

BRITISH NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

Hertfordshire Branch

BULLETIN No.138



Looking for beetles near Codicote

10th November 2018

Photo: Paula Shipway



Relaxing at lunch time – somewhere on the Herts/Essex boundary

Saturday 15th September 2018

Photo: Paula Shipway

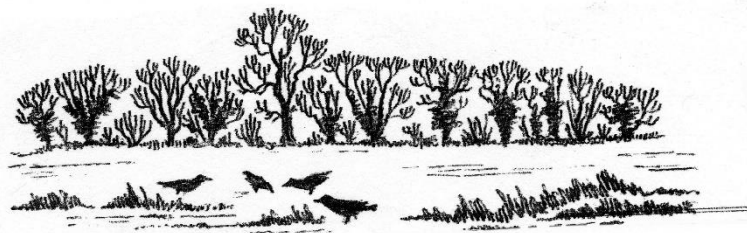


Mycena pseudocorticola – a very small Bonnet toadstool, near Kimpton

Saturday 10th November 2018

Photo: Paula Shipway

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EDITOR'S BIT

It feels as though the natural world is winding down as October arrives with the last butterflies on the wing and most wild flowers over, but small parties of birds are active in the trees and next year's catkins are starting to form. This bulletin covers the autumn to spring of last year and demonstrates there is plenty to see in our county with its diverse landscape and habitats even on the shortest days. Species seen range from a rare lichen at Ashridge, Mediterranean Spurge at Kimpton, a Woodcock at Blagrove Common and a Bear at Sandon...but read on to find out what species of a bear... Thank you as always to all of you who have contributed to the bulletin and to Trevor and Chris for helping me so much with the editing.

OBITUARY – CHRISTINE REISER

Christine became a member of Herts Branch in the very early 1990s. At that time Christine was living between Golders Green and Finchley but attended field meetings as often as she could. She already showed a keen interest in and good knowledge of bryophytes so rapidly became an asset to the branch. Although a little shy and apparently reserved, Christine was always pleased to be asked about mosses and quickly became a leader of winter meetings looking especially at mosses. Her first meeting was to Bricket Wood Common in January 1991 and others soon followed. With the help of fellow members Diana Furley and Graeme Smith, Christine soon moved the study of mosses much higher up the agenda of Herts Branch and showed us their beauty with her very skilful photos taken down the microscope.

In November 1992, Christine, Graeme and Chris Doncaster arranged a whole day with a morning on Hudnall Common looking at mosses followed by an afternoon studying mosses and other microscopic creatures at Chris's house in Harpenden.

Christine continued to lead meetings, including several with follow-up microscopy at Harpenden, for the next couple of years until she sadly (for Herts Branch) moved away to Louth in Lincolnshire to be closer to her daughter. From here, she kept in touch and continued her membership of Herts Branch until 2016. She also continued her work on bryophytes.

Christine passed away peacefully at home at the grand age of 94.

Chris James



AYOT GREEN



Sunday 2nd September 2018

11 members.

It was very pleasing to see so many members and we all enjoyed the beautiful sunny weather. We started our walk from the car park at the east end of Ayot Greenway walking north along the edge of Homers Wood where we were surprised to see several small plants of Butchers Broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*) - probably from a plant once present in the adjoining garden. Emerging onto the lane we found Wood Melick grass (*Melica uniflora*) on the bank - still looking good and in the hedge, we were tempted by some large blackberries. The dense hedges contained various species of Elm (*Ulmus glabra*, *U. minor* and *U. procera*) together with a number of other native shrub species.

We then took a footpath leading to Rectory Wood with its ancient coppiced Hornbeams (*Carpinus betulus*), a number of fine Cherries (*Prunus avium*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*). The ground flora was rather sparse, but had patches of Broad Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), Male Fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) with Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*) and Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). We emerged from the wood onto another road opposite the entrance to Ayot Bury and walked towards Welwyn before joining another footpath across a less interesting ploughed field but with sightings of a Hare and two Buzzards. However, the most interesting sighting was of a Hobby towards the west (never before seen in this area). A little further on, we were watching a tractor harrowing the field followed, as so often, by a large flock of gulls when we realized that beyond the gulls were a number of Red Kite on the ground - numbering more than 15 at one time.

We joined Ayot St. Peter Road and entered its cemetery which proved to be a pleasant spot for a picnic lunch amongst its massive Yew trees and many graves from the 19th century. The road then led us to the impressive gates of Ayot Mountfitchet where the footpath entered the main drive through doors in one of the large pillars. The drive led through an avenue of ancient Horse

Chestnut trees (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) with grass banks containing Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) etc.

The footpath continued south and back onto Ayot Greenway where there had been recent felling of many conifers. A short stretch of the verge with more exposure to light from the south grabbed the interest of the plant lovers with Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), Wild Basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*) and Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*). We followed the Greenway back to our cars but there was one more great sighting, after most of us had left, of a Spotted Flycatcher. Well done you three- the photographs left no doubt!

With thanks to Alla, Paula and William for plant, lichen and bird ID's respectively.

Jean Williamson

Birds- Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Great Tit, Wood Pigeon, Nuthatch, Magpie, Robin, Jackdaw, Coal Tit, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Carrion Crow, House Martin, Wren, Buzzard, Hobby, Linnet, Lesser Black-Backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Pheasant, Tree Creeper, Red Kite, Spotted Flycatcher.

Lichens- at Ayot Mountfitchet- *Phylloblastia fortuita* on Rhododendron, *Caloplaca phlogina* on Elder.

William Bishop

BRENT PELHAM



Saturday 15th September

8 members

We met near the parish church in Brent Pelham on a beautiful autumn day in warm sunshine. It transpired that Paula and Mike had arrived an hour or so beforehand so that Paula could record lichens in the churchyard! Whilst still in the village we recorded the following birds:

Red Kites (2), a Buzzard, several Rooks and Jackdaws, Collared Dove, House Martins, Blue Tit, Great Tit, House Sparrow, Nuthatch, a Chiffchaff and a Robin.

Trevor and William started recording beetles found on grassy verges and lime trees and we were buzzed by a Common Hornet – the first of several we were to see during the day.

Eventually we pulled ourselves together and set off eastwards along an immaculately kept green lane past the Hall, accompanied by occasional Speckled Wood & Small White butterflies. The day was programmed for autumn wildlife including fungi and it wasn't long before we found our first specimen – an *Agaricus* – close to the stables which was unfortunately not positively identified. The walk continued in slow mode with the first half kilometre taking us about an hour! Several members were blackberry-picking (Claudi filled a box intended for fungi specimens!) whilst Paula examined various substrates for more lichens and Trevor & William continued their hunt for beetles. We also looked at a dried-up pond next to the track where we found Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Gypsywort *Lycopus europeus*.

We then took an unplanned shortcut on another identical immaculate green lane bounded by hedges and fine old pollarded trees, also leading northwards. The old trees kept Paula occupied and there were two clusters of Yellow Stainer *Agaricus xanthodermus* toadstools to show members, along with a large Weeping Oak Bracket *Inonotus dryadeus* (on oak surprisingly) and several Hairy Brackets *Inonotus hispidus* growing on an ash tree.

We arrived at a complicated junction of paths east of Hall Wood where William's GPS helped us confirm our position – and where we found a lonely Small Heath butterfly. Several more Hornets buzzed about and we were inspected by one or two Migrant Hawker dragonflies. The buzzards were now circulating over Hall Wood, a couple of wrens dived in to the undergrowth and a small flock of Goldfinches twittered overhead. From Hall Wood we heard Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Tawny Owl and a Jay.

We then turned east again toward Beeches Wood where I hoped to be able to sneak in and look for fungi along the woodland edge. No chance – it was tightly hedged, fenced and ditched! So, we carried on along a grassy track to a path junction on the county boundary with Essex, noting on the way some Egg-yolk fungi *Bolbitius titubans*. A nice weedy field corner yielded both Sharp-leaved and Round-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine* and *K. spuria*, Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis* and Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua* – there

were far more arable weeds in just this corner than we had seen in all of the Hertfordshire fields!

Our path led us downhill to Ford End where we turned north-westwards along a small tributary of the River Stort through the hamlet. Our bird list was added to with Swallows, a Greenfinch, some Starlings, several Goldcrests and a Grey Heron (all markedly of the Essex variety!). After about half a mile we turned left up Cakebread's Lane, an unmade track which took us back towards the Hertfordshire boundary. We found a good lunch spot almost on the county boundary where recorders could argue happily about which county their specimen was truly in. Somewhere about here we found a couple of Oak Boletes *Boletus appendiculatus* growing under an oak tree before crossing the boundary (I think!).

We were more successful in our next woodland sortie – into the Hertfordshire end of Oxbury Wood. We found King Alfred's Cakes *Daldinia concentrica*, Oak Curtain Crust *Hymenochaete rubiginosa*, a tar crust on ash (unid), Hazel Woodwart *Hypoxylon fuscum* and Giant Puffball *Calvatia gigantea*. A Nuthatch shouted an alarm at us.

Moving on westwards, we gently chased a small party of Long-tailed Tits, Great Tits and a pair of Marsh Tits in front of us as we followed a wiggly hedge boundary around the north side of a field. Along here we also found a badger sett. Continuing west, we walked along a lovely free-growing hedge



of buckthorns, field maples, ash trees, dogwood and spindle bushes, admiring all the fruits of autumn. Just where our route turned southwest towards Brent Pelham, we found a large 'troop' of Shaggy Parasols *Macrolepiota rhacodes* growing under scrub.

