

BRITISH NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

Hertfordshire Branch

BULLETIN No.140



Herts Branch bird-watching and recording in the Lea Valley

Saturday 8th February 2020

Photo: Paula Shipway



Beautiful autumnal colour at Stapleford
Saturday 16th November
Photo: Paula Shipway



Identifying unfamiliar conifers at Bayfordbury Pinetum
Saturday 4th January 2020
Photo: Paula Shipway

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BULLETIN 140

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EDITOR'S BIT

I find this time of year to be both inspiring and re-energising. Everywhere around there are signs of renewal; the woodlands and waysides with their early blossoming of flowers and leaves unfurling in delicate shades of green. There is a mood of anticipation as the countryside springs to life and now there is the prospect of a resumption of our programme of field meetings. The reports here are for meetings held just before the lockdown, offering inspiration as we go out again observing nature in both the familiar and the lesser-known parts of our diverse county.

We also have a full obituary for Trevor, the account of his life by Mike shows how much we are indebted to Trevor. We remember, too, loyal member Diana Furley, who made me feel very welcome when I had just joined the society and attended my first field meetings had a great skill in chasing up field meeting leaders for their reports!

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OBITUARIES

Trevor J. James (16.09.1947 - 05.06.2020)

-shortened from a longer obituary in 'Country-Side', Autumn & Winter 2020



Trevor (left) leading the Boxing Day Walk in 2013 – Photo Mike Demidecki

The early years

Trevor was five when his family moved to Cuffley in Hertfordshire. He was to live in the county for most of his life. One day in 1962 Trevor discovered a wood warbler's nest in Northaw Great Wood, a first for the wood, and his discovery led to an introduction to Bryan Sage, author of *A History of the Birds of Hertfordshire*. Trevor was invited by Bryan to join a meeting of the Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Branch of the British Naturalists' Association (BNA) and as a result Trevor joined the Branch. He remained a member of BNA for the rest of his life, becoming Chairman of the Branch for very many years. He was also a member of BNA's national Council for a while.

After leaving school Trevor went to York University, where he obtained a degree in English Literature, and then trained as a librarian. He worked briefly at Bexleyheath library in Kent, then moved to the Department of Environment in Marsham Street, London where he was an assistant librarian.

Stepping into natural history

Trevor wasn't happy living in London. Having heard about the job from a York friend, he applied for the position of 'Keeper of Natural History' at Hitchin Museum. He got the job - he was the only candidate who could identify a Maybug beetle which had been brought into the museum the day before! This was in 1973 and Trevor was 25 when he embarked on his career in natural history which he would follow for the rest of his life! The museum's collections included an herbarium carefully managed by Dr John Dony, author of *Flora of Hertfordshire*, published in 1967.

Following local government re-organisation, Hitchin and other local towns, including Letchworth, became part of the new North Hertfordshire District. Trevor and Brian Sawford, curator at Letchworth Museum, met and decided it made sense to merge the collections. So, a new Department of Natural History came into being. Part of Trevor's brief at Hitchin Museum was to draw up a management plan for Oughtonhead Common, a marshy open space on the north edge of the town. Detailed vegetation surveys were undertaken and work parties comprising trainees on a government training programme were organised. One of the supervisors was a girl called Chris Smith who was to become Trevor's wife. They married in 1979 and, in 1987, their son Edward was born.



Trevor beetling at Hertford Heath – A Harris

In 1978, Trevor became Higher Plant Recorder not only for the Hertfordshire Natural History Society (HNHS) but also for the Botanical Society of the British Isles. By 1983, Bryan Sage had moved to Norfolk and so Trevor took on the Recordship for Beetles, too.

The then Secretary of the HNHS suggested there should be a new 'Flora' of Hertfordshire because John Dony's 1967 *Flora* was becoming out-of-date. So, in 1987 the *Hertfordshire Flora Project* was launched, which Trevor was to run for nearly thirty years.

Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre

In 1990, Hertfordshire County Council decided that a *Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre* should be established, amalgamating the existing museum record centres in North Herts and St Albans districts. Trevor was made redundant by North Herts but invited to join the new centre as an Ecology Officer, employed by the County Council.

National Biodiversity Network

Nationally, biological recording had begun to take off. In 1995 Trevor was elected Chairman of the National Federation for Biological Recording (NFBR). As Chairman, he proposed that the NFBR would support an integrated national programme to develop local record centres and voluntary recording schemes. The Chief Executive of the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) supported the proposal and subsequently Trevor was invited to become one of the Trustees of a new organisation, the *National Biodiversity Network Trust* (NBNT).

The Trust had the radical idea that natural history data should be collected and stored on a central database and then shared via the internet. The project was based at the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology's Monks Wood Experimental Station near Huntingdon and needed a 'Development Officer'. Trevor applied successfully for the post and started work there in 2001. He described his time at Monks Wood from then until its unfortunate closure in late 2007 as "in many ways the most fulfilling time of my paid career". During this period, he travelled all over Britain and Ireland, engaging with many different species recording schemes.

Seeing the world

Back-tracking now to 1976, Trevor felt the need to explore the wider world. Bryan suggested Morocco and Trevor invited me to join him on the trip. We both set out with a tent made by my father's company, in a car we rented in Gibraltar, following an itinerary suggested by Bryan. Trevor kept meticulous natural history records of all that we found.

In 1993, Trevor co-led a trip to a remote mountain area in northern Greece for the fledgling Naturetrek company. It was a great success and between

then and 2005 Trevor subsequently co-led other Naturetrek trips - to Nepal, Morocco (again), Madeira, Corsica, Sardinia, Portugal, Spain and Samos.

Flora of Hertfordshire

During all this time, Trevor had retained the roles of Flora and Beetle Recorders for Hertfordshire. In addition, he had continued to run the 'Hertfordshire Flora Project'. In late 2009 his first major book *Flora of Hertfordshire* was published

Trevor remained working for the NBN Trust until 2014. In the February he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Later that year, he was offered the Honorary Degree of Master of Science by the University of Hertfordshire, for services to natural sciences and ecology in Hertfordshire. He postponed surgery to remove his prostate gland so that he could attend the degree ceremony. There he joked that having just retired from a lifetime of work in biological sciences and wildlife recording, he was at last qualified to do the job!

Other commendations followed. In 2015 he received the HNHS's prestigious 1875 Award for an outstanding Hertfordshire naturalist and in 2018 he was given the NBN Trust's Gilbert White Award for an outstanding contribution to biological recording.

Beetles of Hertfordshire

Unfortunately, Trevor's cancer spread but despite further major surgery, he continued to undertake field surveys and to write his second magnum opus. The remarkable *Beetles of Hertfordshire* was published in July 2018 and launched at the Royal Entomological Society's headquarters in St. Albans. His great friend, Bryan Sage, to whom the book is partly dedicated, travelled from Norfolk for the launch. Trevor produced two annual updates to the book, the last appearing in the 2020 edition of *The Hertfordshire Naturalist*.

In 2019 Trevor received BNA's David Bellamy Award, given to a Field Naturalist of Distinction. In November of the same year, a letter from the Cabinet Office invited Trevor to accept a British Empire Medal for services to nature conservation in Hertfordshire in the Queen's New Year's Honours List.

The investiture was carried out by the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, Robert Voss, on 2nd March 2020.



One of the last photographs of Trevor on a BNA walk: At Northaw Great Wood Sep 2019 – photo Chris James

The Hertfordshire Branch of BNA

Trevor did an enormous amount for the Branch, organising holidays, week-ends away and many, many field meetings. We all learned so much from him. Trevor was an example to us all and Hertfordshire Branch meetings of BNA will not now be the same without him. We all miss Trevor but he will never be forgotten.

