

NEWSLETTER

Issue 30

Summer 2007

WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY

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Wednesday 18 April 2007

Visit to the Hillier Arboretum

Ten members enjoyed a morning tour of the Hillier Arboretum near Romsey in beautiful weather. Our leader was Allen Coombes, an expert arboriculturalist, who provided consistently knowledgeable and interesting guidance. He took us round the arboretum at a very leisurely pace, which was much appreciated by those who wanted to question him about individual plants.

Allen gave us an initial account of the history of the gardens, which houses

one of the largest collections of hardy trees and shrubs in the world. The collection was built up largely by Sir Harold Hillier in his own grounds, beginning 50 years ago, and his collections have been supplemented by others. These include some of Roy Lancaster's and national collections of twelve genera, including *Carpinus*, *Cornus*, *Cotoneaster*, *Metasequoia* and *Corylus*. There are over 300 trees, with more of record British height for their species than anywhere else, partly due to the species being rare. It also has one of the longest garden borders in the world, the length of ten cricket pitches. It is now owned and run by Hampshire County Council, aided by about 100 volunteers to

supplement the work of its staff. The standard of maintenance, on today's viewing, is exceptionally high, and the labelling of plants must be the best I have seen in gardens open to the public. There is an education centre used by more than a thousand children a year.

The Arboretum contains plants from all over the world, and some British natives are included. A large Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) was particularly impressive, covered as it was by masses of white blossom at the height of flowering.



Nebrodi Fir detail- John Presland



Nebrodi Fir - John Presland

There is a policy of featuring a selection of "plants of current interest" on a monthly basis, including them in a handout leaflet and signposting them in the gardens. The brilliantly yellow *Mahonia aquifolium* 'Apollo' was most striking and the *Malus* 'Katherine' absolutely covered in white bloom. *Staphylea* 'Hessel' (a Bladdernut) bore its clusters of white tinged pink flowers abundantly. *Paeonia* 'Feng Dan Bai' had huge flowers. *Magnolia* 'Lois' was a particularly fine example of the new yellow *Magnolia* hybrids being produced.

The shrubs commonly on display in collections at this time of year were well represented - Rhododendrons in red and blue-purple, red and white Azaleas, red and white Camellias, and Magnolias in white, pink and yellow. There were also some very colourful trees, particularly the deep red flowering *Malus profusa* and the yellow legume *Sophora cassioides* from Chile. Also impressive was *Cornus nuttallii* 'Portlemouth', with its huge white bracts providing a fine display behind clusters of more discreet flowers.

Allen pointed out a number of trees and shrubs with features of special interest. Particularly fetching was

Euonymus fortunei, which creeps along the ground, rising at intervals into conical masses of branches several feet high. We saw a Cork Oak and a young Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*). Until 1994, the latter was known only from fossils dating back 120 million years ago, but it was then found in a canyon in New South Wales. It is one of the surviving relics of a once major family of conifers, the *Araucariaceae*, of which the Monkey Puzzle Tree and Parana Pine from South America and the Kauri Tree from New Zealand are other survivors. There was also a fine Katsura Tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*), found in Japan, China and the Himalayas and the only

Bird Cherry flowers - John Presland



Paeonia 'Feng Dan Bai' - John Presland

genus and species in the primitive family *Cercidiphyllaceae*. It can grow to almost 100 feet high and has bright green leaves partially hiding small but interestingly coloured flowers.

Individual members found plants that were of particular interest to them. Some of us were amazed at the number of oak species present, some of them very tiny, barely amounting to trees at all. Simon Young took the opportunity to photograph a blue-purple-flowered *Lathyrus vernus*, which grows only in pinkish white in his own garden. I was interested to see our own attractive potted *Choisya 'Aztec Pearl'* put in the shade by a huge shrub totally covered with white flowers. There were also two trees to remind me of adventures abroad. One was a lancewood (*Pseudopanax*

ferox), which is in the Ivy family (*Araliaceae*) and endemic to New Zealand. The genus is remarkable for the way in which leaves take different forms at different life stages. In this species, the leaves of the young tree are linear and reflexed and up to 43 inches long, while the mature leaves are shorter, broader, and mostly divided into leaflets until the last stage of life, when they are simple and

linear. The other was *Abies nebrodensis* (Nebrodi Fir), a Sicilian endemic which I saw in the Madonie Mountains, where it was discovered perhaps 30-40 years ago. Previously it was known only from a handful of plants in cultivation. .

Thanks to Allen for a most stimulating morning, which must have left us all with a wish to visit again.

John Presland

Leaves of the Katsura tree - John Presland



Tuesday 1 May 2007

The Secret Valley – Devizes

Tony Sampson and Gwyneth Yerrington

Our first real outdoor meeting of the season proved to be delightful. Mr and Mrs Sampson, the owners of several hectares of meadow and woodland, situated on the southern edge of Devizes, had invited us to come and investigate their land. Their house was very aptly named 'The Secret Valley' and the area proved to be an oasis amongst residential development.



The weather on May 1st was wonderful and it was good to meet both regular and some newer members. The garden graduated into less formal planting down a steep slope and then into meadow at the bottom. Ferns were immediately evident; there were some lovely clumps of Harts-tongue Fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium* as well as Common Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Broad Buckler Fern *Dryopteris dilatata* and Soft Shield Fern *Polystichum setiferum*. Later, we found Hard Shield Fern *Polystichum aculeatum* too.

Whilst the meadow itself had not reached its peak of flowering (it was, after all, only May 1st) the pond area provided interest with Great Pond Sedge *Carex riparia*, Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula* and Lesser Duckweed *Lemna minor* whilst a



stream had some Fool's Watercress *Apium nodiflorum* in it. The butterflies were enjoying the sunny spot, in particular brimstones and orange tips, and sharp-eyed Lesley was able to find an Orange Tip egg laid on Lady's-smock *Cardamine pratensis*. Growing with Goat Willow *Salix caprea* and Grey Willow *S. cinerea* was a specimen of *S. matsudana: tortuosa*. This is a contorted or corkscrew willow, known as Dragon's Claw Willow, which Jack believes to be a cultivar created as a result of genetic change. The plant is susceptible to disease and apt to die suddenly but can be propagated by cuttings whilst still healthy.

Pre- World War II the stream was canalised to power a hydroelectric generator and before that had been used to mill snuff. We had to admit our ignorance of the snuff industry in Devizes!

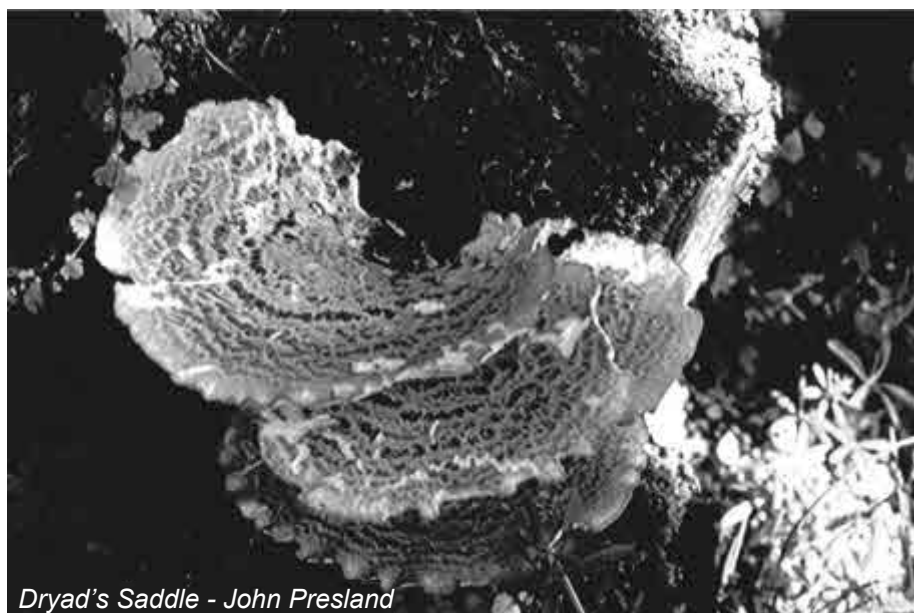
A second area of woodland provided a great deal of interest, including around twenty plants on the southern region list of ancient woodland indicator species. Doubtless more could be spotted a little later in the

season. Most notable were Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia* and Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem or, in Wiltshire, Bath Asparagus *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum*. The Herb Paris was concentrated mainly in one spot but two new plants had been found at a different location in amongst the Bath Asparagus, which was also restricted in its distribution. It was splendid to see these two unusual species. The snowdrops too must have been lovely a few months ago and the owners believed them to be native. We spent some time at a large alder tree, which Jack decided was worthy of measurement. Unfortunately no one had a tape or even a length of string but the problem was solved by using an extendable dog lead. Our next problem was marking the lead and, strangely, no one had any Snowpake on them - but a couple of safety pins helped and the conversion was then painstakingly made using a 50cm measure. Two measurements were finally made since the tree's greatest girth was someway above ground level. The estimates were 450cm at 1ft and 510cm at 5ft but Ivy, coupled with numerous natural bumps and undulations in the trunk – not to mention the unique approach to the process of taking the measurements - make these figures somewhat approximate.