And just when we thought we had run out of fungi (and it had been quite hard work finding them due to very dry conditions), we found Willow Shield

Pluteus salicinus on a log, some Oak Bonnets *Mycena inclinata* on another log plus Chicken-of-the-Woods *Laetiporus sulphureous* and Southern Bracket *Ganoderma australis* on a large beech tree in the avenue at Brent Pelham Hall. Back in the churchyard, we also found Glistening Inkcap *Coprinellus micaceous* and Claudi spotted some rather elderly tiered brackets on a yew tree (unid.).

So, we had enjoyed a wonderful walk in attractive 'borderland' countryside, finding lots of species of interest and enjoying the company of like-minded friends.

Chris James

HERTFORD HEATH AND BALLS WOOD NATURE RESERVES

Sunday 30th September

11 members

It was a bright but chilly Sunday morning that eleven of us met at Hertford Heath. Normally a wet to damp site, the hot dry summer had taken its toll and only a couple of wood-loving fungi were to be found. There were, in addition, the usual powdery mildews.

Crossing the heath, we entered Balls Wood hoping for better things. The leaf litter was crisp and dry but a few species had been encouraged by the morning rain of the previous Sunday. Smelling of raw potatoes, the False Deathcap *Amanita citrina* was found under the old hornbeams. Wood-loving species included Redleg Toughshank *Gymnopus erythropus* (= *Collybia*) with reddish clustered stems and Spindle Shanks *G. fusipes*. Two species of *Pluteus*, the Deer Shield *P. cervinus* with a brown cap and Willow Shield *P. salicinus* with a grey cap. The commonest species of the day was Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*.

A muddy damp ditch had the tiniest toadstool of the day – one of the Parachutes - *Marasmius setosus* (= *M. recubans*) with its white cap, few gills and two-coloured stipe. On an old acorn cap, a cup fungus called *Hymenostyphus frutigenus* grew. As we made our way around the wood, the damp hollows had small amounts of stagnant water, but very little in the way of fungi around them. The list of fungi gradually began to increase mainly

with single specimens. A pink Bonnet *Mycena rosea* was found with its radish smell, though faint as the specimen was rather dry. After walking down one of the grassy rides, we came to the far side of the wood where we stopped for lunch.

Now finally refreshed, we followed the perimeter of the wood. The ditch lines were all dry, but we continued to add a few specimens to the list. The most notable was a corticioid which smelt of moth balls. On further microscopic examination at home I was pleased to see it was *Scytinostroma portentosum* as I had suspected. I have only seen this once before, so it is not a common species.

The rest of the walk was fairly uneventful, but it had been a beautiful day with leaves falling and the crisp feeling of autumn underfoot in the air. Considering the dryness of the season it was amazing to find we had recorded 64 species.

Aphyllophorales

Bjerkandera adusta
Byssomerulius corium
Daedaliopsis confragosa
Hymeochaete rubiginosa
Junghuhnia nitida
Peniophora laeta
Phlebiella vaga (=sulphurea)
Piptoporus betulinus
Postia stiptica
Schizopora paradoxa
Scytinostroma portentosum
Stereum gausapatum
Stereum hirsutum
Subulicystidium longisporum
Trametes versicolor



Smoky Bracket
Netted Crust
Blushing Bracket
Oak Curtain Crust

Yellow Cobweb
Birch Bracket, Razor Strop
Bitter Bracket
Split Porecrust

Bleeding Oak Crust
Hairy Curtain Crust

Turkey Tails

Gasteromycetes

Lycoperdon perlatum

Common Puffball

Heterobasidiomycetes

Calocera cornea

Dacrymyces stillatus

Exidia plana (= *E. glandulosum*)

Stypella subhyalina

Tulasnella violea

Small Stagshorn

Common jelly Spot

Witches' Butter



Ascomycetes

Annulohypoxylon multiforme

Chlorociboria aeuruginascens

Diatrypella quercina

Diatrype stigma

Daldinia concentrica

Erysiphe heraclei

Hymenocyphus fructigenus

Hypoxylon fuscum

Hypoxylon petriniae

Kretzschmaria deusta (= *Ustulina*)

Microsphaera alphitoides

Nectria peziza

Rhytisma acerinum

Sawadaea bicornis

Birch Woodward

Green Elfcup

Oak Tar Crust

Common Tar Crust

King Alfred's Cakes

a mildew on Hogweed leaves

a discomycete on hazel nuts

Hazel Woodward

a crust on ash

Brittle Cinder

Oak Mildew

one of the 'coral' spots

Tar Spot

a powdery mildew on Sycamore

Rusts

Melatrissordium botulinum

Phragmidium violaccum

Puccinia caricina var *ribesii-pendulae*

on leaves of Birch saplings

on bramble leaves

on Pendulous Sedge leaves

Myxomycete (Slime mould)

Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa

Kerry Robinson

False Deathcap



BISHOPS WOOD AND BATCHWORTH HEATH

Saturday 13th October

4 members

It started to rain as a small group gathered at the Bishops Wood Country Park. The rain hadn't been forecast so we were a bit surprised. We waited a little at the car park and the rain stopped soon. The day got drier and warmer as we headed north into the wood at a leisurely pace. Several White Fibrecaps *Inocybe geophylla* were growing on soil close to the path, also Scurfy Twiglet *Tubaria furfuracea* and Pale Brittlestem *Psathyrella candolleana* further along on an open area of the woodland. We found several brittlegills growing under deciduous trees, Purple Brittlegill *Russula atropurpurea*, Charcoal Burner *Russula cyanoxantha* and Blackening Brittlegill *Russula nigrescens*, a species easily recognisable when cut with a knife because the white flesh changes first to a reddish colour and then black. William found a White Knight *Tricholoma album* in an area of mixed woodland.

Many fungi species grow on wood helping to decompose it. Some are small like Bonnets: Common *Mycena galericulata*, Grooved *Mycena polygramma* and Clustered Bonnet *Mycena inclinata*, with an odour reminiscent of garden Pelargonium. Honey Fungus *Armillaria mellea* is much larger, a semi-parasite or parasite that often doesn't wait for the trees to die and attacks them while still alive. Apple and plum trees and other Rosaceae are especially prone to being infected. We also found Bulbous Honey Fungus *Armillaria gallica*, darker in colour and less aggressive.

Ascomycetes are less obvious but still interesting. Coral Spot *Nectria cinnabarina* is a generalist that can be found on wooden twigs. Birch Woodwart *Annulohypoxylon multiforme* is normally found on Birch *Betula* sp. Hazel Woodwart *Hypoxylon fuscum* is typical of Hazel *Corylus avellana* but also grows on Alder *Alnus glutinosa*. William handed me a conifer twig with Wood Mulberry *Bertia moriformis*, a less-common species resembling little black mulberries, as its name indicates.

We found what was expected for mid-Autumn and we produced a decent list. Arguably, the most remarkable species was Powdery Piggyback *Asterophora lycoperdoides* growing on decayed Blackening Brittlegill *Russula nigrescens*.

Alla recorded the plant species in flower, the most noticeable being: Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* in the wood, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* by the pond and Buck's-horn Plantain *Plantago coronopus* by the roadside. There was also Soft Shield Fern *Polystichum setiferum* in the wood and a wild pear (presumably *Pyrus pyraster*) with fruits by the road. We spent some time around an impressive Beech *Fagus sylvatica* with many stems on a wood bank at the edge of the woods. Alla also recorded a moss, *Atrichum undulatum* and Cucumber Green Spider *Araniella cucurbitina*.

ASCOMYCETES

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| <i>Annulohypoxylon multiforme</i> | Birch Woodward |
| <i>Bertia moriformis</i> | Wood Mulberry |
| <i>Biscogniauxia nummularia</i> | Beech Tarcrust |
| <i>Daldinia concentrica</i> | King Alfred's Cakes |
| <i>Diatrypella quercina</i> | |
| <i>Erysiphe (Microsphaera) alphitoides</i> | Oak Powdery Mildew |
| <i>Hypoxylon fuscum</i> | Hazel Woodward |
| <i>Melogramma campylosporum</i> | |
| <i>Nectria cinnabarina</i> | Coral Spot |
| <i>Phragmidium violaceum</i> | Violet Bramble Rust |
| <i>Rhopoglyphus filicinus</i> | Bracken Map |
| <i>Rhytisma acerinum</i> | Sycamore Tarspot |
| <i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i> | Candlesnuff Fungus |

BASIDIOMYCETES

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| <i>Agaricus campestris</i> | Field Mushroom |
| <i>Amanita citrina</i> | False Deadcap |
| <i>Amanita muscaria</i> | Fly Agaric |
| <i>Armillaria gallica</i> | Bulbous Honey Fungus |
| <i>Armillaria mellea</i> | Honey Fungus |
| <i>Asterophora lycoperdoides</i> | Powdery Piggyback |
| <i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i> | Jelly Ear |
| <i>Bolbitius titubans (vitellinus)</i> | Yellow Fieldcap |
| <i>Boletus badius</i> | Bay Bolete |