Trevor's natural history collections

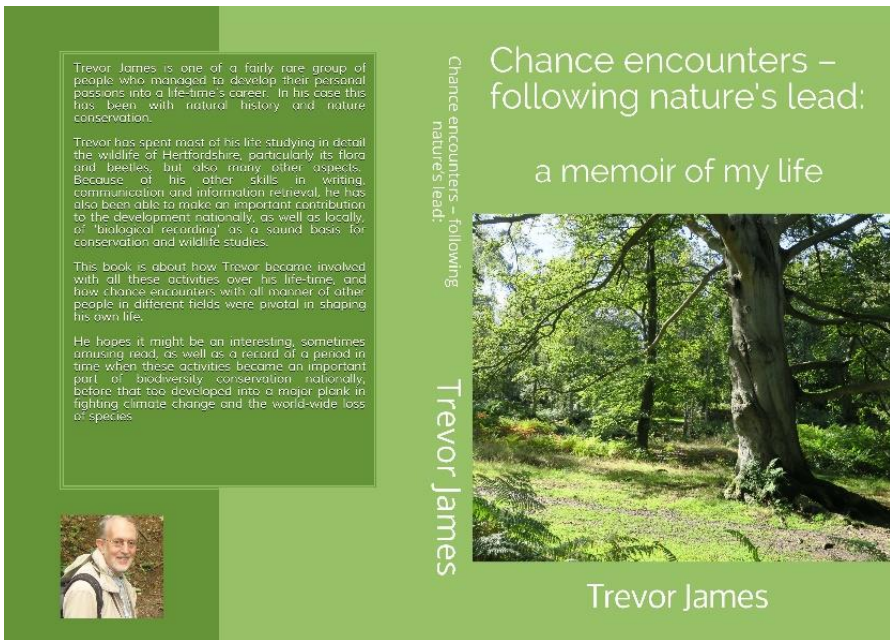
Trevor's botanical collections are now with the North Hertfordshire Museum at Hitchin. His beetle collection will go to the Oxford University Museum of Natural History when circumstances allow.

Before he died, Trevor produced his final book, an autobiography (James 2020), and I have taken much of the information here from this. He was thankfully able to see printed copies of this book at the hospice in Letchworth Garden City before he passed away. Trevor's burial at Ashwell Cemetery was on June 26th 2020. He leaves his wife, Chris, and his son, Edward.

Reference

James, T.J., 2020. 'Chance encounters-following nature's lead, a memoir of my life'. Pub. by Trevor J. James, 56 Back Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5PE.

Michael Demidecki



Diana Furley 1927 – 2020



Diana at the Great Offley meeting in 2008

Photo Andrew Harris

Diana joined Herts Branch of BNA in 1974 and remained active until infirmity forced her to give up field meetings only a few years ago. She was particularly interested in botany, especially mosses and, along with another former member Graeme Smith, tried her hardest to encourage other members to slow down a bit and look at very small plants. Diana attended many branch weekends and holidays and was, notably, a participant in Frank Lancaster's 'Long Treks' which took place during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many branch photographs show Diana carrying at least one plastic carrier bag in which to put botanical specimens or to carry those books should could not find room for in her rucksack. Inevitably, and in the nicest possible way, her friends would call her the bag lady!

Diana lived in New *Barnet* and had a very varied and full life with wide connections to many societies. She was highly respected locally. She was a gracious hostess – Herts Branch held many indoor meetings in her house where we would all squash into her lounge on a variety of

chairs retrieved from other rooms and partake of wonderful bring-and-share suppers half-way through slide presentations by much-travelled members. We will miss her.

Diana died on 2nd January, aged 93 and Peter Alton, another Barnet member, was able to attend her funeral at Brunswick Park Cemetery.

Hert Branch is (also) sad to record the death of former member Ken Honnor on 18th January 2021. A tribute to Ken, written by Michael Demidecki, appeared in the March edition of 'British Naturalist'.

Chris James

CONSERVATION NEWS

The State of Nature in Hertfordshire – the Facts

A huge piece of work undertaken jointly by the Herts Environmental Record Centre and the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust was presented at the recent AGM of the Herts Natural History Society. Here is a summary of that presentation. It makes sobering reading.

2.8 million records were analysed for the report: Of the 10,863 species recorded since 1970, 1,524 are of conservation concern in Hertfordshire.

- 60% are invertebrates, 21% are higher plants, 15% are lower plants, 4% are vertebrates.
- 1% have gone extinct (this represents 76 species, 3 species every 2 years and includes the Nightingale, the Burnt Orchid and the native Crayfish)
- 19% are Threatened with Extinction
- 80% are at Risk of Extinction

Of the 1,524 species of Hertfordshire concern:

- 49% have decreased in distribution, including 113 species of grasslands/heaths
- 12% have increased
- 39% are stable

Hertfordshire currently has 27,000 hectares of semi-natural habitats of which:

- 61% are woodlands
- 35% are grasslands
- 5% are wetlands

Since 1970:

- 16% (29 hectares) of the remaining calcareous grasslands has been lost

- 27% (82 hectares of semi-improved neutral grasslands has been lost
- 71% (670 hectares) of unimproved neutral grasslands has been lost
- There are only 13 hectares of heathland remaining in Hertfordshire

The message from the HNHS meeting was that we should all remember our loss of grasslands and heathlands and resist strenuously the pressure to plant more trees on what we have left of these precious habitats!

The situation for woodlands is a little better: there has been an increase of 9% (1,330 hectares) *but* only 4% of the total woodland cover is classed as Ancient Woodland. There is strong evidence to suggest that many of our remaining natural woodlands are seriously undermanaged, or not managed at all. We should be encouraging owners to manage properly and appropriately the woodlands we already have, as well as extending and linking them together with new planting (as long as this planting is not on important grasslands!)

Despite all our rivers, streams, ponds/lakes and gravel pits, only 1% of the county is made up of wetland habitats. This compares with an average of 3% in other counties.

But the good news here is that several of our dragonfly species have increased their ranges

The change in our climate has had an effect on Hertfordshire's habitats:

- 50km of chalk rivers have dried up.
- Woodlands on calcareous soils are drying out.

Only 50% of the county's Sites of Special Scientific Interest are in 'good conservation condition'.

Only 12% of the county's Wildlife Sites are managed positively for wildlife conservation.

**If Hertfordshire is to achieve government's target, it needs
another 22,000 hectares of wildlife habitat.**

Where on earth do we find these hectares in our increasingly urban county?

A Handy Reference Guide to Trees in Winter

One of the Herts & Middx Trust's 'Green Team' has published a very useful photo guide to the common deciduous trees and shrubs of Hertfordshire. Why do we need another guide to trees, you might be asking?

Andrew Holtham decided that most of the field guides he possessed depended on being able to identify the leaves – all very well during the growing season but less helpful when out on walks during the winter when most leaves have dropped off and are decomposing on the woodland floor.

So he set about taking photos of bark, twigs, buds and any other features that assist with identification and has used as his starting point whether buds are in opposite pairs or arranged alternately up the stem.

Along with close-up and clear photos of lateral and terminal buds, there are pictures of fruits that might be present, the characteristic corky wings of field maple twigs, petiole scars, catkins and bark patterns. Each species has brief note about where it might be found and what it might be confused with.

At the end of the book are a short key, a table listing winter fruits by colour or special feature against their likely species and a list of further useful references.

The book is A5-size, runs to 78 pages and has a glossy, probably wipe-clean cover. The cost to members of BNA Herts Branch is £7.00 plus £1.40 P&P. Andrew has very kindly allowed us a £1.00 discount! Please contact Andrew direct at holthams13@btinternet.com to order a copy and arrange payment.