We seldom stop to admire Sycamore but one in particular caught Jack's eye! The inflorescences were huge, one was in excess of 20cm and another had eight branches per pedicel.

Several interesting fungi were noted in the woodland areas. Dryad's Saddle *Polyporus squamosus* was found on a cut log and *Fomes*





Dryad's Saddle - John Presland

fomentarius on a fallen trunk. The common names of the latter are Hoof or Tinder Fungus, derived from its shape and its ability to be made in to tinder. There were also masses of the Many-zoned Polypore, *Trametes versicolor* on a dead, fallen trunk and bright orange spheres of a slime mould on another cut log.

The records made will be put into the Society's database since we feel sure that it is some time since botanists have been fortunate enough to visit this area of Devizes. Our thanks to our hosts for a lovely morning and to Gwyneth Yerrington for leading the walk.

Broadleas Gardens Devizes.

This lovely garden was at its best at this time. Our afternoon began with a memorable encounter with Lady Anne Cowdray, the owner, who was relaxing at the entrance in the most wonderful bath chair which she told us she had been given as a wedding present.

Although we started off together, the group quickly split up and found their way around with the aid of maps provided. The range of unusual plants was quite amazing and we were more than pleased to be provided with short lists of those in each section of the garden. So many species were in flower and looking magnificent in this early season. Several roses were already in bloom, tree peonies, rhododendrons and azaleas, trilliums, magnolias, lithodora and many, many more. We were surprised to find areas of Pink

Purslane (*Claytonia [Montia] sibirica*) in full flower and some white ones too. Although this plant was almost inevitably introduced to the garden, there was plenty of native ground flora to see including Bluebells, Pignut and Yellow Archangel.

It was heartening to realise that, even after some 60 or more years of gardening at Broadleas, Lady Anne was still active and the evidence of recent plantings was abundant. The gardens are now managed by a charitable trust and their future is clearly being carefully planned.

Pat Woodruffe

Species list for The Secret Valley:

Vascular Plants:

<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field Maple
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Adoxa moschatellina</i>	Moschatel
<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Garlic Mustard
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Alder
<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>	Wood anemone
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Wild angelica
<i>Apium nodiflorum</i>	Fool's Watercress
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Wild arum
<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Cuckoo Flower
<i>Carex pendula</i>	Pendulous sedge
<i>Carex riparia</i>	Great Pond Sedge
<i>Carex sylvatica</i>	Wood sedge
<i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i>	Opposite-leaved golden saxifrage
<i>Circea lutetiana</i>	Enchanter's nightshade
<i>Conopodium majus</i>	Pignut
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel

<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>	Common Spotted Orchid
<i>Deschampsia cespitosum</i>	Tufted Hair-grass
<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>	Broad buckler fern
<i>Dryopteris filix mas</i>	Male fern
<i>Equisetum telmateia</i>	Great horsetail
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadow sweet
<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>	Snowdrop
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood avens
<i>Hyacinthoides non scripta</i>	Bluebell (native)
<i>Hyacinthoides x massartiana</i>	Hybrid Bluebell
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i>	Yellow archangel
<i>Lemna minor</i>	Lesser duckweed
<i>Melica uniflora</i>	Wood Melick
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Dog's Mercury
<i>Millium effusum</i>	Wood Millet
<i>Mimulus guttatus</i>	Mimulus
<i>Myosotis sylvestris</i>	Wood For-get-me-not
<i>Ornithogallum pyrenaicum</i>	Bath Asparagus
<i>Paris quadrifolia</i>	Herb Paris
<i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i>	Hart's Tongue
<i>Polygonatum multiflorum</i>	Solomon's Seal
<i>Polystichum aculeatum</i>	Hard Shield Fern
<i>Polystichum setiferum</i>	Soft Shield Fern
<i>Primula elatior</i>	Cowslip
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Primrose
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Oak - Englsih
<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	Celendine
<i>Ribes rubrum (sylvestris)</i>	Red currant
<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>	Gooseberry
<i>Salix caprea</i>	Goat Willow
<i>Salix cinerea</i>	Grey Willow
<i>Salix fragilis</i>	Crack Willow
<i>Salix matsudana: tortuosa</i>	Dragon's Claw Willow
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red Campion
<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Bulrush
Fungi:	
<i>Polyporus squamosa</i>	Dryad's Saddle
<i>Fomes fomentarius</i>	Hoof Fungus
<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Many-zoned Polypore
An orange slime mould	

12 May 2007

Asham Wood

Leader: Sharon Pilkington

Eleven members were at the site well on time – however Simon (who hadn't studied his trips list recently) and Sharon were half an hour late! Everyone else appeared very tolerant of their tardiness.

Asham is a huge Somerset wood managed by the County Wildlife Trust with complete public access. It is criss-crossed by a vast number of tracks and is bordered by a huge inactive quarry (Mendip limestone). Sharon soon informed us that there was a range of soils, making for interesting botany. The early haul included False Oxlip, Sanicle, Early Purple Orchid, Goldilocks, *Veronica montana* and Solomon's Seal. These were on the relatively dry slopes, before we descended into a lovely stream valley. Here there was an array of ferns – which I always did find difficult. Thanks to Richard I now know my Broad Buckler (triangular pinnae and pale scales) from my Narrow Buckler Fern (tapered pinnae and pale scales). We also found



Sharon - are my boots and jacket waterproof?

Scaly Male Fern, which Lesley re-christened Shaggy Male Fern!

We then crossed the stream and diverted along a narrow path to hunt for Herb Paris (known to be thereabouts). A good-sized patch was found in quite boggy ground. It seems remarkable how local it is in any one wood, but of course it is easily overlooked.

On the way back Sharon gave us some more insights into the woodland management. In some areas there were trees which had been cut at an intermediate height – not a coppice or a pollard. They are apparently a Somerset speciality called a 'stoggle'.

Simon Young



What's THAT?

Saturday 12 May

Eley's Field

Leader: Simon Young

A very pleasant afternoon was spent in these unimproved ancient hay meadows. The owner and her late husband kept ownership of these fields after the family farm was sold to preserve them; the fields are amazingly species-rich and would repay a much more intensive examination than the time and rain allowed us. With stunning views around us taking in an amazing sweep, from the smoke stack of the Westbury works and the white horse, round to Alfred's Tower, and we were told Glastonbury Tor on a clear day, and to the accompaniment of the bells of Mells' Church, we listed the following sample of meadow plants.

Hedgerow borders showed old laid branches of Midland Hawthorn and with *Brachypodium sylvaticum* (Wood False Brome), *Cruciata laevipes* (Crosswort) indicated relict woodland. *Ranunculus bulbosus* (Bulbous Buttercup) showed up in damper lower field and near the capricious spring risings in the upper field;

elsewhere *Ranunculus acris* (Meadow Buttercup) was common. The rare *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (Adder's Tongue Fern) was found in damper patches on the way up the sloping field. Amongst doubtless several more species of *Apiaceae* we found *Sison amomum* (Stone Parsley) in the hedges, *Heracleum sphondylium* (Hogweed) and *Conopodium majus* (Pignut) in the fields. Common *Asteraceae* included *Taraxacum officinale* (Dandelion), *Bellis perennis* (Daisy), *Leucanthemum vulgare* (Ox-eye Daisy), *Hypochaeris radicata* (Cat's Ear), *Hieracium pilosella* (Mouse Ear Hawkweed) and *Centaurea nigra* (Black Knapweed). The list goes on with the early summer flowers of *Primula veris* (Cowslip), *Trifolium pratense* (Red Clover), *Prunella Vulgaris* (Self-heal), *Ajuga reptans* (Bugle), *Geranium dissectum* (Cut-leaved Cranesbill), *Rumex acetosa* (Sorrel), *Convolvulus arvensis* (Field Bindweed), *Vicia sativa* (Common Vetch), *Sanguisorba minor* (Salad Burnet), *Lotus corniculatus* (Birds-foot Trefoil), *Medicago lupulina* (Black Medick), *Cerastium fontanum* (Common Mouse-ear), *Potentilla reptans* (Creeping Cinquefoil), *Plantago major*, *media* and *lanceolata* (Plantains). We were delighted to

also see *Orchis morio* (Green-winged Orchid) and *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple Orchid), the former in all its colour variations of purple, salmon and the rare white.

Amongst doubtless other grasses we noticed *Bromus erectus*, *Bromus mollis*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and *Briza media*. We also saw *Luzula campestris* (Good Friday Grass, Field Wood-rush), *Carex flacca* (Glaucous Sedge), *Carex caryophyllea* (Spring Sedge) and *Juncus inflexus* and *J. effusus* (Hard and Soft Rushes).

These fields are cut annually for hay usually once, sometimes twice, and although the grazing regime is unknown, the presence of many tiny oak seedlings shows the precarious nature of this biotic sub-climax vegetation.

The day ended with Lesley Wallington braving the rain to photograph the white orchid and with tea and cake kindly provided by Liz Eley, the field's owner.

David Pickering



It's a stoggle!



Pignut flowering in the meadow - John Presland

Thursday 17 May 2007

New Grove Meadows, Monmouth

Leader: Dave Green

This is a jewel of a reserve but what a difference scorching spring weather and 24 days make!