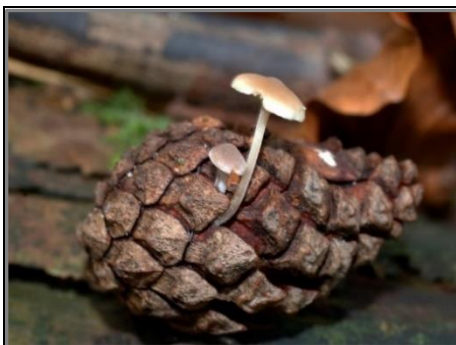
| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Calocera pallidospathulata</i> | Pale Stagshorn |
| <i>Chondrostereum purpureum</i> | Silverleaf Fungus |
| <i>Clitopilus prunulus</i> | The Miller |
| <i>Dacrymyces stillatus</i> | Common Jellyspot |
| <i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i> | Blushing Bracket |
| <i>Gymnopus dryophilus</i> | Russet Toughshank |
| <i>Gymnosporangium sabiniae</i> | Pear Rust |
| <i>Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca</i> | False Chanterelle |
| <i>Hymenochaete rubiginosa</i> | Oak Curtain Crust |
| <i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i> | Sulphur Tuft |
| <i>Inocybe geophylla</i> | White Fibrecap |
| <i>Lepiota cristata</i> | Stinking Dapperling |
| <i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i> | Common Puffball |
| <i>Macrolepiota konradii</i> | Slender Parasol |
| <i>Macrolepiota procera</i> | Parasol/Slender Parasol |
| <i>Mycena galericulata</i> | Common Bonnet |
| <i>Mycena inclinata</i> | Clustered Bonnet |
| <i>Mycena polygramma</i> | Grooved Bonnet |
| <i>Mycena pura</i> | Lilac Bonnet |
| <i>Mycena rosea</i> | Rosy Bonnet |
| <i>Oudemansiella mucida</i> | Porcelain Fungus |
| <i>Parasola conopilus</i> | Conical Brittlestem |
| <i>Peniophora quercina</i> | A Crust |
| <i>Piptoporus betulinus</i> | Birch Polypore |
| <i>Pluteus cervinus</i> | Deer Shield |
| <i>Psathyrella candolleana</i> | Pale Brittlestem |
| <i>Psathyrella piluliformis</i> | Common Stem Brittlestem |
| <i>Rhodocollybia butyracea</i> | Butter Cup |
| <i>Russula atropurpurea</i> | Purple Brittlegill |
| <i>Russula cyanoxantha</i> | Charcoal Burner |
| <i>Russula nigricans</i> | Blackening Brittlegill |
| <i>Schizophyllum commune</i> | Common Porecrust |
| <i>Schizopora paradoxa</i> | Split Porecrust |
| <i>Stereum hirsutum</i> | Hairy Curtaincrust |
| <i>Trametes versicolor</i> | Turkeytail |
| <i>Tricholoma album</i> | White Knight |
| <i>Tubaria furfuracea</i> | Scurfy Twiglet |
| <i>Xerocomellus chrysenteron</i> | |

Claudi Soler

ASHRIDGE

Saturday 27th October 2018

7 members



Conifer Conecap *Baeospora myosura*



Arthonia cinnabarina on Beech

It was a sunny bright morning though the temperature had plummeted to 3 degrees C when we met (a far cry from the double figure temperatures we had been enjoying over the last few days), clouding over later in the day and being 4 degrees C when we left. Our route took us from Tom's Hill car park through Rail Copse, across Berkhamsted Common, past Little Coldharbour Farm, past Woodyard Cottages, around the big field and back along the northern side of the road by the car park.

Although billed to feature the fallow deer rut, in fact not much deer activity was noted. Two fallow bucks locking antlers and pushing each other were seen from our lunch spot on the north side of the field next to Thunderdell Wood and does were running quickly across the field, but no groaning (a sign of rutting activity) of the bucks was heard. We did see one magnificent buck (dark form) with broad palmate antlers, motionless in woodland on Berkhamsted Common.

We came across a silver birch tree which was weeping a black substance from a hole in the trunk. (Later, after research on the internet I learned that this could be bacterial wetwood or slime flux. It is a major cause of rot in trunks and branches of hardwood trees, and is normally associated with wounding or environmental stress, or both. A healthy tree will apparently usually overcome slime flux).

Fungi were abundant following the recent unseasonable warm spell and many young fungi were emerging. The honey fungus seemed particularly abundant and we saw it at the base of beech, birch and hawthorn trunks. Although there are different species of honey fungus, we believed this one to be *Armillaria mellea*. Good finds were the Green wood-cup *Chlorosplenium aeruginascens* and, especially for me as I hadn't seen it before, Split-gill *Schizophyllum commune*.

After lunch we met a man with binoculars who told us he had just seen a brambling among a flock of chaffinches some 10 minutes earlier. We later found the flock of chaffinches (probably there were more than 100 birds) by a beech tree in the big field next to Thunderdell Wood, and among the flock we saw two bramblings which was very exciting.



We walked back through the sweet chestnut trees where this year there had been an abundant crop. William remarked that in 1967 which, like this year, had experienced a dry summer, potatoes had been scarce and the lady in the house where he had been lodging had peeled and boiled sweet chestnuts and served them as an alternative to potatoes!

There was a lot of Wood Sorrel in leaf and Alla emailed me after the ramble to say that she had recorded one plant in flower, namely Common chickweed. She had also noted quite a few ferns including Lady fern, Broad Buckler fern, Male Fern and Bracken. Ferns were very visible, she had noted, because there was not much other ground vegetation apart from some Foxglove rosettes, a few patches of Stinging Nettle, Herb Bennet, Wood Dock, Bramble and some grasses (False Brome, Cock's-foot and Tufted Hair-grass).

Paula identified several species of lichen and was very excited by one she saw at the end of the day, which she said she would go back to when the light was better and photograph. The following day she reported that she had indeed gone back, taken a photograph of the lichen, and had identified it as *Arthonia cinnabarina*, only the second record of this species for Hertfordshire. Although it is common in the south west, she said, it is a good record for our region.

Michael Demidecki

Lichens recorded by Paula

| | | |
|---|------------------------|--|
| <i>Arthonia cinnabarina</i> | on veteran beech | |
| <i>Arthonia radiata</i> | | |
| <i>Arthonia spadicea</i> | | |
| <i>Arthopyrenia punctiformis</i> | | |
| <i>Caloplaca ulcerosa</i> | on veteran beech | |
| <i>Chaenotheca ferruginea</i> | on birch | |
| <i>Cladonia coniocraea</i> | | |
| <i>Dimerella pineti</i> | | |
| <i>Enterographa crassa</i> | on veteran beech | |
| <i>Evernia prunastri</i> | |  |
| <i>Flavoparmelia caperata</i> | | |
| <i>Fuscidea lightfootii</i> | | |
| <i>Graphis scripta</i> (right) | | |
| <i>Illosporiosis christiansenii</i> | a lichenicolous fungus | |
| <i>Jamesiella anastomosans</i> | | |
| <i>Lecanactis abietina</i> | | |
| <i>Lecanora chlarotera</i> | | |
| <i>Lecidella elaeochroma</i> | | |
| <i>Melanelixia subaurifera</i> | | |
| <i>Opegrapha vermicellifera</i> | on veteran beech | |
| <i>Parmelia saxatilis</i> | | |
| <i>Parmelia sulcata</i> | | |
| <i>Parmotrema perlatum</i> (right) | |  |
| <i>Pertusaria albescens</i> var. <i>albescens</i> | | |
| <i>Phlyctis argena</i> | | |
| <i>Physcia adscendens</i> | | |
| <i>Physcia aipolia</i> | | |
| <i>Physcia tenella</i> | | |
| <i>Punctelia jeckeri</i> | | |
| <i>Ramalina farinacea</i> | | |
| <i>Ramalina fastigiata</i> | | |
| <i>Schismatomma decolorans</i> | on veteran Beech | |
| <i>Strigula taylorii</i> | | |
| <i>Trapelia coarctata</i> | on a flint | |
| <i>Trapeliopsis flexuosa</i> | | |
| <i>Xanthoria parietina</i> | | |

Footnote:

I went with Paula in February to look at the remnants of the tree with *Arthonia cinnabarina*. Since the lichen would be lost with the decay of the tree, we searched other nearby beeches for this lichen. We eventually found another healthy tree with some 30-40 crusts of *A. cinnabarina* on it. While doing this we also recorded several other species of lichen associated with venerable trees and ancient woodland and a report of our findings has been sent to the National Trust – *Andrew Harris*.

KIMPTON

Saturday 10th November 2018

8 Members

The day started with perfect autumn sunshine and a clear sky but clouded up by late morning at which point we experienced a light shower. After this it returned to sun and cloud, but by two o'clock we had heavy rain that lasted until near the end of the walk. Not that BNA members are perturbed by such trifling inconveniences.

As usual we met in Claggy Road. My intention for the day was to head to Whitwell and possibly St Paul's Walden; but we ended up going towards Cuckoldscross Wood, turning right to Cuckolds Cross, then heading down to Rye End, back up towards The Hoo, then back to Kimpton.

Before we set out a Red Admiral flew passed the gathered group. We then worked our way through the maze of alley/footpaths that meander around Kimpton; these lend a rather pleasant charm to the village; it would be easy to get lost in them. We emerged to take the footpath northwards towards Park Farm, passing the tennis courts and cricket pitch. Here we spotted a fine troop of tiny fungi on moss on a tree stem which Claudi identified as *Mycena pseudocorticola*.

Between Park Farm and Park Wood is a rather splendid meadow, containing lots of ant hills and a huge old oak. We dawdled here for some time, finding a few choice items. Noteworthy were a perfect Hen-of-the-Woods *Grifola frondosa* fungus, Mountain Brownie toadstools *Psilocybe montana* and the pin lichen *Chaenotheca trichialis* in profusion. Birds seemed to come in

threes here, we had three Mistle Thrushes, three Buzzards and three Ring-necked Parakeets (the latter are spreading).

Going up to Cuckoldscross Wood and then turning towards Cuckolds Cross, we stopped to admire the view back down and across the valley. The view here is wonderful and was enhanced by the light and autumnal colours of the leaves. Further on, Simon spotted a Common Darter, last of the dragonflies of the year, these seem to be the most resilient in the face of approaching winter. We saw our second Red Admiral and in the hedge we found Mediterranean Spurge *Euphorbia characias*, a 'garden escape' and only the second Herts record. A short stop for beetles produced *Tachyporus nitidula*, *Xantholinus linearis*, *Cartodera bifasciata*, *Corticaria gibbosa*, plus some other commoner ones; all extracted by Trevor from the grass headland.