FIELD MEETING REPORTS

STAPLEFORD

16th November 2019

7 Members



On a chilly morning six cheerful BNA members arrived at the designated meeting point. Having finally agreed on the date to write in our notebooks we spent a while looking around the area close to the cars to see what we could find. Alla pointed out a common foliose lichen, *Parmelia sulcata* on a Cherry tree and I made a note of several other species including *Candelaria concolor*, *Physcia tenella*, *Melanelixia subaurifera*, *Punctelia subrudecta*, *P. jeckerii*, *Candelariella reflexa*, *Evernia prunastri*, *Hypogymnia physodes*, *Lecanora chlarotera*, *Amandinea punctata* and *Lecidella elaeochroma*. There was another species too, *Lecanora barkmaniana*, for which there were only half a dozen records in England before 2000 although it is now frequently recorded in southern counties. I confirmed my identification by checking for the slight orange colour visible on the soredia under a UV light.

A Goldcrest flew past us then across the road and William pointed out the well-developed leafy rosette of a Bee Orchid, *Ophrys apifera*, on the verge which had us all searching for more. One more was seen and there could well have been more under the recent fall of autumn leaves. While searching for more rosettes we noted a Thyme-leaved Speedwell, *Veronica serpyllifolia* in flower and several fungi which were well camouflaged by the surrounding leaves.

A local resident who was walking close-by came over to see what we were looking at and commented on the abundance of Lawyer's Wig, *Coprinus comatus*, in a local field. We all agreed that it was an excellent year for fungi.

We eventually managed to depart from our starting point (!) and walked along the road towards the River Beane pausing by a bridge over a tributary noting White Deadnettle *Lamium album*, Red Deadnettle *Lamium purpureum* and Common Field-speedwell *Veronica persica* all in flower. Through binoculars we had a good view of a Red Kite at the top of a tree and I looked at the mosaic of lichens covering the sandstone coping stones on the bridge parapet. The community included *Polysporina simplex*, *Rhizocarpon reductum*, *Lecanora polytropia*, *Porpidia tuberculosa*, *Lecidella scabra* and

Acarospora rufescens. These species are often confined to sandstone memorials in churchyards, so it was good to note that there is the opportunity for them to thrive away from their more usual environment.

We glanced at more roadside trees noting a good covering of lichens and although there was determination to make some progress on the planned route, I paused for long enough to point out a lichenicolous fungus (that is a fungus that is parasitic on a lichen). *Athelia archnoidea*, has fungal hyphae that look like cobwebs and is common during winter months. Alla pointed out the small pink blobs of another lichenicolous fungus, *Illosporopsis christiansenii*.

In fields close to the River Beane we noted several Moorhens before turning south to follow the riverside footpath although we almost immediately made a make a short deviation to have a quick look in the Churchyard of St. Mary the Virgin. We were pleased that Andrew managed to catch us up here although the challenge wasn't hard as we were still making very slow progress. A note was made of the very recent mole hills at the front of the church and we spread out to explore the yard. A limestone memorial had a good covering of *Diploicia canescens*, commonly known as the Brain lichen as the outer lobes look like the lobes of a brain. The striking yellow/green colour of *Psilolechia lucida* on sandstone memorials stood out on the dull day and I pointed out a foliose species, *Xanthoparmelia mougeotti* on a granite boulder. There were the remains of a Giant Puff Ball in the undergrowth on the edge of the yard and discussion over a probable Parasol Mushroom with a particularly dark top although the exact identification remained unresolved.

We moved off following the river with a short pause to record *Lecanora confusa* and *Arthonia radiata* on the trunk of an Oak tree. A few of us caught the smell of a fox and we found Hogweed, *Heracleum spondylium*, in flower. Movement in bushes proved to be a Dunnock.

The base of a splendid Ash tree was a likely habitat for lichens however a quick hunt only revealed more *Amandinea punctata* and *Arthonia spadicea*. Members at the front of the group disturbed a Little Egret on the river and as we approached an area of Ancient Hornbeam coppice a squirrel hurried away. At the side of the path there was a heap of old branches and on one there was decaying fungus, or perhaps a slime mould. Again, identification

wasn't possible, but we agreed with one member's suggestion that it was "very horrible"! A little further on William discovered a toadstool in perfect condition, Panther Cap *Amanita pantherina*, and several photographs were taken.

As we headed away from the river towards Bardons Clumps and Rickneys quarry we heard a Ring-necked Parakeet and walking along the narrow winding lane we noticed Roman Snail shells. Members at the back of the group stopped to look underneath a large board that was lying on the bank. Sadly, there were two dead bank voles and one more that ran away. Because of tyre marks running along the bank the conclusion was that a farm vehicle had run over the board and squashed the voles. I pointed out a jelly lichen, *Collema tenax*, growing in the middle of the little used lane and we paused to watch a small flock of chaffinches. Just before Bardon Clumps Andrew spotted a clump of Grey Sedge, *Carex divulsa*, although not in flower and on the corner of Bardon Clumps Bristly Oxtongue, *Helminthotheca echioides* was flowering.

A little further along the track there was a bank which provided a suitable place for our lunch stop. One or two of the group set off quickly after the break in the hope of seeing interesting birds in the quarry just ahead of us however they were disappointed by the complete lack of birds. The wooden railing fence that separates the footpath from the old quarry proved to be an excellent habitat for lichens and included *Fuscidea lightfootii*, *Flavoparmelia soredians*, *Micarea denigrata*, *Usnea subfloridana*, *Lecanora symmicta*, *Hypogymnia physodes*, *Xanthoria polycarpa* and *Lecanora pulicaris*. Within the fenced off area we could see Carline thistles.

We continued on our way towards Upper Stonyhills Wood and William caught us up to say that we had missed seeing Fieldfares and Redwings by the farm buildings. A Jay flew past ahead of us and we heard and saw the undulating flight of a Green Woodpecker. We passed the wood then turned north. Along the road I noticed a discoloration towards the base of an Elm trunk in the hedge, after a quick chemical test and reassurance from Andrew I was happy to record *Opegrapha vermicellifera*. We continued north then turned towards Southend Farm passing a veteran Oak tree that looked a likely candidate for interesting lichens. The only lichen that we recorded with any certainty was *Dimerella pineti* although there was a leprose lichen

protected by the overhang of the leaning trunk that could be of interest but unfortunately identification defeated us.

We continued along our route walking down the hill back towards the river and passed through a young plantation where the mosaics of common lichens on the young trunks were admired. As well as the expected species we were pleased to see *Pertusaria leioplaca* on a young Ash trunk and very pleased to find *Pertusaria pertusa* on the trunk of a young Oak tree. These two are 'old forest' species and although *P. leioplaca* is sometimes found to be colonising on young trees neither Andrew nor I had seen *P. pertusaria* on young trees locally before.

We finished our descent through Clusterbolt Wood as the daylight was starting to go and walked back along the river-side path towards our starting point noting some fine specimens of Trooping Funnel Toadstools, *Clitocybe geotropa* and a patch of Shining Cranesbill *Geranium lucidum*.

We had an enjoyable day with plenty of wildlife and I was pleased that we had managed the whole route in daylight.

