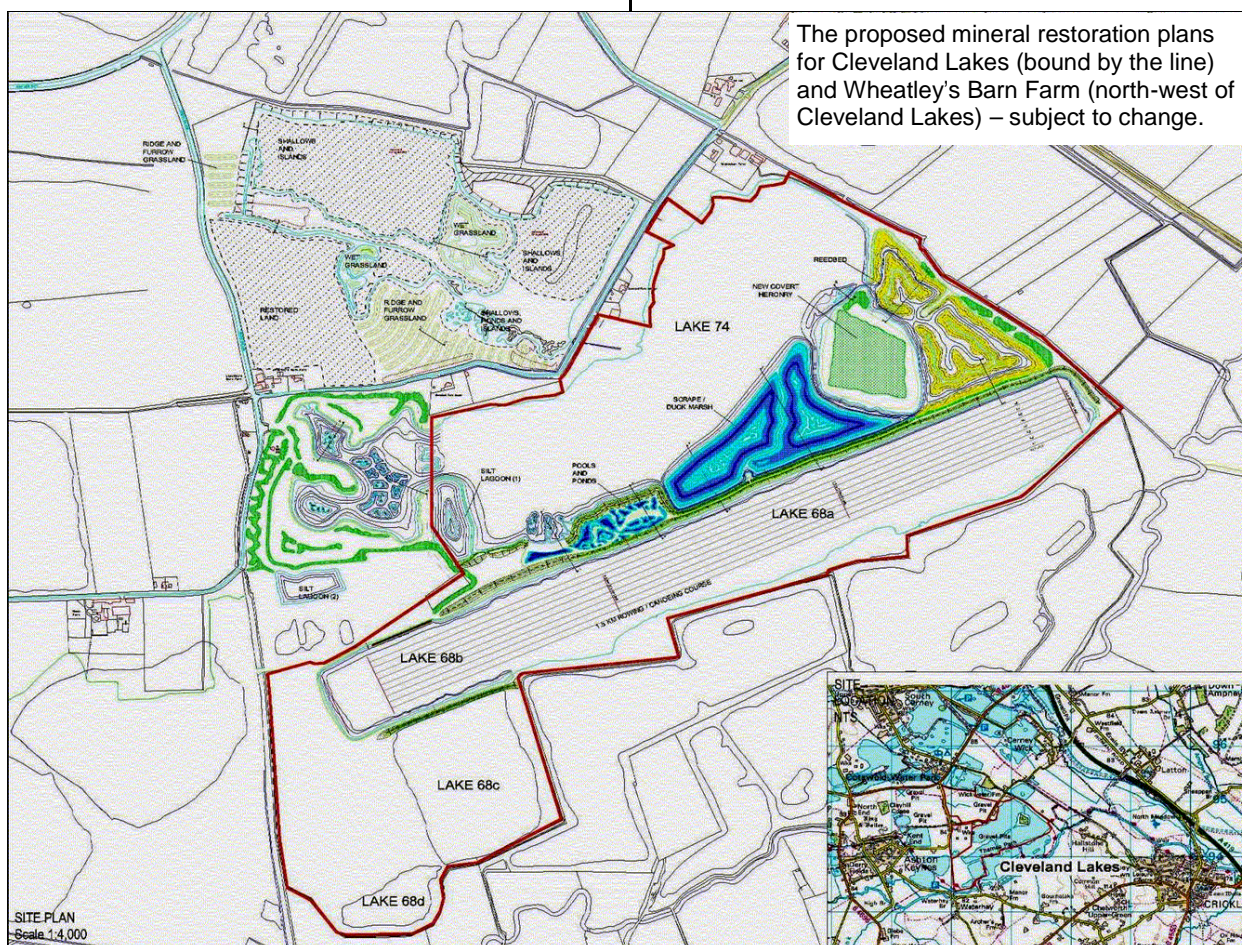
The Cotswold Water Park has a wealth of amazing wildlife in and around the lakes created as a result of

mineral extraction. A great deal is known about the bird life, the aquatic plants and there are surveys of fauna (such as Water Voles) and invertebrates (such as dragonflies) revealing more information all the time. More information, however, is needed regarding the flora of the area. Two sites in the Wiltshire section of the CWP are in need of urgent investigation.

The Cotswold Water Park Society purchased the first site, Cleveland Lakes, in 2003. The mineral company Aggregate Industries owns the second site, Wheatley's Barn Farm, which is adjacent to Cleveland Lakes. The Cotswold Water Park Society is currently fundraising to purchase and develop this site for nature conservation, notably for breeding waders but also other extensive biodiversity interest.

Before we can begin the development of these sites for nature conservation and paddle sports, botanical surveys are required.

In addition, the fundraising efforts to purchase Wheatleys Barn farm can be greatly boosted if we can demonstrate that these sites support a flora of high nature conservation value.





## Context & Background

### 1. Cleveland Lakes (Lakes 74, 68a, 68b, 68c, 68d)

Cleveland Lakes is an area of 110ha of lakes and land, purchased in 2003 by the Cotswold Water Park Society from Aggregate Industries for £450,000. The purchase was grant aided by the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF). Part of the site is to be developed as a paddle sports course, namely rowing, dragon boating and canoeing, on two of the lakes (Lakes 68a and 68b will be joined to make a single long lake), whilst managing the rest of the site as a nature reserve. The aim is to demonstrate that sport and leisure can be successfully undertaken on a site without causing a significant deterioration of its already high nature conservation value.