Our path now took us towards Hoo Park Cottages and the first rain shower, but despite the barn offering shelter we pressed on. Gun dog training was taking place here so we reversed our loop walk and went southward. We passed between Christmashill Wood and Hoopark Wood, then stopped for lunch on a suitable pile of logs on the edge of Hoopark Wood. There appeared to be a field of sown thistles for pheasant cover here and a brief sweep with a net yielded *Stictopleurus punctatonnervosus* (a Rhopalid bug). Wood Blewits *Lepista nuda* and Yellow Stainers *Agaricus xanthodermus* were growing on the wood margin, both in lovely condition.

On reaching Hog Wood we were again much taken with the view across the valley towards Rye-end. At Coronation Plantation the weather changed for the worst and we had rain for most of the rest of the day, often heavy. A sweep of the conifers produced the moth *Caloptilia rufipennella*, identified by Simon; these moths have long front legs giving them a characteristic stance. We made our way to the kennels only to find the path blocked and possibly moved, however we made our way up the field and headed for Rye-end Farm. There were slots of both Muntjac and Fallow Deer in the mud. A Brown Hare was seen by some as it crossed the field. Following the track, we came to the road and then turned left, crossing the ornamental bridge and returning uphill in the rain to Hoopark Wood. At Hoo Park Cottages we took the tarmac driveway straight back down into Kimpton, then back through the

alleys and to Claggy Road. It being wet and cool by now we all headed off home to dry out and warm up.

Birds: Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Jackdaw, Dunnock, Starling, Wood Pigeon, Rook, Red Kite, Blackbird, Robin, Carrion Crow, Mistle Thrush, Goldfinch, Green Woodpecker, Ring-necked Parakeet, Magpie, Buzzard, Wren, Goldcrest, Black-headed Gull, Jay, Skylark, Fieldfare, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Pheasant, Stock Dove, Long-tailed Tit, Siskin, Song Thrush, Redwing, Kestrel, Chaffinch, Great Tit.

William Bishop

OUGHTONHEAD COMMON

Saturday 24th November

[no note of attendees]

The party gathered at the top of Westmill Lane, by West Mill Farm, on a somewhat dull day. Despite this, though, it was not long before we had a decent bird list, even before moving off! There was the usual range of garden birds, but also Yellowhammer, a flock of about sixteen Fieldfares flying over, four Redwings, a Pied Wagtail and at least nine Black-headed Gulls.

We set off down Westmill Lane towards the Common, hearing a Goldcrest on the way, as well as the calls of Moorhens from the River Oughton below. We found Wood Blewits *Lepista nuda* in the hedge bank and Tar-spot *Rhytisma acerinum* on Sycamore leaves. At the former Mill, where the mill-race appears from under the bridge, we checked for the usual Brown Trout, which were still in evidence. The bridge also still has Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, in small quantity here, but it is abundant in the mill-sludge on the other side of the bridge, invisible to us. Nearby, next to the overflow stream, we examined an old, long-known specimen of Purple Osier *Salix purpurea*. The call of a Water Rail was also heard, but no sign of the bird! Beside the sluice 'waterfall', a good colony of the relatively uncommon White Saddle fungus *Helvella crispa* was found and on a fallen tree we identified Southern Bracket *Ganoderma australe*. Several Mallard and a party of Long-tailed Tits were also present.

Our path led us towards the Common along the mill-stream section of the River Oughton, which unfortunately is now very neglected, so we could see almost nothing of the river between the overgrowth of Reeds and other herbs. The Moorhens evidently like the cover, though, and their clucking and chirrups were frequent. Some Skylarks passed overhead and other birds here included Linnets, two Great Spotted Woodpeckers, another Water Rail (calling), more Fieldfares and Redwings, a Jay and three Magpies. We failed to find a Kingfisher, though, usually a regular here.

The route took us along the riverside path along the Common, where mole hills were in good evidence and a Kestrel appeared, and eventually we entered the tree-lined section of the Oughton towards its spring source at Oughton Head itself. We found Giant Elm Bracket *Rigidiporus ulmarius* growing on the old planted Horse Chestnuts and King Alfred's Cakes *Daldinia concentrica* on Ash. Other fungi included Velvet Shank *Flammulina velutipes*, its bright orange conspicuous in the dull light, Silverleaf Fungus *Chondrostereum purpureum*, Oyster Mushroom *Pleurotus ostreatus* and Yellow Jelly Fungus *Tremella mesenterica*. A Nuthatch appeared with a tit flock in the Alders – not a common bird here.

Beyond the springs at Oughton Head, the countryside opens out to arable farmland with old hedges beside Oughton Head Lane, an ancient green lane. Our route was briefly up this hedgerow, then up towards Oughton Head Farm, where we knew there was the chance of good tea and cakes (a venue found a few years ago on another BNA meeting!). A flock of Starlings, some Collared Doves, a single Stock Dove and a Carrion Crow added to the bird list.

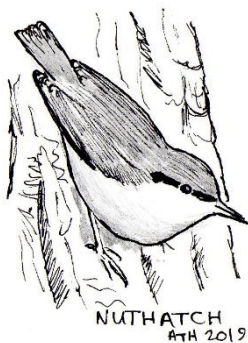
We were waylaid by food for quite a while, but eventually dragged ourselves away to continue up the track towards Gaping Hills. A large, scruffy dung heap shortly detained us, though, with a range of alien flora, including *Acer negundo* (new to Herts. in the wild!), Marigold *Calendula officinalis*, Argentine Vervain *Verbena bonariensis* and Spotted Medick *Medicago arabica*, as well as less obvious introductions like Small Nettle *Urtica urens*, and White Mustard *Sinapis alba*. Two Common Gulls flew over, and there was a party of another 10 Long-tailed Tits in the hedge. They evidently had had a good year. William Bishop, keen as ever with his sweep-net despite the time of year and weather, managed to find a couple of the minute scavenger beetles *Corticicara gibbosa* for me on Ivy near the farm.

At Gaping Hill, on the fringes of Hitchin, the hedge-bank produced more fungi – Scurfy Twiglet *Tubaria furfuracea* and Blue Roundhead *Stropharia caerulea*. There were also some 30+ House Sparrows by houses.

Our return route took us back down Oughton Head Lane alongside the housing of north-west Hitchin. Here, its wooded banks sported a colony of escaped Sowbread *Cyclamen hederifolium*, but we found very little else of note until we re-entered Oughton Head Common at its south end, where a flock of 30+ Redwings were in evidence in the old thorn bushes. This end of the Common is largely grazed in paddocks by longhorn cattle, and here the hills of the Yellow Meadow-ant *Lasius flavus* are abundant. Mole hills were frequent here, too, in a separate tetrad, for the records, as well as evidence of rabbits. A couple of Song Thrushes appeared, a welcome sight, along with at least 50 more Fieldfares and a Green Woodpecker (unsurprising, given all the ant-hills).

Finally, as we neared West Mill, we came across Birch Polypore *Piptoporus betulinus* on an old birch, which we had missed on the way out, as well as a small, orange Ascomycete (*Scutellinia?*) on cow dung.

Trevor James



Birds: Mallard, Kestrel, Pheasant, Water Rail, Moorhen, Common Gull, Black-headed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Collared Dove, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Redwing, Blackbird, Robin, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Dunnock, Wren, Nuthatch, Pied Wagtail, Starling, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer, House Sparrow.

Mammals: Mole, Rabbit.

Fish: Brown Trout

Flora (selected only): *Acer negundo* (at TL165295), *Asplenium scolopendrium*, *Calendula officinalis*, *Cyclamen hederifolium*, *Medicago arabica*, *Salix purpurea*, *Urtica urens*, *Verbena bonariensis*.

Fungi (list compiled by Chris James & Claudi Soler) :

ASCOMYCETES

Cheilymenia (Coprobia) granulata

Diatrype bullata

Helvella crispa

Hypoxylon fragiforme

Nectria cinnabarina

Rhytisma acerinum

Xylaria hypoxylon

Willow Barkspot

White Saddle

Beech Woodward

Coral Spot

Sycamore Tarspot

Candlesnuff Fungus

DISCOMYCETES

Melastiza cornubiae

BASIDIOMYCETES

Auricularia auricula-judae

Bjerkandera adusta

Chondrostereum purpureum

Conocybe sp

Coprinellus disseminatus

Coprinopsis atramentaria

Crepidotus cf variabilis

Daedaleopsis confragosa

Daldinia concentrica

Entoloma juncinum

Flammulina velutipes

Ganoderma australe

Hyphodontia sambuci

Lepista nuda

Phellinus ferruginosus

Piptoporus betulinus

Pleurotus ostreatus

Psathyrella spadicea

Jelly Ear

Smoky Bracket

Silverleaf Fungus

A Conecap

Fairy Inkcap

Common Inkcap

Variable Oysterling

Blushing Bracket

King Alfred's Cakes

A Pinkgill

Velvet Shank

Southern Bracket

Elder Whitewash

Wood Blewit

Rusty Porecrust

Birch Polypore

Oyster Mushroom

Chestnut Brittlestem

Puccinia malvacearum
Rigidoporus ulmarius
Stropharia caerulea
Trametes versicolor
Tremella mesenterica
Tubaria furfuracea

hollyhock or mallow rust
Giant Elm Bracket
Blue Roundhead
Turkeytail
Witches' Butter
Scurfy Twiglet

LITTLE BERKHAMPSTEAD AREA

Sunday 9th December

9 members, 1 visitor

Even before the group had set off, William Bishop had disappeared into the churchyard, only to reappear with an Earthstar fungus *Geastrum striatum* in hand - a good find, as this species of fungus is none too common, last recorded in the same churchyard during the 1990s.



William with Earthstar in hand!