Andrew kindly sent me a list of bryophytes that he noted during the day, with a few additions from Alla:

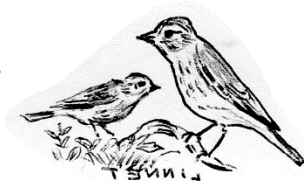
<i>Atrichum undulatum</i>	Bank	Foxleys Wood
<i>Cryphaea heteromala</i>	Ash	Green lane by Bardon Clumps
<i>Frullania dilatata</i>	Ash	Green lane by Bardon Clumps
<i>Grimmia pulvinatia</i>	Headstone	Stapleford Churchyard
<i>Hypnum cupressiforme</i>	Stump	Green lane by Bardon Clumps
<i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>	Base of trees	Foxleys Wood
<i>Orthotrichum affine</i>	Ash	Green lane by Bardon Clumps
<i>Pseudoscleropodium purum</i>	Soil	Old pit
<i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>	Grassland	Stapleford Churchyard

Paula Shipway



November 30th 2019

ARDELEY AREA



A Tree Full of Linnets

On a freezing bright sunny morning, 9 of us met outside the Jolly Waggoners to walk through Ardeley village, passing the pond, some picturesque thatched alms houses surrounding the village green and then lingered in the churchyard of the 13th century Church of St Lawrence. Paula found lichen on the gravestones: *Haemmotoma ochroleucam* on the sandstone; *Leconora campestris* and *Caloplacca flavescens* on the limestone headstones. Jean wondered if the *Haemmatoma* lichen had anything to do with blood which it has: apparently when the fruiting bodies ripen they are bright red. The traditional churchyard Irish Yews and Holly bore seasonal berries. Amongst the trees and roofs of the houses we had already spotted Wren, Blue Tits, Magpies, Robin, Pied Wagtail, Redwings, Rooks and Jackdaw.

Leaving the village behind we skirted along the boundaries of Church Farm, a thriving community enterprise with fully organic agricultural practices. In the hedgerow, caught between tree roots and fence, were the remains of a dead fox, followed more happily by the sighting of a live one padding across the sheep pasture and crossing the path a hundred metres or so in front of us. The striking yellow leaves and purple catkins of a Hazel in the hedgerows caught our attention. Such a common plant but so gorgeous at this time of year. Just as colourful, lit up by the sun, was a green woodpecker and the shocking pink berries of the spindle tree in the hedgerow. William reminded us of the old English word 'blet' meaning the decay that happens in berries, often after frosting, making them more palatable for the birds.

Across the fields we noticed three Belted Galloways calmly grazing. A flock of Starlings rose up in front of them and gave us a miniature murmuration flying display. By then we had left the wonderfully named Sqitmore Spring and were walking towards St John's Wood. Amongst the dead wood and leaf litter, Jean found a bright yellow jelly fungus: Yellow Brain fungus, *Tremula mesentrica*. We saw what at first sight seemed to be a woodpecker's hole fairly low in the trunk of a young oak, but on closer inspection it turned out to be a woodpecker's hole reconstructed with mud to make a smaller entrance

to the dwelling for a Nuthatch family. A little later we heard a the distinctive sound of a Nuthatch singing heartily and further along still we had a clear view of a pair of nut hatches foraging 'right way up and upside down' in the branches of an oak tree.

Moving along the margin of Lord's Wood we took a detour into the wood to look at some spectacular funnel fungi when William noticed an even more exciting colony of Slender Club fungi, *Typhula juncea*. The fruiting bodies are tall thin spindly cream stalks 3 to 10 cms high, growing out through the leaf litter and very easily overlooked. However, once we began to notice them, the area they covered was surprisingly large. Most of us had never seen this fungus before, and being so unusual, it was the real highlight of the day.

We found a warm sunny bank on the woodland's edge for lunch, some of us perched on one of the beautiful old Hornbeams that bordered the wood. We noticed several squirrel dreys amongst the trees, both low winter ones and high summer residencies.

Setting off across the field towards Parker's Green we saw several arable weeds still in flower: Scentless Mayweed, Common Field Speedwell, Hedge Mustard and the like. All very common but you have to admire their tenacity to flower in these conditions. We stopped to look at a very characterful, old beamed farmhouse and then made our way north westward along Chain Walk, with the occasional Red Kite and Buzzard making an appearance. Bordering this path was a field of planted millet which was attracting flocks of Chaffinch, with Goldfinches, some Yellowhammers and trees full of chattering Linnets. A treat on a cold winters day, for the birds and for us!

Having taken an unexpected turn we walked along the road and returned to Ardely for our final treat of the day... tea and cake at the Church Farm Cafe!

Bird List:

Wren, Blue Tit, Magpie, Robin, Pied Wagtail, Jackdaw, Redwing, Rook, Wood Pigeon, Canada Geese, Buzzard, Green Woodpecker, Pheasant, Nuthatch, Blackbird, Long-tailed Tit, Yellowhammer, Kestrel, Red Kite, Bullfinch, Chaffinch, Linnet, Goldfinch, Fieldfare, Great Tit, Carrion Crow, Starling, Feral Pigeon, Stock Dove, Skylark, Dunnock, Jay, Goldcrest, Grey Heron, Coal Tit.

Plants in Flower:

Groundsel, Ivy, Dandelion, Shepherd's Purse, Pellitory of the Wall, Red Dead-nettle, White Dead-nettle, Daisy, Wood Aven, Common Field Speedwell, Scentless Mayweed, Autumn Hawkbit, Hedge Mustard, Knapweed, Meadow Buttercup, Smooth Hawksbeard, Feversweet and Yarrow

Some of the Lichens:

Haemmatoma ochroleucum, *Toninia aromatica*, *Leconora campestris*, *Verrucaria calciseda*, *Caloplaca flavescens*

Signs of Mammals:

Red Fox, Grey Squirrel, Wood Mouse, Mole hills, Rabbit, deer prints.



Ruth Graham

STANDON

Saturday 14 December 2019

9 People

The weather forecast for the day changed continually in the two days prior to the walk, but last thing Friday suggested no rain. Hurrah. It had changed again on the Saturday morning and at 10:00 started to pour down. Not what I'd ordered.

After a quick look in the churchyard, where we spotted Snowy Waxcaps and Paula found *Lecanora semipallida*, we left Sandon heading west passed the Paper Mill, over the river and then turned south into the meadow along the west side of the River Rib. Mole hills were abundant. We passed the bank before The Lordship on which in previous years we had seen Meadow Saxifrage growing. At The Lordship we turned westward again and headed up the hill in the rain towards the north end of Plashes Wood. Everywhere was wet but at the top of the hill the rain eased giving way to brighter sky, that eventually turned clear and cold. We took the footpath south along the east edge of Plashes Wood. The field margin was sown with a game bird crop, but this was at least also providing a refuge for arable weeds. Poppy and Fumatory plants were present amongst others. The empty shells of Roman

Snails were abundant along the wood margin, suggesting a healthy population. One plant of Jack-by-the-hedge was going all out to brighten the area with its column of white flowers. Plashes Wood is obviously good for lichens, as Paula kept calling us over to admire new finds on the boundary trees. Amongst these were *Opegrapha varia*, *Cliostomum griffithii* and *Schismatomma decolorans*. Claudi found a particularly fine specimen of Witches' Butter *Exidia glandulosa*, on oak. Rose saw a Buzzard drop into a field on the other side of the valley and noticed it had startled two Hares, which then had a race around after each other in typical hare fashion.

We turned up hill on the path to Plashes Farm, through the wood then turned back down hill again, stopping to admire a huge dead oak that stripped of its bark shone silver in the sunlight. Just before passing back through the wood a Grey Wagtail landed in the field and gave some a hard time trying to pick it out in the stubble. A Muntjac on the path ran off towards the road; I think this was the male who on the previous Sunday had stood on the ridge in the wood at this spot and barked at me like a guard dog. We crossed the road and then the small bridge by the ford, now at the southernmost point of the walk. Claudi found a nice example of *Tremella mesenterica* Yellow Brain on a twig in the road. We turned right into a small track up hill and saw a little colony of Stinking Hellebore, undoubtedly an escape but attractive. As this was the last bit of moderate shelter, we tried to find a spot for lunch, somewhat unfortunately the wind was at its strongest and coldest while we ate (after we moved off it stopped blowing!) Simon and Gail left us here and headed back to Standon, but not before being the only lucky ones to see a pair of Ravens.