We first visited this reserve in June 2003 and I refer you to that report for the geology and eulogy. This year not the same dazzle of colour just greener but still cheeky tussocks of bright green Pill Sedge *Carex pilulifera* with their distinctive *bristly* utricles (described chastely in Rose as *downy*: you choose) and softly gorgeous mauve brown, very past their best, Green-winged and Early Purple Orchids *Anacamptis morio* and *Orchis mascula*. But voila! Three specimens of the very rare Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* which gained the Ooh factor. *B. lunaria* is at its southern extremity here, giving it kudos, but truthfully it is a rather primitive looking dwarf fern with inelegant leaves and unspectacular grapelike "flowers" – sorry everyone, but very, very

rare is not always beautiful – just tickable!

Next onto New Lady Wood, GREAT DOWARD a steep limestone site with a disused quarry and mixed broadleaved woods high above the

river Wye. We enjoyed lunch on a felled tree trunk in the company of Bloody Cranes-bill, Nettles, Wood Spurge and Dave's tales of emigration to and retirement in Monmouth.

We explored the quarry, home to Peregrine Falcons (with nest) and were delighted with bold spikes of Greater Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, bonny *Aquilegia*, Grey Sedge *Carex divulsa* and our second rarity of the day Blue Moor Grass *Sesleria caerulea* (hairless with no white dots! I'll say no more!) In the woodland en route to the seven sisters rocks we passed 30+ fresh, still dewy, unpollinated Bird's-nest Orchids *Neottia nidus-avis*.

The seven sisters rocks stand high above the river Wye and we gazed at the truly stunning views, not for the faint-hearted. Here were lovely dangerously perched Whitebeams, four types including *aria* and *torminalis* diagnosed on the nail biting cliffs edge...

Dave very kindly led us to his new home, a beautifully converted barn with lovely views enhanced by tea drinking and good conversation with friends. Ace day!



Birds-nest Orchid - John Presland



Whitebeam ... - John Presland



... leaves ... - John Presland



... and flowers - John Presland

Other species of the day were:

Broad-leaved and Small Leaved Limes,
 Mistletoe on Whitebeam,
 Spurge Laurel *Daphne laureola*
 Betony *Betonica officinalis*
 Cow Wheat *Melampyrum pratense*
 Narrow-leaved Bittercress
Cardamine impatiens
 Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*
 Pale Sedge *Carex Pallescens*
 Hard Fern *Polystichum aculeatum*
 Common Vetch *Vicia sativa*
 Hedge Bedstraw *Galium Mollugo*
 Wild Madder *Rubia peregrina*

A slime mould

Speckled Yellow Moth

*Pseudopanthera
 macularia,*

and the possibility of 30 species of moth
 on the Sorbuses - and much more!

Do go there.

Lesley Wallington



White Green-winged Orchid !
 - John Presland



Sheep's Sorrel - John Presland

Thursday 24 May 2007

Distillery Meadows

Leader: Paul Darby

Our meeting was in the far North of the county and on the Thursday before half term so just seven of us were lucky enough to get there, and we had a good time, as usual.

The collection of damp meadows is still managed in the old-fashioned way with rotated grazing and hay making, so there is a richly varied herbage.

The meadows seem similar but are subtly different with surprising presences and absences. One meadow had no – or very few – plantains; in the next the plantains were back and there was a group of Spiny Restharrow not seen elsewhere. In Ring Ground meadow, with a small stream, there was Tubular Water-dropwort, Lesser Stitchwort and Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil. In Wood Ground we searched for, but did not find, Green-winged Orchid still in flower but the abundant Heath Spotted Orchids were in full bloom and the thousands of Common Spots were just a few days behind them. In the same meadow Great Burnet was a treat.

Throughout the morning we did a little sorting out of our grasses and sedges.

The Meadow Foxtails were in full mauve flower, very good looking. Among the sedges were Oval Sedge *Carex ovalis*, Hairy Sedge *C. hirta* and Carnation Sedge *C. panicea*.

Paul was, as ever, a gentle and knowledgeable leader and in good time led us back to our picnics, eaten while comfortably settled among flowering grasses.

Rosemary Duckett

Sunday 3 June 2007

Scratchbury Hill, Warminster

Leader: Sharon Pilkington

Botanist's luck prevailed and we



stayed dry when ten of us joined Sharon for a walk round this hill fort on the southwestern edge of Salisbury Plain. The steep banks and ditches of the hill fort provide ideal conditions for the chalk grassland flora and we were able to renew our acquaintance with many common and not so common plants.

With lots of us on the look out, we eventually spotted Bastard Toadflax (*Thesium humifusum*), although it was not yet in flower and not very obvious. The Nationally Scarce Field Fleawort (*Tephrosia integrifolia*), often associated with hill fort ramparts, is widespread on the site, so we saw quite a few plants. We also found a number of patches of



Spring Gentian

Early Gentian (*Gentianella anglica*) in flower. Wiltshire is a stronghold for this Nationally Scarce plant, protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Both Common and Chalk Milkworts (*Polygala vulgaris* and *P. calcarea*) occur, often next to each other and Sharon taught us how to distinguish between them.

There were plenty of Common Spotted (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*) and Fragrant Orchids (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) in bloom and we also found Twayblade (*Listera ovata*) and one Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*), but we searched for Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*) without success, although Sharon has recorded it at Scratchbury previously; we were probably too early for it. Our other finds included Squinancywort (*Asperula cynanchica*), Clustered Bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*), Carlina Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*), Crested Hair-Grass (*Koeleria macrantha*) and Small Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*). Horseshoe Vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*), the food plant of the Adonis Blue (*Lysandra bellargus*), is abundant on the hill and we were pleased to see plenty of these beautiful iridescent blue butterflies. Skylarks serenaded us on our walk.

Returning to our cars, we found a message on a windscreen from Jack Oliver, who had been with us for part of our visit, to the effect that there were three Knapweed Broomrapes (*Orobancha elatior*) 40 yards down the road. These were duly discovered and admired. All in all, it was a very rewarding and enjoyable trip.

Thanks again to Sharon for her time, company and for sharing her expertise with us.

Anne Appleyard



Thursday June 21st 2007

Visit to Dean Hill Park

Dean Hill Park is the new name for a site which was requisitioned by MOD in 1930s and developed as an armaments depot. The site covers some 385 acres and straddles the Hants – Wilts county boundary. The more southerly section lies within the Brickworth Down and Dean Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Habitats within the site are varied and include chalk grassland, yew / whitebeam woodland, juniper scrub, hazel coppice, rail and road tracks, railway embankments and improved agricultural land.

Until recently, only the land within the SSSI had been systematically recorded and many of these records were 20 or more years old. The new owner is willing to allow recording work and considers conservation of the estate as a priority; he was therefore happy for a group of botanists from the society to record within the Wilts section.

Eleven of us met and split into groups to cover specific sections. In the morning, we each looked at a section

of downland but after lunch changed to man-influenced habitats including the blast banks, road and rail tracks, and recently ploughed land. The blast banks were formed from spoil excavated in the formation of twenty-four large storage bunkers which were built in to the hillside. Aerial photographs taken in 1940s show them as bare chalk but today they support many calcareous grassland and scrub species.

By the end of the day, we had recorded some 194 different species and made just under 600 records: a very useful addition to the database for the Wilts part of the site. The grassland part of the SSSI was damaged by being disked, harrowed, fertilised and reseeded in 1981. Fortunately, the damage was not as great as might be imagined and ten years later, the grassland was recovering well. It has been managed by annual cutting in the intervening years and now supports a good range of chalk grassland indicator species, although not some of the more notable ones such as bastard toadflax, field fleawort or dwarf sedge. None the less, we were able to find around 100 species in each of the three sections. Some of the more interesting finds were however kept to the end of the day, when a plant of Moth Mullein



Moth Mullein - Pat Woodruffe

(*Verbascum blattaria*) was spotted along the roadside. Very nice specimens of Dark Mullein (*Verbascum nigrum*) were also seen and some Evening Primrose (*Oenothera glazioviana*) was also noted in the same situation.

My thanks to those who helped; I trust they enjoyed their days' visit and will return in September to investigate the roses there in greater detail.

Pat Woodruffe



Common Spotted-orchids - Pat Woodruffe



Sunday 1 July 2007

West Yatton Down

Leaders: Simon Young and Ron Hurst

Three members (two leaders and one intrepid Richard) attended when the forecast was atrocious, and a general caveat over the likely conditions had been issued! In fact, there was plenty of sun and hardly any rain - so much for forecasts!



Yellow Wort

We started on the steep limestone of West Yatton Down - where we were told there was the (remote) chance of Musk Orchid (not seen for decades - and still not seen). It is a lovely stretch of down with a wonderful flora, of which we listed the following:

Carlina Thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, Musk Thistle *Carduus nutans*, Woolly Thistle *Cirsium eriophorum*, Yellowwort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* and Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*. Fellwort *Gentianella amarella*, Chalk and Common Milkworts *Polygala calcarea* and *vulgaris*, Common and Spiny Restharrow *Ononis repens*



Beautiful Demoiselle

and *spinosa*. Also Dyers Greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, Field Madder *Sherardia arvensis* and Squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica*. Pyramidal and fragrant were the only orchids recognizable. Stone Parsley *Sison amomum* was seen. Interestingly, on both of the leaders' visits there were 4-5 Clouded

Yellows on the same patch of down - raising the question of a possible breeding colony? We also saw Ringlets and Marbled Whites - the latter testing my "knowledge" of my new digital camera!