Photo: Merle Gwyn



Striated Earthstar *Geastrum striatum*

Photo: William Bishop

Eventually the party set off from Little Berkhamstead memorial westwards along Little Berkhamstead Lane, turning right into a bridleway that leads to Essendon. Passing Danes Farm, the lane was bordered by Common Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, flowering profusely. A minute hairy ladybird was swept from the Gorse [actually a recently-arrived species in Britain: *Rhyzobius chrysomeloides* – T.J.], while in the distance a Mistle Thrush was singing. Others were marvelling at an Oak *Quercus robur* pollard that was probably

300 years old. In the grass at the side of the track we found the unusual green/black *Nostoc*, a Cyanobacterium which becomes jelly-like when wet. Trevor noticed indicator plants probably enriched by the runoff from Danes Farm's field; while Jean Williamson and Alla Mashanova noted many plants still in flower so became busy identifying them (list at end of report).

At the base of a tree were well-defined holes, which William and Simon Knott identified as Hornet Moth or Lunar Hornet Moth emergence holes. In appearance both moths imitate the Hornet.

From a five-barred gate was a view overlooking a section of the Vale of St Albans, which provides evidence of the early River Thames before it was diverted by the Anglian glaciation. This section of the walk is part of the escarpment which extends from Radlett, North Mymms, Essendon to Little Berkhamstead.

Passing down into Berkhamstead Plantation, Intermediate Polypody *Polypodium interjectum* was growing high up on an old corrugated shed. Amongst the leaf litter, Purple Russula *Russula atropurpurea* and a troop of Trooping Funnel *Clitocybe geotropa* were growing in a definite line.



Trooping Funnel *Clitocybe geotropa*

Photo: Merle Gwyn

The route turned right, passing the perimeter of Essendon Golf Course and a ditch/stream. A Buzzard was being mobbed by Carrion Crows. We took another right turn along the edge of Bedwell Park Chalk Pit towards Ashfield Farm, then followed a bridleway where there were many old pollarded Oaks. Back in Little Berkhamstead, we had our picnic lunch in a very drafty cricket field.

After lunch we rejoined the Hertfordshire Chain Walk behind the cricket pitch but quite soon left it again to cross waste ground, where the distinctive calls of Ring-necked Parakeets were heard overhead. Crossing Church Road, we continued to Bucks Alley Wood, where, amongst the leaf-litter was the White Saddle fungus *Helvella crispa*, with its white, irregular shaped cap and fluted stipe. On some rotting tree stumps was Candle-snuff *Xylaria hypoxylon*. A pile of Silver Birch *Betula pendula* logs was growing Birch Brackets *Piptoporus betulinus* whilst on the cut surfaces was a gelatinous mass of purple-coloured discs of *Asocoryne sarcoides*. Flying among the trees were approximately 30 Winter Moths *Operophtera brumata*. Leaving the wood, we joined Bucks Alley, where, in the proximity of Stratton's Folly, was a Horse Chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* claimed to be the largest in Hertfordshire.

Back at our cars we were amazed how many species of flora and fauna we had recorded in December.

Flora (in flower, listed in order of walk - A.Mashanova): Red Dead-nettle *Lamium purpureum*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Spurge *Euphorbia* sp., Shepherd's Purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*, Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, White Dead-nettle *Lamium album*, Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*, Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, Common Field Speedwell *Veronica persica*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua*, Smooth Hawk's-beard *Crepis capillaris*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Hemlock *Conium maculatum*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Dandelion *Taraxacum* agg., Hedge Crane's-bill *Geranium pyrenaicum*, Canadian Fleabane *Conyza canadensis*, Green Alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, Black Horehound *Ballota nigra*, and Chickweed *Stellaria media*. Also (notes from T.J.): Grey Sedge *Carex divulsa* (Bucks Alley), Intermediate Polypody *Polypodium interjectum*, Warty Cabbage *Rapistrum rugosum* (Bedwell Pit), and several brambles: *Rubus ulmifolius*, *R. rufescens*, *R. hindii*, *R. echinatus*, *R. subinermoides*.

Birds (with additions by Trevor James): Red Kite, Buzzard, Pheasant, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Gull, Black-headed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Collared Dove, Ring-necked Parakeet, Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Blackbird, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Marsh Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Goldcrest, Dunnock, Wren, Nuthatch, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, House Sparrow.

Mammals (mostly signs rather than sightings – Trevor James): Grey Squirrel, Rabbit, Mole, Badger.

Fungi (with additions, Trevor James): *Ascocoryne sarcoides*, *Clitocybe geotropa*, *Coriolus versicolor*, *Geastrum striatum*, *Helvella crispa*, *Lepista nuda*, *Piptoporus betulinus*, *Rhodocollybia butyracea*, *Russula atropurpurea*, *Xylaria hypoxylon*.

Beetles (Trevor James & William Bishop): *Abax parallelepipedus* (Sandpit Grove), *Bessobia occulta* (in *Clitocybe geotropa*, Sandpit Grove), *Corticaria serrata* (on Gorse, Bedwell Park), *Lordithon trinotatus* (in *Clitocybe geotropa*, Sandpit Grove), Devil's Coach-horse *Ocypus olens* (Sandpit Grove), *Olibrus affinis* (on Gorse, Bedwell Park), Black Clock *Pterostichus madidus* (Sandpit Grove), *Rhyzobius chrysomeloides* (Bedwell Park).

Moths: Hornet Moth sp. (emergence holes), Winter Moth.

Jean Williamson & Merle Gwyn

SANDON: Boxing Day Walk

Wednesday 26th December

9 members, 1 visitor

As usual, this was a short walk after a day of indulgence! We gathered at Roe Green, high on the East Anglian Heights in north-east Herts, in rather foggy, dull weather. Our route took us south-east towards Green End to start with, following field paths, alongside some rather fine, rough hedges. Of most note to start with were the numbers of Blackbirds at Roe Green – we counted at least 16 on the grass and in the boundary hedge of the Green. Flocks of Rooks were in evidence on the fields, together with a party of Goldfinches. Then we came across an odd find – a ‘bear’ beside a footpath finger-post (in fact a lost teddy bear!). We descended to Blagrove Common by way of a

good field margin, where we came across a substantial colony of still-flowering Barren Strawberry. A Red Kite gave its uncanny call in the mist, and a party of Fieldfares fled the hedgerow.

Despite the dullness and time of year, Blagrove Common was one of the highlights of the walk, providing views of a Woodcock, a small party of Mallard in the stream, a Marsh Tit (no doubt from the adjoining wood), a Bullfinch, Song Thrush, Treecreeper and Jay. Mole hills were also frequent in the damp grass and Paula Shipway reported an uncommon lichen on Elder: *Caloplaca phlogina*.

Right: Caloplaca phlogina

Photo: Andrew Harris



We left the Common past Blagrove House, where the long-standing colony of Shining Crane's-bill was admired and an active Seven-spot Ladybird was noted on Ivy. A small party of Long-tailed Tits also flitted towards Green End Green. Our route took us up Beckfield Lane towards Friar's Wood. At Beckfield Farm, a good colony of flowering Sun Spurge was in evidence, while Joe Gray found an odd skull in a heap of manure, which we eventually decided was a pig's skull! Given that the farm is a pig farm, not that surprising, really!

Friar's Wood was quiet, except for the call of a flock of Jackdaws nearby, the pipe of another Treecreeper and the screech of another Jay. We headed out into the fields to the south and west, at one time part of the enormous Offley Green, now mostly under the plough having been lost to cultivation during the Second World War and never returned as common land. A flock of 10 Yellowhammers appeared, along with a party of Skylarks and a Mistle Thrush. A male Great Spotted Woodpecker was also heard drumming briefly. Quite why he thought it was Spring is a moot point.

Finally, we trudged up the hill again to Roe Green, crossing open arable just by the Green, which resulted in claggy feet, just in time to get into the cars! A Coal Tit called from trees nearby and some House Sparrows were heard, the only ones all morning. Perhaps the best sighting on the return trip, though, was of three Brown Hares in the open fields.

It was a good walk, I think, and we found a good range of birds and other wildlife. Thanks to all who turned out in support.

Trevor James

Birds: Mallard, Red Kite, Pheasant, Woodcock, Black-headed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Mistle Thrush, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Treecreeper, Dunnock, Wren, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, House Sparrow (33 species).



Mammals (tracks/signs etc.): Grey Squirrel (Friar's Wood), Mole, Fallow Deer (slots frequent in field margins), Muntjac (occasional slots), Badger (sett south of Friar's Wood), Rabbit (droppings at Blagrove Common), Brown Hare (near Roe Green), Fox (scent) + Domestic Pig (skull), and 'Bear'!

Plants of note (a complete list of 30 species was compiled by Alla Mashanova): Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum*, Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*, Sun Spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia*.

Insect: Seven-spot Ladybird.

Lichen: *Caloplaca phlogina*.

OFFLEY

Saturday 12th January 2019

Ruth Graham's report was lost in the ether when she changed computers!

HERTS BRANCH AGM

Saturday 19th January - Digswell Village Church Hall

Twenty-three members attended the AGM. The sad deaths of three very long-term and much-loved members were noted: Bryan and Audrey Sage and Frank Lancaster. The Chairman thanked the committee for all it did to keep the Branch active, especially Paula for organising the field meeting programme and, of course, all the members who led the meetings. Jean highlighted her special 'sightings' during the year and congratulated the Branch for having special talent in its midst. The Treasurer told the meeting that we had a good balance at the bank (just over £700.00) but that we couldn't be complacent. Membership is decreasing, with losses currently out-weighting gains. However, David felt that subscriptions could stay the same for another year. Trevor proposed that Tom Gladwin should be elected as Vice President and Tom accepted with pleasure. The Committee remained unchanged.