After lunch we continued on and headed for Archers Hall Stud at Latchford. In a paddock just after the buildings we stopped to admire the birds. Several species were present, but the winter thrushes were lovely. The Redwings tended to stay close to the hedge, the Fieldfares were reasonably close and in good light; how very beautiful and elegant they are. We proceeded on and had to cross a very muddy field. By the other side we all had lead boots on, and it didn't want to come off to easily. We followed the old railway northwest. We passed a fine group of *Verbascum* plants looking very much like a crop of hairy grey spring cabbage; these 'ugly ducklings' will no doubt bloom into majestic yellow columns next year. In places the track was covered in lots of Strawberry plants, the leaves pressed flat to the ground. At

the end of the railway we turned east alongside a wide deep ditch up the hill, which at the top end amongst the trees was full of *Daphne laureola* Spurge Laurel. There were large numbers of them, and many were large plants, a splendid sight. They were close to flowering with fat buds in between the leaves, but not yet out so not available for Alla's in-flower list. Turning north again we headed up to the sewage farm below Standon. Here there were lots of Rooks and they swirled around making a lot of noise. I love the black corvids, such fascinating and intelligent birds. In the last field before Standon we were entertained by some close, low flying Red Kites and Buzzards; the colours of their feathers displayed to the best by the light as they twisted and turned.

Back in Standon we parted, with Christmas good wishes. The hardy remained to study the church wall along the road for lichens. To those of you who joined me – my thanks for your company & 'Bah Humbug'; you need to have been there to understand that one.

Birds –

Jackdaw, Wood Pigeon, Moorhen, Mallard, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Robin, Meadow Pipit, Blackbird, Canada Goose, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Red Kite, Black-headed Gull, Redwing, Marsh Tit, Wren, Carrion Crow, Grey Wagtail, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Dunnock, Mistlethrush, Pheasant, Magpie, Kestrel, Starling, Little Egret, Raven, Red-legged Partridge, Fieldfare, Jay, Rook.



Fungi – (from Claudi S, with thanks)



Daldinia concentrica, *Hypoxylon fuscum*, *H. petriniae*, *Nectria cinnabarina*, *Xylaria hypoxylon*, *Auricularia auricula-judae*, *Auricularia mesenterica*, *Bjerkandera adusta*, *Byssomerulius corium*, *Crepidotus* sp., *Exidia glandulosa*, *Inonotus hispidus*, *Mycena inclinata*, *M rosea*, *Panellus stipticus*, *Phellinus pomaceus*, *Psathyrella* sp., *Stereum hirsutum*, *Tremella mesenterica*, *Hygrocybe virginea*.

William Bishop

WILSTONE

Boxing Day 2019

Six hardy members joined David and me in the centre of Wilstone for the Boxing Day Meeting. I immediately apologised for the bad weather and after waiting for a few minutes for any late comers we set off. We walked down New Road towards the village pond noting *Viscum album* Mistletoe growing on apple trees in the front gardens of the old Rothchild cottages. The gardens were also a popular spot for House Sparrows, and we noted a few common plants in flower next to the pavement including White Deadnettle, Shepherd's Purse, Chickweed and Red Deadnettle. The first Red Kite of the day flew overhead and I made a note of Collared Doves and Wood Pigeons.

Crossing in front of the barn conversions we paused to look at a planted tree, the flowers were quite distinctive and after examining leaves that lay on the ground the decision was that it was a *Liquidambar styraciflua* Liquid Amber tree. I pointed out a Daisy in flower and we carried on past the pond towards Wilstone Green where we admired a veteran Ash tree with a hollow trunk. William caught us up at this point and said that he had found a Sweet Violet in flower and I was sorry to have missed it. Further along the field path towards Marsworth Cow Parsley was in flower and we noted a very recently dead Wood Pigeon lying on the ground with no apparent injuries.

A few of us gathered speed in order to keep warm and when we looked back the rest of the group had disappeared from sight. We gathered later that a flock of birds on the far side of the field had proved to be Golden Plover and I was assured that there were 128 in the flock! Mike spotted deer slots that he recognised as being made by Chinese Water Deer and Jum found a very clear badger print in the mud.

We turned right in Marsworth towards the Reservoir noting a Green Woodpecker in the sports field before hurrying along hoping for some shelter from the rain and very cold wind. We noted that there were lots of Great Crested Grebes on the reservoir along with Tufted Ducks and we enjoyed a short break from the wind in the bird hide for a few minutes before adding Cormorant to the bird list as we braced ourselves and continued on our way.

I made the decision to cut the walk a little shorter than planned because of the weather so we crossed over to Tringford Reservoir and followed the path to Little Tring. The next bird hide provided shelter for a very quick cup of coffee for some of us before we followed the Wendover Arm Canal and dropped down the hill to Wilstone Reservoir. Just as we arrived a flock of Teal took off and we noted a Grey Heron standing on a post and a few Shoveler Ducks busily feeding.

The highlight of the day was found by William when he spotted hundreds of fungi growing on the moss on the concrete side of the reservoir. They were difficult to see properly, but William, who is either very dedicated or fool hardy, lay flat on the ground in the wet and managed to reach one or two of the fungi without going headlong over the edge! They were, as he suspected, *Tulostoma brumale* Winter Stalkballs, which have only been recorded in Hertfordshire once before and provided a certain amount of excitement on an otherwise dull day.



Some of the group had continued beside the reservoir not knowing about the fungi and Rose spotted a Little Grebe on the water which was another good addition for the list.

We hurried back through the village to our cars and I was pleased that we had ended the mornings walk without anyone suffering from hyperthermia.

Hot soup was deserved by all.

Paula Shipway

PINETUM AT BAYFORDBURY

Saturday, 4 January 2020,

15 members plus 3 guests

This meeting had the largest number of participants I had ever seen so far. As I heard, an earlier meeting at Panshanger Park encouraged a few new people to join. Fine weather forecast might have played a role as well as New Year resolutions...

Bayfordbury sustains a good variety of species due to its historical use and the range of habitats. The meeting had a focus on conifers, and so we started with looking at Mountain Pine (*Pinus mugo*) near the car park but got distracted from conifers straight away by Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*) and Mediterranean Buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus*). Two Jays, a Cormorant and a Sparrowhawk flew past. We spotted a few Mistletoes (*Viscum album*) with one exceptional Hawthorn having a few dozens of them.

We reached the Pinetum entrance and got absorbed into fungi growing on the log piles. Having Claudi was invaluable. *Trametes versicolor*, *Stereum hirsutum*, *Daldinia concentrica*, *Calocera cornea* and *Flammulina velutipes* were the most obvious ones. In the meantime, Paula recorded *Candelaria concolor*, *Candelariella reflexa*, *Lepraria finkii*, *Parmotrema perlatum*, *Physconia grisea*, *Punctelia jeckeri* and *Punctelia subrudecta* on a big Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). We compared fir (Grand Fir, *Abies grandis*) and spruce (Norway Spruce, *Picea abies*) twigs noticing that spruce needles were attached with small pegs, while fir needles were attached with a 'suction-cup'. William explained that cone-like growths on Norway Spruce shoots were caused by *Adelges* (aphid related insects) forming galls. From a later google search, it was likely to be *Adelges viridis* (the commonest of a few similar species). *A. viridis* alternate spruce and larch hosts, and so checking both the spruce and the two big larches next to it for *Adelges* infection in summer might help with identification.