We then went on to the water meadows by the adjacent Bybrook, which were unaffected by the recent deluge. Surrounded by beautiful demoiselles, we recorded the following:

Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*, Hairy Sedge and False Fox Sedge *Carex hirta* and *otrubae*, Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus*. Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, Common Valerian *Valeriana officinalis* and either Pink or Blue Water-speedwell *Veronica catenata* or *anagallis-aquatica* - which we saw on our survey but could not re-find on the day to identify! Perhaps the best find was Wood Club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus* - a 3ft. tall specimen growing in the stream, which we identified after Richard waded in to collect a branch. According to the Wilts flora, there are only 11 sites in north Wiltshire.

Simon Young

Wednesday 18 July 2007

Home Farm, Cholderton

Under the leadership of Audrey Summers and Eileen Rollo, eleven of us made another visit to this carefully managed farm owned by the conservationist Henry Edmonds, and just outside our Wiltshire boundary. We recorded plants growing in one of his larger hayfields and which for about sixteen years has only had an annual cut; as a result, it is now very species-rich.

Within the main field is a large enclosure which has been managed differently to encourage the nesting of the rare Stone Curlews which already nest near Stonehenge a few miles away. This area was ploughed and seeded a few years ago with a starter-mix of wildflower seeds, and subsequently only disc-harrowed annually. We recorded this area separately.

The survey of the main field revealed 86 species which certainly surprised me, and once again underlined both what richness of wildlife is lost in more intensive regimes, and how the clock can be turned back if the will and resources are there. The list included a predictable range of fourteen meadow grasses, half a dozen sedges, and many of the commoner wildflowers; the presence of occasional woody species (Blackthorn and Buckthorn) reminded us that "hands-off" management is only just resisting natural progress to woodland.

The survey of the enclosure provided twenty-six species not found in the surrounding field, and although undoubtedly reflecting the wild seed mixtures used, some may well have established naturally aided by the distinctive management. Certainly, the great thrill of the day, *Misopates orontium* (with the enchanting name of Weasel's Snout). Henry assured us that it was not in the original mix. It was a special joy on that sunny day to see the spectacular colour mix of flowers now rarely seen: cornflowers,

corn marigolds, poppies, and the fetching sun-hats of our botanists amongst them! Scarlet Pimpernels were wide open and in huge profusion, and Mervyn was as lively as the butterflies he was recording.

Other plants of note were Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua*, both *Kickxias* (Round and Sharp-leaved Fluellen), and the Prickly and Rough poppies *Papaver Argemone* and *P. hybridum* (which drops its petals early in the day and so tends to be overlooked); Perennial Sow-thistle *Sonchus arvensis*, usually indicating that autumn is near, was out depressingly early in this odd year, but added its stateliness and striking colour.

Our youngest associate, Joy's grandson Oscar, was principal bug-hunter and most capably identified many insect denizens of the huge field.

At the end of the day, we provisioned ourselves from the well-stocked farm shop run by Henry's family.

David Pickering

John Ounsted - A Hampshire Botanist

John died on December 2nd at the age of 88. Pat Woodruffe and Barbara Last have contributed some memories.

From Pat: "During his retirement from the busy life of Headmaster and HMI he managed to contribute over 2000 entries to the Wiltshire Botanical Society's records. It is indeed fortuitous that his retirement coincided with the start of the Flora Mapping Project. Many of John's records were made in 1984 and came from ST91, SU01 and SU12: often including the extreme southerly parts of VC8, which lie in Hampshire or Dorset.

In later years he enjoyed searching for neophytes and garden escapes and he made numerous records of plants such as *Aster agg.*, *Cerastium tomentosum*, *Elodea nuttallii*, *Lemna minuta* and *Malus domestica* in all parts of Wiltshire. A significant

proportion of his records are of arable plants and, indeed, the last time I recall him attending a Botanical Society meeting was during the summer of 2004 at a farm near Downton when we were working with Simon Smart on a FWAG project.

Although a 'Hampshire Man' John was keen to share his records and tried hard to provide us with a second record of *Gagea lutea* within the county. I last saw the colony in 2005 and it was a mere 50 yards within Hampshire. There is hope yet! Well done John, we'll keep an eye on it."

From Barbara: "He very kindly took me to see the really special rarities at Hatcher Pond in the New Forest in 1981, a very great treat for me! Dick and I went on a Botanical Society trip to the Alps at Ville-Vielle in 1992, which he led along with some very congenial company. I still have the flora list!

There were some very exciting mountain paths to negotiate.

In 1995 John organised a small trip to Alderney. This was quite fascinating and I remember scrambling down a steep cliff to see a fair population of *Orobancha rapum-genistae*.

He always said that one must die laughing. I only hope he did!

Yes, I have very fond memories of John, a kind and delightful man."



Sunday 8 July 2007

Shapwick Heath National Nature Reserve

Leader: Melvin Yeandle

This summer we had a visit to the magnificent wetland reserve of Shapwick Heath in the Somerset levels. The reserve has a mix of habitats – reed bed, open water, wet woodland, fen and meadow. Long ago, the sea covered Shapwick. As the sea began to retreat (c. 4,500 BC) reed beds colonised the drying marshes.

In Neolithic times, people began to settle on the surrounding dry ground and used wooden trackways to cross the wetlands. Parts of the Neolithic Sweet Track, the oldest man-made routeway in Britain, still exist here, preserved beneath the wet peat. The track was built in 3806 BC to cross 2km of reed swamp.

The Romans are thought to have been the first to extract peat and for centuries, the peat was cut by hand until the 1950s when other types of fuel became more popular. Mechanised removal began in the 1960s for horticultural use and ended



Marsh Fern

on Shapwick in the 1990s. There are still 40 peat producers left on the levels but their margins are getting less because of cheap peat coming in from abroad.

Before we started looking at the reserve, we saw Water Bent growing in the car park.

In the morning we were lucky enough to be shown round the reserve on the east side of the road by Natural England warden, Melvin Yeandle, who is very knowledgeable about the

reserve. There were numerous plants, Marsh Fern being one of the many impressive species to be seen. Among other plants were Bog Myrtle, Water Dock, Cyperus Sedge, Whorl Grass, Skullcap, Royal Fern and Greater Tussock Sedge.

Invertebrates we saw were represented by Blue-tailed Damselfly, Iris Sawfly larvae, Red Admiral and Peacock. One of the specialities of the reserve is the Lesser Silver Diving Beetle, a rare species that thrives in the wet woodland.



Yellow Loosestrife

Also seen was the Marsh Frog. Bittern have been seen (or heard) every month of this year. Thousands of starlings roost in a part of the reserve at night and their droppings greatly increase the amount of Duckweed in the water beneath the reeds.

After lunch, we went to a wonderful wet meadow on the other side of the road. It was very wet in places this year because of all the rain. Here we saw another wonderful selection to species including Common Meadow-rue, Jointed



Our leader:
Melvin Yeandle

Rush, 6 Sedges at least including Brown Sedge and the Yellow Sedge, *Carex viridula* ssp. *oedocarpa*, Marsh Pennywort, Marsh Cinquefoil, Bog Pimpernel and Blunt-flowered Rush which has both longitudinal and cross-partitions in its leaves. It also has far-creeping rhizomes that produce extensive patches of the plant which can be picked out from quite a distance away because of its lovely straw-coloured flower heads.

As well as plants, we saw Black-tailed Skimmer, Grass Snake, Common Frog and Marsh Frog.

By some miracle, we managed to escape the worst of this summer's rain and the bit of rain we had in the afternoon did not dampen our enthusiasm. The only disappointment of the day was not being able to have a hot drink and delicious piece of home-made cake in the excellent café which unfortunately was closed for renovation.

I think all agreed we had a very enjoyable day's botanising. We must go again in the near future.

Jean Wall



Water
Chickweed

Wednesday 1 August 2007

Manor Farm RSPB Reserve, Newton Tony

It was a glorious morning when 16 members met in the farmyard at Manor Farm, which is now owned by the RSPB. Some know the reserve and have already been involved in surveying and seed sowing, so it was good to have the chance to gain an overview of a larger area of the site.

We were greeted by Patrick Cashman, site manager. He introduced Manor Farm and explained some of the management plans.

The farm has arable options - barley is already being grown for the brewing industry - and maintains 6 metre grass margins round fields. Some of these are sown with wild birdseed mixture, and left as a standing crop for birds in winter.

As well as various thistle species, other plants such as Quinoa and Linseed are included. One area is closed off to visitors at present due to the presence of Stone Curlews. Only one pair has been recorded this year and it is hoped that they are breeding. A bit of a disappointment, as there were two pairs last year, or maybe their camouflage was just too good for them to be spotted this year.

Part of the site is an old railway line that used to be a Wildlife Trust reserve, and is now a County Wildlife site, which Rob Large (WWT) and colleague were surveying during the morning.

The site is open to anyone at any time and there are plans to have a car park (RSPB) by the old railway line, with two circular Nature Trails. Patrick told us that the name would change to Winterbourne Downs, to avoid confusion with all the other Manor Farms.