There was a lively session when members reported on the species highlights of the preceding year before the meeting broke for the accustomed splendid tea. This was followed at a suitable interval with several 'Powerpoint' slide presentations showing interesting species seen in the county and further afield. Some of them were two-legged, doing odd things!

Chris James

RIVER VER AND RIVER COLNE

Sunday 9th February 2019

6 members & 1 guest

At this meeting, which took place on a cold, mostly sunny day, six regulars were joined by a guest, the very talented young naturalist Sam Buckton, who had recently graduated from university. We began by hopping on a train at How Wood (conveniently timed at just a few minutes after the traditional meeting-up hour) and headed one stop down the line to Bricket Wood so that we could enjoy a linear walk. The need to cover a fair few miles in order to return to the departure point, while relying on route options that were limited by such obstructions as the M25, meant that the leader had quite a

task on his hands. An early diversion onto Bricket Wood Common proved to be a mistake in this regard, as the lichens and bryophytes proved to be of great interest to the group. At one point, it looked like the leader might be left on his own, but some stern words soon had the naturalists marching in near-military order.

After leaving Bricket Wood Common, we passed through Jack William's Wood and headed through a field above the northern bank of the River Colne, following it upstream in the direction of its confluence with the River Ver. Here we enjoyed the melodies of Skylarks and also had the opportunity to examine a fresh Badger latrine. On reaching the Ver, our route then hugged the river for the best part of a mile and offered a rather pleasant lunch spot. As we ate our sandwiches, a pair of Siskins joined us to feed on a nearby Alder. From there we headed to Frogmore for some birdwatching on the ponds, before making our way back to the train station.

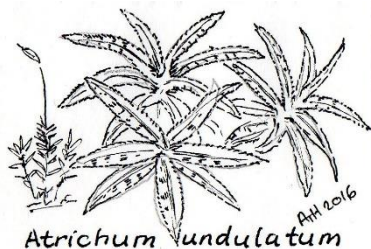


Winter Aconite in a derelict garden near the confluence of the River Colne and River Ver

Plants in flower (list by Alla Mashanova): Annual Meadow-grass (*Poa annua*), Cherry-plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), Common Chickweed (*Stellaria media*), Common Field Speedwell (*Veronica persica*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), Hairy Bitter-cress (*Cardamine hirsuta*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Italian Alder (*Alnus cordata*), Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*), Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*), Red Dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*),

Shepherd's Purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*), White Dead-nettle (*Lamium album*), Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*)

Bryophytes (list by Sam Buckton):



Fragile Fork-moss (*Dicranum tauricum*), Cypress-leaved Plait-moss (*Hypnum cupressiforme*), Common Pincushion (*Dicranoweisia cirrata*), Swan's-neck Thyme-moss (*Mnium hornum*), Common Feather-moss (*Kindbergia praelonga*), Common Tamarisk-moss (*Thuidium tamariscinum*), Bank Haircap (*Polytrichastrum formosum*), Common Smoothcap (*Atrichum undulatum*), Creeping Feather-moss (*Amblystegium serpens*), Wall Screw-moss (*Tortula muralis*), Common Pocket-moss (*Fissidens taxifolius*), Wood Bristle-moss (*Orthotrichum affine*), Forked Veilwort (*Metzgeria furcata*), Minute Pouncewort (*Cololejeunea minutissima*), Juicy Silk-moss (*Plagiothecium succulentum*), Capillary Thread-moss (*Bryum capillare*), Grey-cushioned Grimmia (*Grimmia pulvinata*), White-tipped Bristle-moss (*Orthotrichum diaphanum*), Even Scalewort (*Radula complanata*), Dilated Scalewort (*Frullania dilatata*), Elegant Bristle-moss (*Orthotrichum pulchellum*), Tender Feather-moss (*Rhynchostegiella tenella*), Great Hairy Screw-moss (*Syntrichia ruralis* ssp. *ruralis*), Silver-moss (*Bryum argenteum*), Cylindric Beard-moss (*Didymodon insulanus*), Whitish Feather-moss (*Brachythecium albicans*), Rough-stalked Feather-moss (*Brachythecium rutabulum*), Bonfire-moss (*Funaria hygrometrica*), Pointed Spear-moss (*Calliergonella cuspidata*), Neat Feather-moss (*Pseudoscleropodium purum*), Springy Turf-moss (*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*), Fern-leaved Hook-moss (*Cratoneuron filicinum*)

Birds (list by William Bishop): Cormorant, Little Egret, Mallard, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Coot, Red Kite, Moorhen, Lapwing, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Black-headed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Ring-necked Parakeet, Skylark, Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Blackbird, Robin, Magpie, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Dunnock, Wren, Starling, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Jay, Goldfinch, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll, Bullfinch.

Joe Gray

AMWELL AND EASNEYE

Saturday 23rd February 2019

9 members

The day started misty but by late morning this cleared, and the remainder of the day was cloudless with sunshine. It was extremely warm for the time of year.

We met by the road on the access track to Amwell Nature Reserve. Simon Knott had kindly brought a collection of seasonal moths from his trap which he showed us; closely observed, the subtlety of their markings is exquisite. Then we proceeded down to the viewpoint at Great Hardmead Lake. On the way down we saw Seven-spot Ladybirds and Hollyhock Rust on a Hollyhock by the railway. Great Hardmead had a lot of birds but this consisted of the expected range of water birds, lots of ducks and gulls mostly. The Bittern and Smew were not on show, sadly (both appearing the next day!). Shoveler was probably the most abundant duck, followed by Pochard; the population of wintering birds here is nationally important.

After looking at the birds we made our way north, passing a fine specimen of Blushing-bracket fungus in rich red colour. We then turned east along the track to the south end of Tumbling Bay, where Trevor James pointed out the Tussock Sedge on the water margin. We continued past Hollycross Lake to the road underpass, where Roman Snail shells were seen and lots of Snowdrops in flower lined the banks. Here we followed the old Buntingford railway line to the Ash Valley, stopping in a meadow to admire the red *Ulmus minor* flowers and swept for insects. I caught a large bug which Joe Gray took home and identified as *Stictopleurus punctatonevrosus*. Trevor later confirmed one beetle as *Leiodes badia*, the first Herts. record since 1930. Trevor told us about the site's historic flora, which had included Grass-of-Parnassus.

Entering the Ash Valley, we admired the view, with Easneye Wood to our right, and saw a Red Admiral fly past. Claudi Soler showed a Hornbeam stick he had found with the resupinate fungus *Peniophora laeta* on it. The field we were in was used in the television series 'Foyle's War' for a scene involving a German parachutist and contains some fine pines and old oaks. Being nearly 12.30 and in a sheltered, warm and beautiful spot, we had lunch under a huge oak, which had a tortrix moth flying around it: *Tortricodes alternella*.

During lunch I saw a bug land on the tree, which I caught and passed to Joe, who identified it as *Gastrodes grossipes*, a specialist of pine cones. There were some Weymouth Pines and Scots Pines nearby. I had a quick sweep of a nearby Scots and caught two micro-moths that Simon confirmed as *Ypsolopha ustella* and a *Stigmella* species, probably *S. aurella*.

Proceeding, we found Sixteen-spot Ladybird and several fallen Dryad's Saddle *Polyporus squamosus* fungi. Trevor gave the fungi a good shake over a sheet, which yielded some beetles (*Mycetophagus multipunctatus*, *Autalia impressa* and *Dacne rufifrons*) and the bug *Cardiastethus fasciiventris*. At the end of the field was a very interesting Hornbeam, which caused much debate, as it had roots and flints embedded in it several feet above ground level. Had it fallen over at some point in time or was it an exposed base-plate of an ancient coppice? We had passed over the Greenwich Meridian in this field, which at least one member felt was noteworthy (and a matter of envy, as only Peter Alton's map had this feature highlighted, causing it to be a desired object). We rounded the wood end and turned south-east, up towards the cottages in the wood, passing the specially-built dog kennels that once housed the gamekeepers' dogs. Over the field in the hedge was a flock of Yellowhammers. It was by now mid-afternoon and our progress had been slow. To have continued would have meant not getting back till late, so we opted to retrace our footsteps. We arrived back at the Amwell viewpoint in time to see a female Goosander, an uncommon bird at Amwell, although this one had been present several days earlier for about a week but had gone missing.

It had been a wonderful sunny, warm day in a beautiful valley with some good finds. Thank you to those who came, and it was especially good to have Trevor with us.

Birds at Amwell: Cormorant, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goosander, Pheasant, Red Kite, Moorhen, Coot, Water Rail (heard by canal – T.J.), Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Snipe, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Stock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Great spotted Woodpecker, Ring-necked Parakeet, Skylark, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Treecreeper, Cetti's Warbler, Goldcrest, Dunnock, Wren, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Starling, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Reed Bunting.

Birds (extra) in the Ash Valley: Kestrel, Buzzard, Feral Pigeon, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Siskin, Yellowhammer.

Fungi (list from Claudi Soler): King Alfred's Cakes *Daldinia concentrica*, Hazel Woodward *Hypoxylon fuscum*, a crust on ash *H. petriniae*, Candle-snuff *Xylaria hypoxylon*, Jelly Ear *Auricularia auricula-judae*, Netted Crust *Byssomerulius corium*, a woodland inkcap *Coprinellus cf. xanthothrix*, Blushing Bracket *Daedaleopsis confragosa*, Velvet Shank *Flammulina velutipes*, Oak Curtain Crust *Hymenochaete rubiginosa*, Elder Whitewash *Hyphodontia sambuci*, Hornbeam Crust *Peniophora laeta*, Oak Crust *P. quercina*, Cushion Bracket *Phellinus pomaceus*, Dryad's Saddle *Polyporus squamosus*, Mallow Rust *Puccinia malvacearum*, Hairy Stereum *Stereum hirsutum*, Turkey-tails *Trametes versicolor*.