Following the path along the stream, we admired Dwarf Siberian Pine (*Pinus pumila*) with 5 needles in a bundle, Brewer's Weeping Spruce (*Picea breweriana*) with drooping shoots, Bhutan Pine (*Pinus wallichiana*) with long silky needles and a group of Western Red Cedars (*Thuja plicata*) with foliage smelling of citrus. A spectacular glade formed of Giant Redwoods (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) brought us to Japanese Plum-yew (*Cephalotaxus harringtonia*) with plenty of plum-like fruits. We found two more examples of needle attachment types: needles of Canadian Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) had short green petioles parallel to the shoot, and needles of Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) were attached with a 'suction-cup' raised above the shoot, as opposed to sunken ones in firs. In the meantime, Paula found an intricate *Phaeographis smithii* on a Sycamore tree. This was an exciting find as *P. smithii* has only been recorded in the region during the last few years [and this only the second VC20 record -AH].

We looked at a Badger set with white freshly dug out mounds, strolled through Holly and Yew thicket (Yew has decurrent needles going onto the shoot), passed a historic Lucombe Oak (*Quercus x hispanica* 'Lucombeana', a hybrid between Turkey and Cork oaks) and came to a structure called Fungal clock. Dead wood of different age is arranged in a circle providing a continuum for wood-decaying fungi. The structure serves its purpose: we saw *Auricularia auricula-judae*, *Exidia nucleata*, *Exidia plana*, *Lycogala terrestre*, *Pleurotus pulmonarius* and *Pluteus cervinus* in different parts of it. Pinetum has a 170-years old Grotto with ferns, and rocks covered with mosses and liverworts. Big clumps of *Anomodon viticulosus* and *Porella platyphylla* were particularly noticeable. We were extremely short on invertebrates, and Simon's find of tiny Globular Springtails on Hart's Tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) triggered an excitement.

Back at the grounds, we noticed that some bees in the apiary were active. It was good to see Winter Cherry (*Prunus x subhirtella*) and Persian Ironwood (*Parrotia persica*) in flower. I was hoping to see Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*) in flower, but its leaves were just coming out - collateral damage from Giant Hogweed eradication programme around the lake. The low water level revealed aerial roots of Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) looking like teeth. Indian Bean Tree (*Catalpa bignonioides*) still had its long bean-like fruit 'cases'. We spotted Mandarin Ducks, and a Buzzard landed on low-shrub vegetation on the lake edge to everyone's delight.

A note: Pinetum is privately owned by University of Hertfordshire. If you would like to visit contact (Alla Mashanova or Ian Flack i.flack@herts.ac.uk) or visit Pinetum webpage (<http://www.clintonbakerpinetum.org.uk>) to find out how to become a Friend.

Birds (thanks to William, 28 species): Black-headed Gull, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Blue Tit, Magpie, Pheasant, Robin, Moorhen, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Great Tit, Ring-necked Parakeet, Blackbird, Jay, Rook, Green Woodpecker, Red Kite, Buzzard, Fieldfare, Greenfinch, Yellowhammer, Coal Tit, Mandarin, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Sparrowhawk, Cormorant.

Fungi (thanks to Claudi, 31 species): *Arrhenia rickenii*, *Auricularia auricula-judae*, *Byssomerulius corium*, *Calocera cornea*, *Crepidotus mollis*, *Dacrymyces*

stillatus, *Daldinia concentrica*, *Dendrothele acerina*, *Entoloma hirtipes*, *Exidia glandulosa*, *Exidia nucleata*, *Exidia plana*, *Flammulina velutipes*, *Gymnopilus penetrans*, *Hypholoma fasciculare*, *Hypoxylon fuscum*, *Lycogala terrestre*, *Mycena* sp., *Nectria cinnabarina*, *Peniophora* sp., *Phlebia radiata*, *Pholiota squarrosa*, *Pleurotus pulmonarius*, *Pluteus cervinus*, *Rhytisma acerinum*, *Stereum hirsutum*, *Trametes versicolor*, *Tubaria furfuracea*, *Xylaria hypoxylon*.

Lichens (thanks to Paula, 62 species): *Arthonia radiata*, *Aspicilia contorta* subsp. *contorta*, *Aspicilia contorta* subsp. *hoffmanniana*, *Athelia arachnoidea*, *Botryolepraria lesdainii*, *Caloplaca cerinella*, *Caloplaca decipiens*, *Caloplaca flavocitrina*, *Caloplaca oasis*, *Candelaria concolor*, *Candelariella reflexa*, *Catillaria nigroclavata*, *Cladonia coniocraea*, *Cladonia* sp., *Diploicia canescens*, *Erythricium aurantiacum*, *Evernia prunastri*, *Heterocephalacria physciacearum*, *Hyperphyscia adglutinata*, *Hypogymnia physodes*, *Illosporopsis christiansenii*, *Lecania cyrtella*, *Lecania erysibe* s. lat., *Lecania naegelii*, *Lecanora albescens*, *Lecanora barkmaniana*, *Lecanora campestris* subsp. *campestris*, *Lecanora carpinea*, *Lecanora chlarotera*, *Lecanora expallens*, *Lecanora hagenii*, *Lecanora muralis*, *Lecanora semipallida*, *Lecidella elaeochroma* f. *elaeochroma*, *Lecidella stigmatea*, *Lepraria finkii*, *Lepraria incana* s. lat., *Melanelixia subaurifera*, *Opegrapha rufescens*, *Parmelia sulcata*, *Parmotrema perlatum*, *Phaeographis smithii*, *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Phlyctis argena*, *Physcia adscendens*, *Physcia aipolia*, *Physcia caesia*, *Physcia tenella*, *Physconia grisea*, *Porina byssophila*, *Protoblastenia rupestris*, *Punctelia jeckeri*, *Punctelia subrudecta* s. lat., *Ramalina farinacea*, *Rinodina oleae*, *Strigula taylorii*, *Unguiculariopsis thallophila*, *Verrucaria elaeina*, *Verrucaria nigrescens* f. *tectorum*, *Verrucaria viridula*, *Xanthoria calcicola*, *Xanthoria parietina*.



HERTS BRANCH AGM

Saturday 18 January

The meeting was held at Digswell Village Church Hall,

HARMERGREEN WOOD

Saturday 25 January

12 members

We met at Burnham Green Village on a dull day. The temperature was mild for the time of the year but the sun did not come out and it felt cold in the afternoon, especially after lunch.

Paula was already on site when I arrived and she showed me a minute lichen on a concrete post, *Sarcopyrenia gibba*. Not much for me to see apart from some dark dots on the bare surface of the concrete. The fact that grows alone with nothing around it's actually a distinctive feature of the lichen.

The group departed soon after 10 am and we headed Northwest following a path between the seeded fields. The first thing we found was a distinctive rust, *Puccinia smyrnii* (no English name) on Alexanders (*Smiranium olusatrum*), a hairless biennial umbellifer fond of sheltered locations.

A small skull with part of the jaw missing was at the side of the path. The long canine made us think it was a carnivore. It did not have a crest at the top, eliminating the badger. On the field we settled for a young fox (possibly). Back at home and after googling a few skull images I realised that it probably was a domestic cat! We need to spend a bit of time improving our naturalistic skills!

We moved slowly and entered a small hornbeam corpse. Some of the hornbeams seem to be thinner lower down the trunk with what look like fused stems. Alla said that at one time maybe they were roots growing down over a dying stem. Once it had rotten down the roots became the stem supporting the pollard. The area proved interesting for lichens and for fungi. We found two Lacquered Brackets (*Ganoderma lucidum*) on an old hornbeam pollard, one at the base and an older one just at arm's reach. I took photos and the coordinates. Paula recorded several lichens.

Soon after the corpse was the main wood.