Two buzzards circled overhead, as we set off through a field which was predominantly Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*). We soon crossed the old railway line and, reaching a further expanse of open field, Patrick

explained some of the experiments that were in progress. The overall aim is to reduce the fertility of the land, and Roundup has been used to create sterile soil conditions prior to reseedling. Black-grass (*Alopecurus myosuroides*) and Barren Brome (*Anisantha sterilis*) were abundant, and are to be eradicated as part of overall management

Controlled experiments are taking place, using weighed amounts of different types of seed mix, including one with extra Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) to see whether this is advantageous in terms of reducing grass and clover, with the aim of increasing diversity of botanical species.

The plan was to survey two field margins, one that had been cultivated and left to naturalise, and the other that had been sown with wild birdseed. We were told that various unusual species had been recorded there, including Grey Field-speedwell (*Veronica polita*), Venus's-looking-glass (*Legousia hybrida*), Blue Pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis* ssp. *foemina*) and both Rough and Prickly Poppy (*Papaver hybridum* and *P. argemone*).

There was much Perennial Sowthistle (*Sonchus arvensis*) and Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) along the first margin. One unusual yellow flower was identified as Common Fiddleneck (*Amsinckia micrantha*), an unknown

plant to many of us, an introduced species which has now naturalised - possibly arrived in a seed mix.

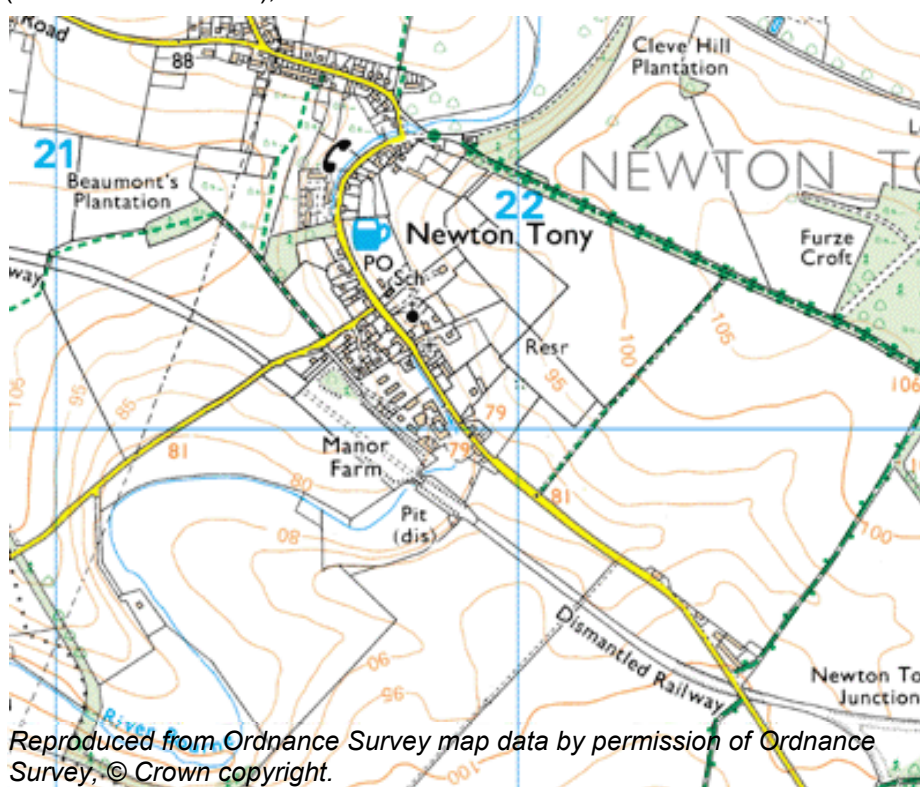
As ever, the group divided into hares and tortoises, eventually reaching an interesting corner with Prickly Poppy, Venus's-looking-glass, and Dense-flowered Fumitory (*Fumaria densiflora*), which was compared (lenses needed) with the Common Fumitory (*F. officinalis*) growing nearby.

The sown margin included many Musk Thistles (*Carduus nutans*), the seeds of which were attracting goldfinches. Anne Appleyard made a species list. The group worked its way along both margins, and divided at lunchtime into sun and shade lovers. After repast and lively conversation, we returned through sheep fields lined with more Musk Thistles, and climbed steps up a steep wooded bank to the railway line. Here the botanical interest included Crown Vetch (*Securigera varia*).

As usual, an interesting visit, to a site with much potential, and one that could be repeated in future to see how it develops.

For a full species list and further information about monitoring, please contact Anne.

Jane Brown



Sunday 5 August 2007

Summer Picnic, Oliver's Castle

Leader: Richard Aisbitt

The day was to be a mixture of the social and the botanical. We were hoping to see members' children and grandchildren and to pass on some knowledge and enthusiasm to the next (and next-but-one?) generation of botanists. Perhaps the middle of the school summer holiday is not the best time for this. However, we were delighted to welcome two of Jack Oliver's grandchildren, with parents, and also two veteran members from Wiltshire Flora Mapping days.



C. tuberosum



C. X medium



Cirsium tuberosum



Clustered Bellflower

Phyteuma orbiculare to me as "out of control"! Long may this situation last. Another treat was the nationally rare Tuberous Thistle *Cirsium tuberosum*, with a fine patch growing close to its hybrid with the Dwarf Thistle (*C. tuberosum* x *C. acaule*, known as *Cirsium x medium*). The two had clearly distinct flower shape, leaves and height.

There was historical interest from the Battle of Roundway in the Civil War; the castle is the site a surprise defeat for the Parliamentary forces based in Devizes. Royalist reinforcements arrived just in time from Oxford and drove off the Parliamentary cavalry over the steep edge of the castle.

Richard Aisbitt

On a blazing hot sunny day, we walked the level half kilometre to the castle ramparts and had a lazy picnic under the shade of a single tree, examining the rich variety of chalk downland plants round our feet. I had prepared small copies of a poster of downland plants to help with identification. The two enthusiastic young Olivers spent a happy time collecting small samples of flowers (rarities excluded!) and displaying them on cards (thanks to Joy Newton for the double-sided sticky tape). We then matched the fragments to pictures.

This summer has been spectacular for downland flowers and Oliver's Castle had a fine display. A botanically knowledgeable walker described Round-headed Rampion



Botanists in action

Sunday 9 September 2007

Dean Hill Park Roses

Leader: Pat Woodruffe

This joint meeting with the Hants Flora Group was attended by some fifteen members, all keen to explore the site for its roses. We were led by Paul Stanley, from The Isle of Wight, and received much help also from Martin Rand and Tony Mundell the BSBI recorders for VC 11 and 12 respectively.



Rosa micrantha hip - Pat Woodruffe

Our first venue was a narrow gauge railway, disused for several years, and now producing a good flora along the banks. There we were able to find the two most common species, *Rosa canina* (Dog Rose) and *R. micrantha* (Small-flowered Sweet Briar) and also the much less frequent *R. rubiginosa* (Sweet Briar or Eglantine). The latter two species are easily distinguished as Sweet Briars by the sweet scented glands on their



Rosa stylosa hip - Pat Woodruffe

leaflets, pedicels etc. *Rosa rubiginosa* stands out because of persistent erect, rather than reflexed sepals after flowering and often the presence of some acicles (small straight narrow-based prickles) on stems and pedicels. Having appreciated the key characteristics, we then started to find hybrids with varying degrees of similarity to one or other parent;

because of additional chromosomes passed on only by the 'mother' plant, it is possible to estimate which is the maternal parent.

In the same area we also found plants which were clearly closely related to *R. stylosa* (Short-styled Field Rose), but Paul explained that this was a coastal species and that all plants found inland tended to be hybrids - usually with *R. canina*. *R. stylosa* is distinguished by the protruding style and narrow, dark green

leaflets, the basal pair of which are reflexed. There were some brief interludes from rose-searching during which we were delighted to see two small populations of Red Hemp Nettle (*Galeopsis angustifolia*) growing on ballast. This is a plant which is regarded by IUCN as critically endangered. We also saw some plants of *Thymus pulegioides* (Large Thyme) on the banks whilst on some ploughed land nearby there was *Papaver dubium* and *Fumaria densiflora*.

After lunch, we visited two other railway sidings which used to form the link between the main line and the narrow gauge system used by MOD within the site. All of the roses previously mentioned were found again together with several species or hybrids of Cotoneaster. The above records were all made in Hampshire, but we did spend some time



Rosa rubiginosa hip - Pat Woodruffe

across the county boundary and noted one bush with particularly interesting characteristics. It was thought to be a hybrid either between *R. micrantha* and *R. rubiginosa* or between *R. micrantha* and



Rosa rubiginosa stem - Pat Woodruffe

R. tomentosa, although the latter is not known on the site. Material was collected for determination and as either would be rare, we await the verdict with interest.

Thanks to the help given by Paul Stanley we now know a great deal more about the roses on this site and will be able to offer feedback to the local conservation group and to the site owner.