William Bishop

AN AFTERNOON SOCIAL and TALK by Mike Demidecki

"IN SEARCH OF THAILAND'S WILDLIFE "

Saturday 9th March

This illustrated talk given at Digswell Village Church Hall was a sequel to one given on 23rd November 2013 at the home of Diana Furley. Mike and Jum Demidecki have visited Thailand each year since then. Mike began the talk by explaining that Thailand could be divided into six biogeographical regions and his talk covered wildlife encountered in four of these. Thailand is one of the 15 or so most biodiverse countries in the world. There are nearly 1000 bird species in the country (compared with 598 on the British list), 264 mammals (compared with 101 in the British Isles), about 1,100 species of butterfly (compared with 59 in the UK) and more than 687 orchids (the number listed in Mike's id. book) compared with 52 in the British Isles. So, of course, there were many animals and plants to talk about! There were adventures and unexpected experiences too. In February 2019 Mike and Jum had spent some of their time camping in Khao Yai National Park and Mike recounted how one day they had returned to their tent to find a hole in the side made by a Pig-tailed Macaque, which had got inside and caused chaos! At the end of the Powerpoint presentation, and after an excellent tea in the hall, Mike showed a film of video footage sequences recorded by camera traps including footage of two Indochinese Tigers!

DANE END

Saturday 23rd March

6 members

In warm sunshine but with a chilly (March!) wind, we set off southwards from Dane End, having given a special welcome to Peter Smith, our Branch member from Herefordshire, who was on a brief visit to Hertfordshire friends.

Our route quickly got us off the road on to a footpath leading eastwards along a broad field margin next to a planted tree belt. Here the pace slowed as we started to find things of interest: the plant people admired Early Dog-violets *Viola reichenbachiana* in flower. The insect people found Seven-spot Ladybirds, Small Tortoiseshell butterflies and some early bees, and of special fungi interest (to the fungi person) were the quite large numbers of the White-footed Elf-cup fungus *Paxina leucomelas* growing on the soil.



White-footed Elf-cups (with Rabbit pellets indicating their size!)

Photo: Chris James

Continuing eastwards, we soon found ourselves approaching a golf course that had been developed on farmland. Keeping a wary eye out for stray golf-balls and/or golfers and having removed a grotty old sign from the hollow trunk of a magnificent Hornbeam pollard in front of the clubhouse (!), we followed the path along the boundary of Cock's Wood, which was marked with a broad bank topped with very impressive old Hornbeams that showed all the characteristics of having been laid in their medieval past. Close by in a field were two fine old Oaks. The presence of pollards, ancient wood boundaries, wonderful old Oaks and a 'Lodge Farm' suggested that the area had once been historic parkland. [On researching this later, I found this was

indeed the case: between the early 1300s and late 1600s, 212 acres of land south of the boundary we had followed were known as Frodgoryshey or Floodgacy Park.]



Huge Oak pollards near Cock's Wood.

Photo: Chris James



Ancient hedgerow Hornbeams on the wood-bank of Cock's Wood.

Photo: Chris James

We added Brimstone butterfly to the list, before being helped back on to the correct route by a very friendly golfer and arriving at a road. A quick left-and-right took us on Langton's Lane, a fine hedged track that led north-eastwards via Trenchern Hills to High Trees Farm. The plan was to try and gain access to Trenchern Hills to look at some more ancient Hornbeam pollards and the springs but this interesting area was very tightly fenced, so we abandoned the idea. Instead we had to content ourselves with admiring some old pollards across the fields and identifying Hairy-footed Flower-bees *Anthophora plumipes* nectaring on flowers.

We left the farm behind us and followed another track downhill into the valley of the Dane End Tributary. A handy grassy patch on a bend out of the wind offered a lunch spot. Several Skylarks sang overhead and a small flock of Linnets popped in and out of the nearby hedge. Another Small Tortoiseshell was recorded.

Close to where the track joined the Levens Green - Dane End road, we found an abandoned house site with an old orchard. Quince and pear trees grew inside the hedged boundary and we found a clump of Butcher's Broom. An uninteresting footpath took us across arable fields downhill to the Tributary, which was bone dry. A couple of Grey Partridges whirled away at our approach. From here we followed a minor road to Gifford's Lane and so along it to Haultwick ('Artick'!). The lane was edged with relatively flowery banks – Great Stitchwort, Common St John's-wort and Black Knapweed and the large leaves of Prickly Lettuce were spotted.



In Haultwick, a small traffic island caught our attention. The grass was sprinkled with hundreds of tiny white flowers, which we decided were Common Whitlow-grass *Erophila verna*. A few moments were allowed for photography at close quarters before we carried on along Dane End Lane to a footpath that took us through some attractive fields with lovely views southwards to Dane End church. We stopped for a break in the warm sunshine before ending up back in the village, where we allowed Paula Shipway to examine different substrates in the churchyard for lichens.

Finally, the friendly publican brought us large pots of very welcome tea (but sadly there was no cake!) kindly purchased by Peter Smith.

Lichens (recorded by Paula in the churchyard):

Limestone headstones: *Caloplaca flavescens* with the lichenicolous fungus *Weddellomyces epicallipisma*, *Verrucaria nigrescens* f. *nigrescens*, *Lecanora albescens*, *Caloplaca dichroa*, *Diploicia canescens* (the Brain lichen).

Sandstone headstone dated 2000: *Acarospora fuscata*, *Rhizocarpon reductum*, *Lecanora polytropa*, *Candelariella vitellina*. **Old Sandstone headstone:** *Psilolechia lucida*. **Church wall:** *Toninia aromatica*.

Chris James

BERKHAMSTED COMMON

Sunday 7th April



6 members

Having survived the treacherous potholes in the car park, six members of the Herts Branch of BNA arrived to join me and welcome Steve Rutherford, the newly-elected President of National BNA, for a chilly day on the Common.

While we waited for the group to assemble, we heard a Blackcap singing and Steve mentioned that he had heard a Garden Warbler. We set off in a westerly direction on a bridle path at a BNA pace, noting two apparently invasive garden plant 'throw-outs' Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum* and Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolan* ssp. *argentatum*, growing alongside Coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara*. I picked up a small lichen-encrusted dead branch and pointed out *Hyogymnia physodes* with its inflated lobes and *Parmelia sulcata* with its distinctive angular lobes. William handed me a pixie cup lichen that he had plucked from a recumbent dead tree and I explained that there is currently a great deal of doubt about our understanding of this genus. There were large granules inside the cup that suggested it could be *Cladonia pyxidata*.

It was good to see a few of our native plants in flower including two dog violets that instigated the usual early Spring discussions about the differences between *Viola riviniana* and the dark spurred *Viola reichenbachiana*. We noted two more lichens, both on Hawthorn twigs, *Punctelia subrudecta* with its punctiform soralia that always put me in mind of a cabbage field and *Ramalina farinacea* with strap-like lobes. Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis* were in flower and the feathery leaves of Pignut *Conopodium majus* were just emerging.

I pointed out a minute lichen growing on holly leaves, *Phylloblastia inexpectata*. Although this species has a British Lichen Society number its' association with algae is not fully understood and due to its diminutive size is under recorded. Another lichen that required inspection through a hand lens was growing on the trunk of a Field Maple trunk. *Strigula taylorii* has a brown thallus and can cover extensive areas on tree trunks. There were only a few records before 2000 but it is now recorded quite frequently.

Some members of the group paused to watch Great Tits and a thorough search in a patch of Celandine *Ficaria verna*, successfully revealed bulbils at the base of the leaf stalks proving that it was the subspecies *verna*. A group of very large Cherry trees was admired and there was a collection of seed shells at the base of one trunk which were clearly the result of a woodland feast. There were also numerous fruit bushes Gooseberry *Ribes uva-crispa* and Red Currant *Ribes rubrum*, both probably bird sown.

A common lichen *Evernia prunastri* was found lying on the ground and I showed some members of the group an inconspicuous lichen on the trunk of a Hawthorn tree. *Anisomeridium polypori* has very small structures called pycnidia with pointed tops as well as flask shaped fruiting bodies called perithecia which are often absent.

I showed two very small species to members of the group despite the challenge of focusing on them even with help from a x10 hand lens, one growing on elder called *Psoroglaena stigonemoides*. The second species, *Scoliciosporum pruinosum* had minute fruiting bodies with a frosted appearance and was hidden deep in crevices of an Oak tree and proved to be a first record for the Vice-county. The tar spot lichen, *Arthonia spadicea* was also growing on the Oak tree and somewhat easier to see, along with the very common powdery or leprose lichen *Lepraria incana*. I made a note of more lichens, this time on Hawthorn, *Buellia griseovirens* and *Parmotrema perlatum* and as we left the wooded area to make a short detour through farmland a Buzzard flew overhead.

I fulfilled my promise to the group to show them some large and colourful lichens as we passed some farm buildings. An asbestos barn wall provided us with the opportunity to compare *Xanthoria parietina* with *X. calcicola* and *X. elegans* and from close by I recorded *Lecanora albescens*, *Lecidella elaeochroma*, *Physcia caesia* and *Physconia grisea*. The wall below the asbestos was home to a few more lichens including *Caloplaca saxicola* and *Caloplaca decipiens*. A long forgotten wooden farm trailer enabled me to add *Lecanora muralis* to the list. It is sometimes called the chewing gum lichen as it is often seen on pavements but doesn't deserve this derogatory nickname

as it is a particularly attractive lichen. *Candelariella vitellina* was also happy on the lignum and *Lecidella stigmatea* on the metal struts.

Sky Larks sang above us as we walked uphill back towards the trees on the edge of the Common and we were very pleased to see two Brown Hares, one on either side of the little valley. Jum spotted a badger latrine under the hedge and a Yellow Hammer sat in full view on top of the hedge.