Harmergreen Wood is a privately owned wood with some areas fenced-off but with rights of way and a good network of paths crossing it. The wood doesn't seem to have a visible structure but the economic interesting tree

species (English Oak, Scots Pine mostly) had been encouraged to the detriment of lesser species like birch that had been thinned or chopped down in some areas. They were some old cherry trees and ashes scattered about. Joe found what looked a Wild Service Tree (*Sorbus torminalis*) but Alla pointed out that could also be some other *Sorbus* hybrid.

Joe, too, showed us one of the few insects we found in the day. It was a bug whose name I can remember because it's very descriptive: Birch Catkin Bug (*Kleidocerys resedae*). There it was, camouflaged on a bare birch, not on a catkin (there were no catkins yet) but on a bud. Maybe "Birch Bud Bug" would be a more appropriate name!



We had a brief lunch at what look an improvised sawmill with a locked-up wooden hut and piles of timber scattered about. Some of it had already gone rotten and it was good for Corticioid fungi. I found Purplepore Bracket (*Trichaptum abietinum*) at the sawn ends of several pine logs. On a fallen branch I found *Steccherinum ochraceum* (no English name), an orangy coloured crust that from the distance look like the common Hairy Curtain Crust (*Stereum hirsutum*) that we also found. On closer look the observer can see that the hymenium of the former species is not smooth but it has little spines.

Another tree was the focus of our attention. Young, at the side of the path, it had a diamond pattern on its greyish bark. Some dry, partially rotten leaves on the ground confirmed that it was a Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*).

Paula found a standing dead Beech covered in what looked tar stains. The tree was covered in the appropriately named Beech Tarcrust (*Biscogniauxia nummularia*), an Ascomycete fond of dead Beech wood. Three of us spend some time there looking at it and photographing it from different angles. When we tried to join the rest of the group, we realised that we've lost them. We made it back to the cars soon after the main group.

Birders did not have their best day as we did not cover a great distance and we stayed mostly inside the woods. The best sightings were probably at the beginning of the walk when we could see some sparrows and finches flying from a hedge into a flooded field and back, time after time. The Coal Tit was

one of the few species we heard inside the wood.

William recorded the following species:

Nuthatch, Carrion Crow, Blue Tit, Magpie, Jackdaw, Wood Pigeon, Ring-necked Parakeet, Robin, Jay, Goldfinch, Kestrel, Starling, Red Kite, Great Tit, Blackbird, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Skylark, Goldcrest, Pheasant, Song thrush, Redwing, Buzzard, Great spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Mallard, Pied Wagtail.

The flowering plants list is even shorter. The highlight for me was Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*), planted or naturalized at the side of a path very close to a front garden.

Paula recorded the following lichens:

LICHENS

Burnham Green – Village

Athelia arachnoidea - Lichenicolous fungus on *Physcia tenella*

Lecanora albescens - On a limestone post

Lecanora chlarotera - Horse Chestnut trunk

Melanelixia subaurifera - Horse Chestnut trunk

Parmelia sulcata - Horse Chestnut trunk

Phaeophyscia orbicularis - On a limestone post

Physcia tenella - Horsechestnut trunk

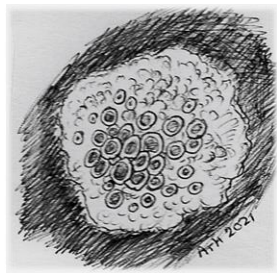
Physconia grisea - Horse Chestnut trunk

Ramalina farinacea - Horse Chestnut trunk

Sarcopyrenia gibba - On a limestone post

Verrucaria nigrescens f. tectorum - On a limestone post

Xanthoria parietina - Horse Chestnut trunk



Burnham Green - Copse

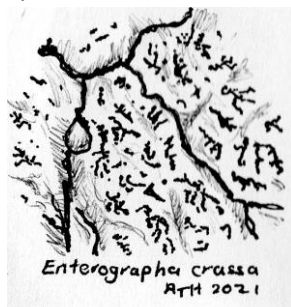
Enterographa crassa - Hornbeam Pollard

Lecidella elaeochroma - Hornbeam Pollard

Lepraria incana - Hornbeam Pollard

Opegrapha varia - Ash trunk

Opegrapha vermicellifera - Hornbeam Pollard



Burnham Green - Harmergreen Wood

Arthonia spadicea - Hornbeam trunk

Chaenotheca ferruginea - Oak trunk

Dendographa decolorans - Hornbeam Pollard, hollow

Dimerella pineti - Cherry trunk

Enterographa crassa - Hornbeam Pollard

Evernia prunastri - Fallen Oak branch

Fuscidea lightfootii - Fallen Oak branch

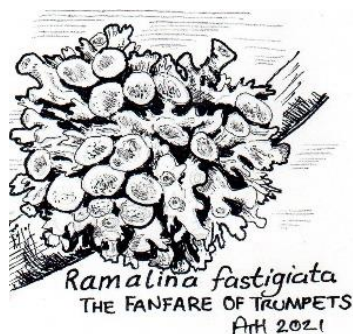
Jamesiella anastomosans - Fallen Birch trunk

Pertusaria leioplaca - Young Beech trunk

Phylloblastia inexpectata - Holly leaf

Punctelia jeckeri - Fallen Oak branch

Ramalina fastigiata - on the ground



Finally, the fungi list, with 43 species, better than expected for January.

FUNGI

ASCOMYCETES	
<i>Annulohypoxylon multifforme</i>	Birch Woodwart
<i>Ascocoryne sarcoides</i>	Purple Jellydisc
<i>Biscogniauxia nummularia</i>	Beech Tarcrust
<i>Daldinia concentrica</i>	King Alfred's Cakes
<i>Diatrype stigma</i>	Common Tarcrust
<i>Diatrypella quercina</i>	
<i>Hypoxylon petriniae</i>	
<i>Melogramma campylosporium</i>	
<i>Nectria cinnabarina</i>	Coral Spot
<i>Nectria episphaeria</i>	
<i>Rhopoglyphus filicinus</i>	Bracken Map
<i>Rhytisma acerinum</i>	Sycamore Tarspot
<i>Trochila ilicina</i>	Holly Speckle
<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	Candlesnuff Fungus

BASIDIOMYCETES	
<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>	Jelly Ear
<i>Bjerkandera adusta</i>	Smoky Bracket
<i>Byssomerulius corium</i>	Netted Crust
<i>Chondrostereum purpureum</i>	Silverleaf Fungus
<i>Clitocybe nebularis</i>	Clouded Funnel
<i>Coprinellus micaceus</i>	Glistening Inkcap
<i>Crepidotus variabilis</i>	Variable Oysterling
<i>Dacrymyces stillatus</i>	Common Jellyspot
<i>Exidia glandulosa</i>	Witches' Butter
<i>Ganoderma lucidum</i>	Lacquered Bracket
<i>Hyphodontia sambuci</i>	Elder Whitewash
<i>Inonotus hispidus</i>	Shaggy Bracket
<i>Mycena vitilis</i>	Snapping Bonnet
<i>Oxyporus populinus</i>	Poplar Bracket
<i>Peniophora quercina</i>	A Crus
<i>Piptoporus betulinus</i>	Birch Polypore
<i>Plicatura crispa</i>	
<i>Pluteus cervinus</i>	Deer Shield
<i>Psathyrella piluliformis</i>	Common Stem Brittlestem
<i>Puccinia smyrnii</i>	A rust
<i>Resupinatus trichotis</i>	An Oysterling
<i>Schizopora paradoxa</i>	Split Porecrust
<i>Steccherinum ochraceum</i>	
<i>Stereum hirsutum</i>	Hairy Curtaincrust
<i>Sterum rugosum</i>	Bleeding Broadleaf Crust
<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkeytail
<i>Tremella mesenterica</i>	Yellow Brain
<i>Trichaptum abietinum</i>	Purplepore Bracket
<i>Tubaria furfuracea</i>	Scurfy Twiglet