Pat Woodruffe, Anne Appleyard

Monitoring Rare Plants on SSSIs in Wiltshire

Following Katie Lloyd's talk on Natural England in February, a number of members signed up as volunteers to help with monitoring on various SSSIs. Pat Woodruffe, Jeremy Wood and I put our names down and were duly assigned to cover Ebsbury Down and the grassland units of Knighton Down and Wood. We also enlisted the help of another south Wiltshire member, Sue Fitzpatrick and Geoffrey Appleyard was persuaded to join us occasionally. This was just as well, since Knighton Down consists of quite a number of different units, covering quite an extensive area. Sue, Lesley Wallington and I also visited Tidpit Down.

By the time details arrived, the trip to the Lizard was imminent and we were too late to pick up some of the early species on our return, but the timing was such that on our first visit, to Ebsbury, we picked up quite a

number of Frog Orchids (*Coeloglossum viride*). We were also able to find some Dwarf Sedge (*Carex humilis*) and a small population of Bastard Toadflax (*Thesium humifusum*). Knighton Downs took quite a few visits and walking the steep slopes was quite hard on the feet! This SSSI includes the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Reserve at Middleton Down, but this is well recorded, so we concentrated on areas to which there is not normally access. Highlights included what must be one of the biggest populations of *Thesium* in Wiltshire, if not the biggest. We also found quite a bit of Dodder (*Cuscuta epithymum*) apparently growing on *Helianthemum* in one unit and some in an adjacent one. This does not feature in the SSSI citation and they may be new records. *Carex humilis* was plentiful, in places forming a major component of the sward. Saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*) and Knapweed Broomrape (*Orobanche elatior*) occur locally.

Our initial visits allowed us to identify areas with potential for Autumn Lady's Tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*) and we revisited these in late August. There were two existing records,

including one for Middleton Down and we were able to confirm that these were still extant, but we added three new sites to the list. The best of these was for 250+ spikes! So, we had a very fruitful day. Apparently, the landowner was delighted with the record and with the photograph Pat sent him. A check of Ebsbury failed to find any, but we did add a few species to our lists, including Spiny Restharrow (*Ononis spinosa*) that we had missed on our earlier visit. The sites do not look very big on maps, but are deceptive because of the steep slopes, so it is an advantage to have as many people as possible to achieve full coverage.

We are intending to go back to the sites in spring to pick up earlier flowering species such as Field Fleawort and Burnt Orchid. We would be delighted if anyone else would like to join us – the more the merrier. There may be something included in the summer programme, but if not, contact Pat or Anne to be included in arrangements for visit.

Anne Appleyard



The Toadflax that dares not speak its name

Tuesday 18 September 2007

Oare Arboretum and Estate

Leaders: Jack Oliver and Joy Newton

There were twelve Wiltshire Botanical Society members on this cool September day. The Oare Estate (Henry Keswick Esq.) is vast, roughly occupying a square between Oare, Hatfield House, West Stowell and the hills north of North Copse. We started at the eastern arboretum (no. 1), distinguishing between some of the many oak species. For beauty, the favourite tree was probably the *Clerodendrum trichotomum* (Verbenaceae), conspicuous at a distance on account of the coloured fruiting calyces.

The four contiguous arboreta have between them over three hundred varieties of tree, including many rare species and rare cultivars. Because of their rarity, several of these trees had the largest dimensions for their taxon in the British Isles. The largest *Tilia x euchlora* in Wiltshire was rooting at its branch tips in concentric rings, infiltrated by *Tilia x europaea* stem suckers and Hybrid Wing-nut root suckers. We saw only 5-10% of the trees of the four arboreta before heading north to warm up, walking to the new ultramodern building near North Copse. This more open grassland had further trees of interest, including *Tilia cordata* "Dainty-

leaf" (tiny leaves) and a Paper-bark Maple. Eileen Rollo found *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort) infiltrating mown lawns near the new building.

In the afternoon, we touched on British history whilst looking at the Stanley Baldwin Oak (1934) and its plaque. Another concentration of special trees was along Pine

wild *Cyclamen hederifolium* patches. The formal gardens themselves (eight acres), created by Sir Geoffrey Fry from 1920 onwards, had high hedges dividing up interesting specialist areas. The group cohesion diminished, with individuals and subgroups losing each other, but the focus generally was now on herbaceous plants rather than the



Eileen Rollo finding Trailing St John's-wort - photo Jane Brown

Avenue north of Oare House, which contained some extreme bizarre tree cultivars, large Scarlet Oaks and a gigantic Scots Pine. However, the overall favourite tree was by the pond west of Oare House, a huge silvery-foliaged veteran White Willow, one of the four largest in Wiltshire. A fallen, but healthy Golden Willow (*Salix alba vitellina*) snaked along the ground nearby, the foliage of the native White Willow contrasting with the shiny yellow twigs and glossy leaves of this oldest of all tree cultivars (excluding, perhaps, fruit trees) from Roman times.

We progressed towards the formal gardens, Simon Young identifying clumps of *Colchicum agrippina* outliers. There were also semi-

shrubs and trees (which included the *Magnolia*, *Viburnum*, *Berberis*, *Osmanthus*, *Prunus*, *Poncirus*, *Syringa* and other genera). One deep narrow rectangular garden was devoted to the *Salvia* genus, with corollas of all colours even this late in the year. Here even the weeds added to the ambience, with *Soleirolia soleirolii* and *Oxalis exilis* (Tasmanian Least Yellow-sorrel) covering steps and stonework.

Oare Estate seemed to cast a spell: two members of the group said it was the best they had ever seen and enjoyed, and at least four more said they planned to visit again.

Jack Oliver



Supper's ready

11 June to 13 June 2007

Residential Visit to the Lizard, Cornwall

Almost thirty of us converged on Mullion for three days of spectacular scenery and intensive botanising. Most stayed at Trenance Farm and were intrigued by the collection of day-glow green-painted spades hung at intervals around the farmyard.

After a long journey from Swindon, I was delighted to find supper ready on the table in a shady bower outside our cottage. The beautiful weather stayed with us for the rest of our stay – “botanists’ weather”.

The Lizard (the most southerly part of mainland Britain, but not the most westerly) has plenty of interest: sea shore, sand and shingle, fresh water, cliffs and meadows, wet flushes, acid and alkaline rocks, and a damp, mild climate which allows a wealth of plants to survive (at least three clovers not found in Wiltshire). Anne Appleyard knows the area and had arranged a busy and varied programme with expert local guides.

The local pubs provided surprisingly good food (with very fresh fish) for rowdy, hungry botanists, giving us a chance to talk over the day's finds and to plan future trips – North York Moors in 2008 and possibly the Irish Burren in the following year.

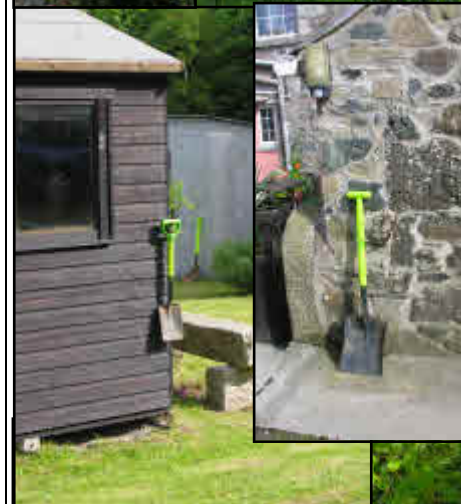
Many thanks to Pat Woodruffe and Anne for organising a thoroughly good trip.

The spades? Dogs. Say no more.

Richard Aisbitt



The spade collection



Mullion Cove

Monday, 11th June 2007

Caerthillian Cove and Lizard Point.

We met Ray Lawman from Natural England on the Village Green at Lizard. He is Site Manager for The Lizard National Nature Reserve and has known the Site for over 20 years. The Site is managed by grazing with native cattle, some burning and a little help from rabbits. Where possible local farmers also get involved and the trend for healthy organic beef is good news for local sites. In October-November the cattle can make the site look quite short cropped. It is a mixture of scrub and species rich sward managed to provide a varied



Fringed Rupturewort

habitat. This is the site where the famous Botanist, the Reverend Johns, threw down his hat and found beneath it 10 rare species. Later, as we tried to sort out the various clovers, we seemed tethered to an imaginary hat. The scrub is important for migratory birds. The resident Choughs have multiplied and from three in 2001 there is now a flock of 20+. This year two pairs have raised nine young. The success of the Peregrine could be a problem for them, but so far so good.

We set off down the valley and were soon puzzling over a fumitory which Jeremy found to be White Ramping Fumitory *Fumaria capreolata*. Dave very soon found the Fringed Rupturewort *Herniaria ciliolata*. (Crush this in water and drink the liquid). The sharp intake of breath on doing so will cure a rupture). Lesser Swine-cress *Coronopus didymus*, smelled when crushed of pigs (Rosemary), or of cress (Francis Rose). We found these plants: Tree Mallow *Lavatera arborea*, Fiddle Dock *Rumex pulcher*, Sheep's-bit *Jasione montana*, Centaury *Centaureum* sp., this with a very dense head of flowers, Dyer's

Greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, Clovers (*Trifolium*) Long-headed *T. incarnatum* ssp. *molinerii*, Upright *T. strictum*, Rough *T. scabrum*, Sea *T. squamosum*, Knotted *T. striatum*, Early Hair-grass *Aira praecox*, Sea Fern-grass *Catapodium maritimum*, Heath Groundsel *Senecio sylvaticus*, Pale Flax *Linum bienne*, Slender Trefoil *Trifolium micranthum*, and Silver Hair-grass *Aira caryophyllaea*.