A lovely old gatepost (right) caused us to have a long pause while we examined the community of acid loving lichens that grew on it. These included *Buellia badia*, *Lecanora stenotropa*, *Lecanora saligna*, *Rinodina oleae*, *Candelariella vitellina* and more unusually *Acarospora fuscata* which is commonly found on sandstone memorials in churchyards in the home counties.



After admiring primroses in flower on the distant wood bank and a closer look at a Rove Beetle that William caught in his sweep net we continued along the path into the wood and were pleased to have protection from the cold wind. I recorded *Fuscidea lightfootii* on a fallen branch and noted another badger latrine. We started to follow a path along the edge of the wood but almost immediately agreed that it must be lunch time and stopped to sit on the bank and eat our sandwiches.

Carefully avoiding my sandwiches, I applied a spot of bleach to a very small lichen specimen from a near-by dead tree and the lack of a red reaction proved that it was *Opegrapha vermicellifera*, one of the 'old forest' species. We were sitting by an old Hornbeam tree and I pointed out two more 'old forest' species, *Graphis scripta* and *Pertusaria leioplaca* growing on the trunk. It is always nice to find these species, particularly the *Pertusaria* which is one of just a few records for the Vice-county.

A large number of ancient Beech trees along the hedge had their tops broken off and there was generally a high proportion of dead wood in the area. Some very large beetle holes were pointed out. One dead tree had another

'old forest' lichen on it, *Schizmatomma decolorans*. It was good to see that *Pertusaria leioplaca* had successfully colonised on a group of young Ash trees. I pointed out another of the 'old forest' lichens, *Enterographa crassa*, this time on a Field Maple.

We noted another ancient woodland indicator, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* growing in several places by the path, although not in flower and Steve caught a glimpse of a Sparrowhawk flying through. William spotted a melanistic pheasant and time was spent around a badger sett. I added squirrel to my list before pointing out that we needed to cut short the original planned walk as time was getting on! We cut through the wood stopping briefly to watch two nuthatches busily building a mud wall to restrict the size of the entrance hole to their nest site high in a tree. I made a note of *Chaenotheca ferruginea* on a Birch tree

We hurried along towards Frithsden Beeches after pausing for a while to examine a gall on a Willow tree. On the south eastern edge, I led the group to a Silver Birch tree that I had discovered a week earlier. Two main trunks were partially covered in a fine web which started close to the ground and went up to the top of the tree, the height of which we estimated to be around 20 metres. Nobody in the group had seen anything like it before and we all agreed that it was an extraordinary sight. There were discussions about spider webs and caterpillars and mention of the Oak processionary Moth but there has not been a conclusion to the story yet.

We continued making haste along the edge of the golf course towards the car park pausing to look at the practice trenches dug by soldiers during the First World War and I pointed out *Pertusaria amara* and *Parmelia saxatilis* growing on the trunk of an oak tree. Close to the car park I showed members the last lichen for the day, *Physcia aipolia*, which was a fine specimen and admired by all of us.

Having reach the car park we said our goodbyes and thanked Steve for driving all the way from Yorkshire to join us. Hopefully everyone enjoyed themselves as much as I did.

Paula Shipway

MERRY HILL near BUSHEY

Saturday 20th April

8 members

It was an extremely warm spring day with the sun shining, the temperature above 20 degrees and a gentle breeze to keep us cool. The open space area that we were about to explore was surprisingly large given that we were within the M25 and on the outskirts of Watford. The provisional plan was to follow the Merry Hill circular walk (4 miles) with numerous options of taking shortcuts if needed (which was very likely). The weather promised a good day for invertebrates and to see Joe and Williams with their nets ready was a delight. While we were waiting for everyone to find the meeting place, we spotted an Orange Tip and a group of Dark-edged Bee-flies.

We started with a small pond in the “park area” of Haydon Hill. Although the pond looked in need of opening up, it provided a beautiful sight of huge Marsh Marigolds (*Caltha palustris*) and a Wavy Bittercress (*Cardamine flexuosa*) which was not impressive but nicely showed all 6 stamens. When we were about to move on, a moorhen appeared to William’s delight as he expected that they should be there. We carried on along the spring where Midland Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) was starting to flower. A Holly Blue settled and demonstrated its characteristic underside. Butterflies were plentiful - we saw a Small tortoiseshell, a Brimstone, a Peacock and a Speckled Wood. Starring, was an Eyed ladybird, visibly larger than other ladybirds, with its truly “eyed” spots. The list of ladybirds was soon extended by a 16-spot ladybird, a Larch ladybird, and (not surprisingly) a Harlequin Ladybird. A Dock bug was sitting on a Dock proving its name.

When we drifted to the back of the line of the houses bordering the field, we drew the attention of a nice lady who was a neighbour of Rob Hopkins. Shortly afterwards we met Rob himself who told us that the field was grazed by horses until the last year and showed the bank which was an old grassland with “ridge and furrow” still visible. Unfortunately, I missed this information when preparing for the walk (although explored that bank during my recce). We decided not to go back to the bank and headed south towards the Woodland Trust site.

After entering the WT part, we first followed a hard-surfaced path with old trees on one side and recently planted trees on the other side. The path is actively used by visitors so neither vegetation nor invertebrates were particularly exciting, but Paula found *Unguiculariopsis thallophila* – a lichenicolous fungus parasitizing on *Lecanora chlorotera*. I wanted to look at the only piece of unimproved grassland on the site, according to the Woodland Trust compartment map. When we got there, we found Hairy Tare (*Vicia hirsuta*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*) and lots of Knapweed, but the site was not as exciting as it could be. Joe spotted a fairy ring with taller and darker-green grass.

We settled for lunch – thanks to William, who just sat down in a sunny spot. While having lunch, we saw a jay and a crow, which was not happy with a buzzard flying around. After lunch, we were eager to move on and got enthused with a growing list of invertebrates including a delicate 1st instar of a cricket, 14-spot Ladybird and a Bishop's Mitre Shieldbug. So, I completely forgot to divert to a patch of Betony which I spotted on my recce, but no one regretted it.

Walking across a mixture of grassland and small woodland patches we came across one particular young oak with five species of galls: Hedgehog, Oak-apple, Marble, Artichoke and one left unidentified. Marmalade Hoverfly (*Episyrphus balteatus*), Turtle Shieldbug (*Podops inuncta*) with the anvil-shaped projections at front of pronotum, and a furry-looking lacewing larva followed. William found Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*) in flower (first in flower that I saw this season).

By mid-afternoon, we reached the boundary between two big compartments of WT site. Everyone agreed that the other side looked like a very appealing scrubby area, but not everyone thought it was a good idea to venture in there given the time. The consensus was that we need to come another time to explore further so we turned back. When one could see (roughly) the way across the fields, we split. Those who had enough cut through the fields and those who wanted more rambled around the edges.

For some time, Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis* was the only excitement, but then we unexpectedly found two *Russula*. Unfortunately, we had already lost Claudi. As we could not identify any particular smell (apart from “a nice

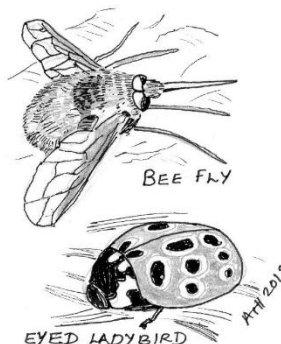
mushroom smell”), we had to leave it as *Russula*. Joe got excited about finding a Stiltbug *Berytinus hirticornis*. William showed us a green woodpecker poo lying on a stone and looking like a worm. The poo consisted solely from ant skins. Catharine identified a bamboo, which was planted well outside the garden walls and already started to spread, as a Golden Bamboo *Phyllostachys aurea*. A Small Copper butterfly and a Dockbug showing bright colour under its wings in flight were welcome additions to the end of the day.

Birds: (records from William) - Robin, Blackbird, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Carrion Crow, Wood Pigeon, Jackdaw, Blackcap, Wren, Magpie, Moorhen, Starling, Ring-necked Parakeet, House Sparrow, Green Woodpecker, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat, Kestrel, Chaffinch, Jay, Buzzard, Skylark, Mallard, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit, Dunnock.

Ladybirds: (records from William) - Cream-spot, Eyed, 16-spot, Larch, 7-spot, Harlequin, 24-spot, 14-spot.

Butterflies: (records from William) - Orange Tip, Small Tortoiseshell, Holly Blue, Speckled Wood, Peacock, Brimstone, Small Copper.

Other Invertebrates identified from Williams photos: *Andrena haemorrhoa* (Orange-tailed Mining Bee) and *Ptychoptera contaminata* (Fold-winged Crane fly).



Galls on oak (identified by William and Joe): *Andricus fecundator* (Artichoke gall), *A. kollari* (Marble gall), *A. lucidus* (Hedgehog gall), *Biorhiza pallida* (Oak-apple gall)

Bugs: (records from Joe Gray) - *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale* (Hawthorn Shieldbug), *Aelia acuminata* (Bishop’s Mitre Shieldbug), *Berytinus hirticornis*, *Coreus marginatus* (Dock Bug), *Deraeocoris lutescens*, *Gonocerus acuteangulatus* (Box Bug), *Ischnodemus sabuleti* (European Chinchbug), *Kleidocerys resedae* (Birch Catkin Bug), *Nabis rugosus* (Common Damsel Bug), *Peritrechus geniculatus*, *Physatocheila dumetorum*, *Podops inuncta* (Turtle Bug), *Rhopalus subrufus*, *Stenodema calcarata*, *Stenodema laevigata*.

Plants: 61 species in flower.

Alla Mashanova



Finding the lost bear at Sandon!

Boxing Day 2018

Photo: Paula Shipway



Checking out the cup fungus at Dane End

Saturday 23rd March 2019

Photo: Paula Shipway



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