The site is already of tremendous value for biodiversity, including 1,500-2,000 wintering water birds, Otter, a 46 pair heronry, presence of nationally scarce stoneworts such as *Chara curta* (Lesser Bearded Stonewort), a diverse aquatic plant assemblage, reed beds, fen and hedgerows supporting Nightingales.

Other notable plant records for the site include Needle Spike-rush and Greater Burnet.

With the exception of detailed aquatic plant surveys [some of which were undertaken by WWT Slimbridge and Bristol University, using a novel methodology of hydro-acoustic sonar as well as detailed boat-based and shoreline grapnel surveys] the site's flora has never been systematically surveyed. More detailed information on the presence and distribution of plant species would greatly help the production of a management plan for the site.

On the map below, Cleveland Lakes is the area bound by the red line.

### 2. Wheatley's Barn Farm (Lake 95)

This 42ha site is arguably the most important site for breeding waders in the Cotswold Water Park and Wiltshire, supporting nationally important numbers of Little Ringed Plover (up to 10 pairs), plus Lapwing (10-12 pairs), Redshank (2 pairs), Oystercatcher (1 pair) and sometimes Ringed Plover and Curlew. It is

*Shallow wetland area of Wheatley Barn, where Little Ringed Plover breed*



*G Harris / Cotswold Water Park Society 2006*

also a key site for breeding ducks and farmland birds such as Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting and Skylark. Additional species include the Scarce Blue Tailed Damselfly (nationally scarce) as well as countless other dragonfly species.

Botanically, the site appears to be rich, with Yellow Rattle, Meadow Rue etc, an indication of what thrived upon the site before mineral extraction began.

The Cotswold Water Park Society hopes to purchase this site in the coming year, pending successful fund raising. In order to secure these funds, we need to further highlight the ecological importance of this site to convince funders of the need to support us.

The site has extensive areas of bare and disturbed ground and the potential for rare arable plants has been identified. Furthermore, wetland plant communities and grassland communities are now developing.

On the map, Wheatley's Barn Farm is the area to the north of Cleveland Lakes.

*Lapwing brood at Wheatley Barn Farm June 2004*



#### **Aims & Objectives:**

What do we want help with? There are two main aims (or objectives) for the survey work

1. To help us to undertake preliminary surveys of key areas of Cleveland Lakes (110 hectares) and Wheatley's Barn Farm (42 hectares) during 2006 in order to clarify the botanical interest of these sites.

This information will;

- a. Feed into the creation and revision of the restoration plans for these sites,
  - b. Enable the protection and improvement of communities of existing value as well as enabling the improvement of less diverse areas,
  - c. Comprise the first botanical assessment of these sites; who knows what you might find??!!
2. To assess wetland and farmland-type habitats for locally/regionally/nationally rare or scarce species, BAP species, Red Data Book species. [NB; Cleveland Lakes, Lakes 68a, 68b and 74, have been assessed for their aquatic plants but not for their marginal vegetation.]

Target areas include:

- a. The extensive Fen, Marsh, Swamp and reed bed communities of Lakes 68c and 68c,
- b. Grassland communities of eastern shoreline of Lake 74 and 68a,
- c. Margins and bare ground of Wheatley Barn Farm, in particular for rare arable plants, rushes and sedges.
- d. Aquatic plant communities of pools within Wheatley Barn Farm.

**Would you like to help? If so please contact Gareth Harris, Biodiversity Officer, Cotswold Water Park Society. Email: [Gareth.harris@waterpark.org](mailto:Gareth.harris@waterpark.org). Tel: 01285 861459.**



# Computerisation of Tree Records. A Volunteer Needed

There are dozens of current records of the great trees of Wiltshire on paper, mainly girth measurements. More are registered on card index; and printouts of older data from the Tree Register of the British Isles (TROBI) are held locally. The TROBI information is organised alphabetically by genera, and geographically by estates and localities; but lacks map references, has mistakes, and is rather out of date. The same goes for some other tree organisations.

I hold these papers, cards and printouts for the Wiltshire Botanical Society, and update the occasional incoming records. These need to be on disk, organised and set out in a way appropriate to the age of the computer. Many people enjoy and are adept at work with computers. If a computer-literate member of the WBS would take on this component of the tree record work, I would be very grateful. Such a person would not be required to go out and measure trees unless interested. It would be a gentle commitment with scope for useful creativity.

Jack Oliver (tel: 01672 861251)

## Wiltshire Botanical Society Library

- Drawings of British Plants (4 volumes) - Ross Craig - Donated by Beatrice Gillam
- The Flora of the Canary Islands - Herbert Moeller
- Lilies of the Field - Ann Mathers (Cyprus)
- Madeira - Flowers - LO Franquinha and A DaCosta
- Landscapes of Madeira - John and Pat Underwood
- Various editions of BSBI 'Watsonia' and BSBI News
- Photographs by John Presland of some wild flowers – mounted – can be removed
- Dried grasses donated by Lady Maitland

These are in the care of Gwyneth Yerrington and can be borrowed by members

## WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY COMMITTEE

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Ron Hurst		01225 865672	

## 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  
Wilts BA15 1PL

### Subscriptions (new rates):

Ordinary Member ----- £10.00 per year  
Joint Membership ----- £15.00 per year  
Life Membership ----- £100  
(Family £150)

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## Future meetings

Please suggest ideas for meetings or talks. Contact me by writing to:

Anchorsholme  
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Wilts SP5 2ST

or by phone or e-mail (01794 884436,  
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*Pat Woodruffe*