Dyer's Greenweed

Now, walking towards Lizard Point we came to an interesting wet area with Sea Milkwort *Glaux maritima*, Marsh (?) Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustre*, Brookweed *Samolus valerandi*, Creeping Forget-me-not *Myosotis secunda*, Ivy-leaved Crowfoot *Ranunculus hederaceus*, Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Marsh



Ivy-leaved Water-crowfoot

Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*. Also, there was Rock Sea-spurrey *Spergularia media*.

a wonderful Rock Pipit provided entertainment at lunch by parachuting, tail vertical to his body, on the cliff edge. Later a seal bobbing in the water imitating a buoy, nose up, letting the world go by. The towering cliffs at Lizard Point were totally curtained with Hottentot Fig *Carpobrotus edulis* and Purple Dew Plant *Disphyma crassifolium*. We made our way home leaving the seal still bobbing in the bay.

Marjorie Waters

Clovers



Long-headed



Knotted



Hare's-foot



Rough

Tuesday 12 June 2007,
morning.

Kynance Cove & Lizard Downs

Leader: Colin French, BSBI
Recorder for W. Cornwall

From the car park, where we saw the first of many Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, we walked a track with margins of Cornish Heath *Erica vagans* – not in flower – the handsome stout-stalked Sea Carrot *Daucus carota* ssp *gummifer* and Petty Whin *Genista anglica*. Bristle Bent *Agrostis curtisii*, a Western speciality, was also there. Colin took us to a rocky outcrop where there were cushions of Spring Sandwort *Minuartia verna* and plenty of Prostrate Broom *Cytisus scoparius* ssp *maritimus*, some of it gnarled and probably very old.



Colin French (left) pointing out Prostrate Broom

Soon we branched onto a sandy track with Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* and a violet which Colin said was a *Viola lactea* x *riviniana* but he did not know of any pure *V. lactea* in the vicinity. Soon we were on our knees for a real excitement, Yellow Centaury *Cicendia filiformis*. The so-called large one was about 3 cm high and the others, if one searched diligently, were tiny, with 2 mm stars for flowers. In the same place were a few Allseed *Radiola linoides*.

On our way downhill, we came upon a fine hairy caterpillar with a pelage of lustrous silver hairs undulating as it moved. At the bottom was a soggy place where there was a whole new cast of boggy plants. Behind was a bright green stand of Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis*, in front was tall

Great Fen Sedge *Cladium mariscus*, below that were Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea* and Flea Sedge *C. pulicaris*. On the ground and in the mud were Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris* and Sea Rush *Juncus maritimus*. Even better was to find Bristle Club-rush *Isolepis setacea*.



Dwarf Rush

We went uphill a little and everyone was crawling about hunting for the very rare Dwarf Rush *Juncus capitatus*. Two were found; goodness, they were tiny, but well appreciated with a patient queue of WBS members waiting their turn. We also found a good patch of Yellow Centaury *Cicendia filiformis* for those who had not seen it properly further up the hill. Being at ground level anyway, and it being a warm slope, several of us lolled contentedly, just like ordinary tourists, and the more energetic found some Chives *Allium schoenoprasum* nearby.

Uphill again to a close-grazed plain with large patches of a proper Chamomile lawn *Chamaemelum nobile*. The scent of walking on it was heavenly. Seasonal or underground wetness was betrayed by some more Bog Pimpernel and, in a muddy rut, some Pygmy Rush *Juncus pygmaeus* was found, to universal rejoicing. There were also two tiny leaves of Three-lobed Crowfoot *Ranunculus tripartitus*. We saw more of those later, with one minute flower.

We walked along a track across a heath where Heath Spotted Orchids *Dactylorhiza maculata* were spaced regularly on either side like soldiers lined up for the Queen. Some Heath Pearlwort *Sagina subulata* was also

seen. We admired a good spread of a colour variant of Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis* var. *carnea*, which is a clear salmon pink

We were making for a rocky outcrop to visit Western Clover *Trifolium occidentale* with its tiny round leaves. In the sward among the rocks were several Thyme Broomrape *Orobanche alba* in excellent condition. And there, also, was the famed Spotted Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris maculata*, more showy than we had expected with large flowers of an especially bold yellow. It was a perfect spot for a picnic among the delights; sunny and sea-facing with comfortable sitting places, so that is what we did. Meanwhile Colin fossicked near the boulders and found for us genuine Hairy Greenweed *Genista pilosa*. Some of us had been on the lookout for it for days, often stopping to interview Greenweeds to see if they were hairy enough but they had always been Dyers Greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, or *G. tinctoria* ssp. *littoralis*. Of course, the real one was **really** hairy and quite different in habit – no question of confusion once seen.



Hairy Greenweed

Soon after, we set off for our cars with some handsome Babington's Leek *Allium ampeloprasum* var. *babingtonii* in a gully near the path

Joy Newton and Rosemary Duckett



Chives

Tuesday 12 June 2007,
afternoon

Windmill Farm

Refreshed by lunch we moved on to Windmill Farm, a property which is owned by the Cornwall Wildlife Trust. As we parked we could just see an old airstrip where two old aircraft were parked and in the near distance young cattle watched phlegmatically as we began our walk. The damp meadows were knee high with tall grasses, principally *Bromus racemosus* (Smooth Brome). We found a small *Alopecurus geniculatus* (Marsh Foxtail) genuflecting neatly in a dryish gateway. Two Meadow Browns, the first of the season flew nearby



Yellow Bartsia

Some one in front gave a sharp exclamation, alerting those of us behind to something special-and special it certainly was, a fine example of a *Parentucellia viscosa* (Yellow Bartsia) surrounded by younger plants. We crossed the runway and moved into a field of shorter grasses scattered with *Dactylorhiza fuchsia* (Common Spotted Orchids). In the dry gateway someone saw a tiny *Coronopus didymus* (Lesser Swine Cress), a strong contrast to the large, lush specimen we saw yesterday. The field Forget-me-Not has not been found on this site since 1999, however we did find the Changing Forget-me-Not (*Myosotis discolor*).

As we approached Ruan Pool, the ground became rough and boggy. The pool has recently been cleaned

and restored and there was little to see, but the surrounding terrain proved a delight for those who knew their bog plants. *Eleogiton fluitans* (Floating club rush) was everywhere and through it were scattered specimens of *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort), *Potamogeton polygonifolius* (Bog Pondweed), *Galium palustre* (Common Marsh Bedstraw), *Baldellia ranunculoides* (Lesser Water Plantain) and a Yellow Sedge.

Having rested after our exertions on a wooden walkway leading to a bird hide, we returned to the cars - noting on the way a large patch of nettles being demolished by hungry black caterpillars.

During the afternoon, we had found two species not on the current list a goosefoot, *Chenopodium rubrum* and a willow, *Salix aurita*.

Rita Grose.

Wednesday 13 June 2007,
morning

Church Cove and Gunwaloe

A sharp shower when we were setting out meant that everyone arrived kitted out for a wet day, but the day steadily improved.

Colin French again accompanied us At Church Cove.

This is where St Winwaloe came from

Ireland or Brittany in the 6th or 7th century. The farm is recorded in Domesday and was at one stage the administrative centre of the Lizard. The beach acts as a bar to the valley behind. Colin took a sample core 7½ metres down from the valley and still had not reached the valley floor. This sample shows that it was deciduous forest about 3-4000 years ago. (Cornwall was deforested in the Bronze Age). Subsequently the area was a lake and at this stage, the dunes did not exist. In the top metre, the vegetation indicates that the lake had silted up and the dunes were in place. There is significant coastal erosion now – to the north of Church Cove three small coves have been eroded into one in the last 20 years.

At Dollar Cove, there was a shipwreck in 1743, much later Cornish miners made a tunnel under the sea to try to recover the coins from the sunken ship. They were not successful, but there have been occasional finds of coins from the wreck.

The exciting find at Church Cove was *Polygonum maritimum* (Sea Knotgrass). This was thought to be extinct in England in the 1970s but was found here in 1983 following the clearing from the beach of large concrete blocks. It has subsequently been found at Marazion and Poldhu. We saw several specimens, and like many rarities, its distinctive characteristics were very clear once seen. Other plants seen included *Eryngium maritimum* L (Sea Holly) and *Cakile maritime* (Sea Rocket).

Gillian King



Church Cove



Loe Bar

**Wednesday 13 June 2007,
morning, continued**

Loe Bar

The approach to the bar was down a deep lane with banks of red campion and foxgloves. Points of interest on the way were *Fumaria occidentalis*, which Colin had shown us earlier, *F. capreolata*, and a vigorous patch of Navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris* growing well up on a tree trunk. Colin also pointed out to us a Cornish Elm with its small leaves and characteristic fishbone pattern of twigs.

By now the weather had brightened and the sandy bar was a pleasing sight, with green sea to one side and the darker water of the lake on the other, backed by the varying colours of windswept conifers alongside brighter green deciduous trees. The bar has been there since the last glaciation and has been steadily moving inland. It is composed of alternating layers of pebbles and sand. As streams from around Helston feed into the lake flooding in the town has been a problem in the past, with the need for channels to be cut

through the bar to allow water to drain away, causing the lake water to be brackish. Since 1800 there has been an adit underneath the bar, which controls the outflow and the lake is now freshwater. Extra drainage measures have to be taken from time to time, particularly as the lake is becoming smaller due to the encroachment of the bar and the accumulation of mine waste silt at the inland end. Strapwort disappeared from this site in 1920

Much of the coarse sand was carpeted with small plants – *Silene maritima*, (Sea Campion) a small form



Yellow Horned Poppy

and *Eryngium maritimum* (Sea Holly) in reasonable numbers and in good condition.

We continued to enjoy the plants as we picnicked and then made a brief foray alongside the lagoon, where we saw an exceptionally fine specimen of *Stachys palustris* (Marsh Woundwort) before heading back to the cars.

Sonia Heywood



Sea Holly



Sea Campion

of *Galium verum* (Lady's Bedstraw), *Honckenya peploides* (Sea Sandwort), *Ononis repens* (Rest-harrow), a small amount of *Crambe maritima* (Sea Kale) and the wonderful *Calystegia soldanella*. (Sea Bindweed). We did not find the rare *Polygonum* here but, to the joy of the photographers, there were *Glaucium flavum* (Yellow Horned Poppies)



Marsh Woundwort

Wednesday 13 June 2007,
afternoon

Trelowarren

Our final visit of the three days was to Trelowarren, the home of the Vyvyan family for almost six hundred years. An extensive woodland walk on the estate can take one as far as the Helford River at Tremayne Quay, but we decided on a shorter version, which gave us time for some refreshments and a look around the nursery too.



Yes it is the Hay-scented Buckler Fern - photo Pat Woodruffe

The ancient woodlands with their large oaks that fringe the river are in sharp contrast to the exposed cliffs which cover much of the Lizard. Ferns were the main interest along this walk: hefty scaly males outnumbered the ordinary male ferns and were found growing with lady ferns, broad buckler and soft shield ferns. It was a good opportunity to revise the identity of these lovely



Ann and the intimidating Gunnera

plants and to check on their differences. Their repeated occurrence made it easy to brush up on them. Along the way, there were also many examples of hart's tongue and hard fern, two ferns which do stand out from the rest.

Along a steep path, we spotted a sedge which had not previously been recorded on this site. It was *Carex laevigata*, one which is uncommon in Wiltshire and more at home in a wet woodland than in a field or marsh. Whilst we were very happy to add this plant to the Cornish list, several of us were also very interested to read that *Dryopteris aemula* – hay-scented fern – had previously been recorded from an unknown location on this site. There is only one record for the plant in Wilts (Francis Rose 1985) from the

extreme south of the county in or near Langley Wood NNR. Jeremy and I spent some time trying to relocate the plants last year but failed. We were



therefore delighted to have a chance of making its acquaintance. Towards the end of the walk we did spot several relatively small ferns – growing on very steep, muddy banks – that appeared to have the right characteristics. Both Colin French, the BSBI Recorder for Cornwall and Sharon were cautiously optimistic and have since confirmed the identity.

We had an excellent three days botanising and, for some of us at least, the best was kept until last!

Pat Woodruffe



Forthcoming Book

THE WILD FLOWERS OF THE ISLE OF PURBECK and Brownsea and Sandbanks

by Edward Pratt, to be published in April 2008 by Brambleby Books, with a preface by Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance FRS

I am grateful for the opportunity to explain the thinking and purpose behind my new book because it is not a flora in the usual sense. It arose from concern about the lack of up and coming botanists. Its chief purpose is to encourage more people into the joys of flower-hunting, and not to be put off by the number of flower species, nor the by the preference of scientific names over English names.

The *New Atlas* showed that Purbeck is the richest area for its size in The British Isles in terms of numbers of native and anciently introduced species of higher plants. So what better place to see them and to learn to identify them? The Plant List in this book gives precise directions to the localities of less common flowers. Those who use it will not have to search a tetrad for a species, or even the 10,000 square metres of a six-figure

map reference. Many localities are given to the nearest ten metres - for example "S side of road at Ailwood Farm" or "20m N of A351 by path 4". Use is made of parish public path and bridleway numbers, which are shown on the sketch maps in the book, so as to avoid longer descriptions like "path from Furzebrook road to near Cotness" which would add considerably to the length and price of the book.

The Introduction includes a list of flower-rich localities, a calendar of outstanding sights and guidance on flower-hunting and recording. There are over 1100 species and over 80 hybrids in the Plant List.

The localities given in the Plant List are nearly all places where plants can be seen without permission having to be sought - by public rights of way, or on land which is either open access under the Countryside and Rights Of Way Act 2000, or which is regarded as open access by the owner - like The National Trust or The Dorset Wildlife Trust. These open areas are shaded on the sketch maps. Just a few private locations are given imprecisely, in cases where the species can be seen on an annual organised walk, as on Arne Moors for example.

Also no locations are given for seven species of orchid which are confined to one or two localities, because there has been some digging of rare orchids locally in recent years. So the book is not a complete record of the distribution of species in the area. The recent *Flora of Dorset* gives most such distributions.

Many readers will not be used to using map references, so eight-figure ones are only used in a few cases when there is a lack of physical reference points, chiefly on heaths. Scientific names appear with English ones in the Plant List (see sample below), but only English names are used in the Introduction.

There is however much in the book which will be of interest to those who are not beginners, for example points of distinction which work for distinguishing similar species, some descriptions of hybrids, and good numbers of locations for specialities of the area. There is also a brief epilogue, which draws on references to flowers in The Bible.

Similar books could be written for some other parts of the country. It remains to be seen whether this will be the first of a new genre of guides. Many people come to holiday in Purbeck and Sandbanks for their beaches, or to walk the Coast Path, but some other parts of the area are almost deserted, even in the height of the holiday season. They await discovery.

The price will be £18. There will be a pre-publication offer from February 5th on www.bramblebybooks.co.uk

Ted Pratt

Example of an entry in the Plant List -

Hairy Birdsfoot Trefoil - *Lotus subbiflorus* (L. hispidus)

Native. Occasional. Dry, bare sandy soil. May to August.
Nationally Scarce.

Norden, just NE of roundabout on track. **Ower**, by SW side of bridleway 7 10m N of crossing of bridleways 7 and 8, and here and there by bridleway 8 from same crossing to Game Copse. **Godlingston Heath**, 10m NW of gate on N side of bridleway 36 opposite E end of bridleway 35. **Studland Heath**, N side of Knoll Beach Road just W of coach park. **Shell Bay**, NW corner of car park. **Lilliput**, on triangle where Minterne Road, Alington Road and Bingham Avenue meet. **Luscombe Valley**, on bank at junction of Shore Road and Brudenell Avenue. **Sandbanks**, in lawn 10m S of entrance from Banks Road to small triangular garden S of junction of Banks and Shore Roads. **Branksome Dene Chine**, above promenade 100m NE of chine.

Not in all sites every year. **See photo on page ...**

Wiltshire Botanical Society Committee

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Simon Young		01225 769551	drsimonyoung@yahoo.co.uk

Winter Meetings

Sunday 4 Nov 2007	Fungus Foray in Bentley Wood
Saturday 10 Nov 2007	Marlborough College - Wildlife of Winsley
Saturday 1 Dec 2007	Langford Lakes WWT Reserve - Wildlife of Namibia
Saturday 19 Jan 2008	Marlborough College - Conserving plants and their habitats for butterflies
Saturday 16 Feb 2008	Marlborough College - The Flora of Essex
Saturday 1 Mar 2008	AGM, Devizes . Lizard Revisited. Memories of our visit to Cornwall in 2007
Sunday 16 Mar 2008	Great Bradley Wood. Mosses (for those with limited knowledge).
Wed 23 Apr 2008	Bristol Botanic Gardens - Summer -
Saturday June 28th to Wed. July 2nd	North York Moors National Park

For details, see our meetings leaflet or the Wiltshire Botanical Society website at
<http://www.communigate.co.uk/wilts/wiltshirebotanicalsociety/>

Future meetings

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

Anchorsholme, Hop Gardens
 Whiteparish, Nr. Salisbury
 Wilts SP5 2ST

or by phone or e-mail (01794 884436,
pmw.bentley@waitrose.com)

Pat Woodruffe

From the Editor

Do come to our meetings during the dark days of winter. Indoor meetings are usually in the Marlborough College Science Labs, but we are looking out for venues in other parts of the county. We have had a comfortable meeting at the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's educational centre at Langford Lakes in the south of the county and would welcome suggestions for central Wiltshire.

Thank you again to the authors who willingly contributed meeting reports and other articles. The drawings and photographs have also been most welcome. Photos without credits were taken by the editor, who would be glad to have more from members.

The next newsletter should be sent out in April 2008, so **all copy to me by 31 March 2008 please.**

Please send material by post to:

84 Goddard Avenue
 Swindon
 Wilts SN1 4HT

or even better, by email: richardaisbitt@yahoo.co.uk

Richard Aisbitt

Membership

We welcome new members, beginners and experts alike. If you are interested, please feel free to come to a meeting or two before you commit yourself. Subscriptions and contact details go to:

Lesley Wallington
 6 Radnor Place, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 6DJ
 Telephone: 01225 709560
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Subscriptions (new rates):

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