Claudi V Soler

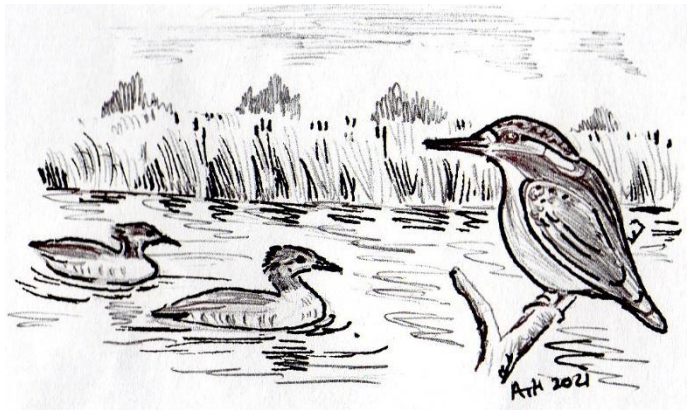
LEE VALLEY PARK

Saturday 8 February

13 People

The weather was overcast but extremely mild, feeling more like April of old. Twenty-four hours later storm Ciara would arrive with strong winds and rain, so we were lucky.

We met in Turnford Brook car park, and there was another good turnout. This spot has a fairly regular little flock of Greenfinches and there were five in the trees when I arrived. Simon brought several moths from his previous night's trapping for us to admire, these included March Moth, Dotted Border, Clouded Drab and a very pretty micro *Acleris cristana*. This micro has over 130 known forms, the common feature being a large tuft of raised scales on each wing.



We headed off over the railway into the Lee Valley Park and turned north making our way to the Ashley Pit. There are usually several Goosander on this pit, and we did find two redheads. Goosander are members of the Sawbill family of ducks which includes Smew, and they have bills with hooked ends and tooth-like lamellae for gripping their fish prey. Females and young birds have red head feathers and are referred to as 'Redheads'. In an attempt to locate a male, we did a circular walk around the Ashley Pit but didn't see any. I did flush a Kingfisher that Simon noticed fly off, but the rest of us missed it. We were afforded some excellent views of two Treecreepers, climbing trunks behind the pit.

Next, we headed back south and took the path over the canal to the east into Essex. Here we stopped at the first open field to check out the finch flocks, as Brambling had been seen. Steve used his small spotting scope, and whilst we saw lots of Linnets and Chaffinches, we didn't find a Brambling. We continued down to Seventy Acres Lake and the Bittern Hide. On the way Terry saw a Bittern fly over the reeds. A redhead Smew was located on the water but whilst identifiable it was moderately distant. We stopped at the hide and went in where my friend Jane Free was on volunteering duty and were told there was a Bittern in the reeds but not on view. We did get good views of a Water Rail though. We waited but no Bittern showed so moved on. When we were 200 yards away Jane rang me to say the Bittern had emerged! Oh well, next time.

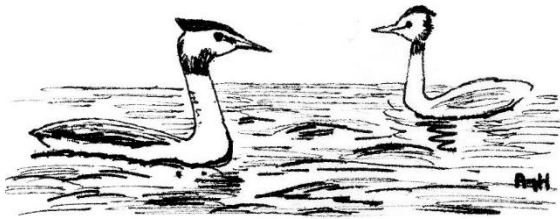


Schizophyllum amplum Poplar Bells photo: William Bishop

We stopped for lunch at a structure that looked like a bus shelter overlooking the river with Hooks Marsh Lake behind it. Claudi showed us a twig that Alla had found with beautiful cup fungi on, *Schizophyllum amplum*, Poplar Bells. I've never seen this before; it grows on old Poplar wood. Rose pointed out to me where the Gunpowder factory had been in the trees. Then on-again southwards to Hall Marsh Scrape. I've never been here before but was impressed with the site. It is a rather nice open wetland area. Here we saw Little Egrets, Lapwings, Wigeon and Cattle Egrets. Cattle Egret was until very recently a scarce bird in Britain but in the last few years has become more frequent, with flocks of up to fifty birds being seen last year. This is probably the two birds from Herts last winter at Cheshunt.

It was the bottom point of our circuit here and we headed back north. Crossing back into Herts we headed up the canal towpath, then over to the Park boundary and up along the side of the North Metropolitan Pit. We saw our first Celandines of the year along this route, flowering in a sheltered ditch. Terry spotted a Goldeneye on the Metropolitan Pit and we soon located a pair in the middle of the pit too. Then we were at the car park and made our farewells. Thank you to those who walked with me and added to our day.

Birds seen

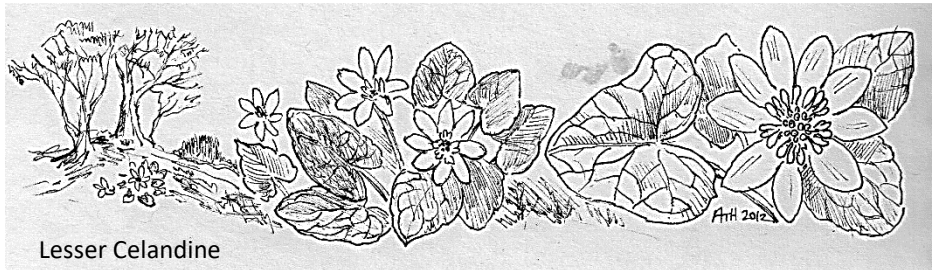


Blue Tit, Blackbird, Robin,
Carrion Crow, Black-headed
Gull, Greenfinch, Great Tit,
Starling, Goldfinch, Jay,
Magpie, Shoveler,
Goosander, Tufted Duck,
Coot, Great Crested Grebe,

Kingfisher, Cormorant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Treecreepers, Chaffinch, Long-tailed Tit, Moorhen, Song Thrush, Mallard, Grey Heron, Canada Goose, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Gadwall, Dunnock, Mute Swan, Linnet, Common Gull, Pochard, Ring-necked Parakeet, Smew, Bittern, Water Rail, Snipe, Wigeon, Goldeneye, Sparrowhawk, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Cattle Egret, Buzzard, Lapwing, Greylag Goose.

Fungi (from Claudi) – Poplar Bells, Birch Woodwart, Smoky Bracket, Willow Bracket, Sycamore Tarspot.

William Bishop

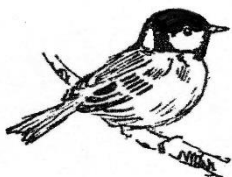


Lesser Celandine

SOUTH MIMMS

Saturday 22 February

Twelve members met at the Black Horse PH South Mimms. The day was mostly dry, dull and windy and took place shortly after the country was at the tail end of two hurricanes. We walked up Blackhorse Lane to the Park entrance, and once inside the park we were sheltered from some of the M25 traffic noise.

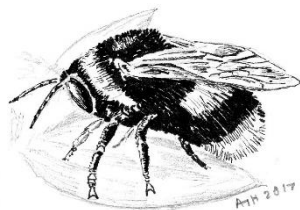


On the path that lies between Redwell Wood and Hawkshead Wood there were early signs of spring with a few Celandines and in the distance the distinct barking of a male Muntjac deer together with the call of a Blackbird, Coal Tit and Song Thrush. We were all pleasantly surprised to find a good number of fungi probably following the recent heavy rain, three of note were the colourful

fungi Scarlet Elfcup, Yellow Brain and almost hidden amongst the fallen leaves a group of Stump Puffball. Claudi's list is included at the end of this report.

The trees were largely a mixture of Hornbeam, Oak, Silver Birch and Hazel. In a small clearing near the path was a fascinating sight of a bright green moss (possibly *Brachythecium*) extending about 10-15 cms. up the stems of a dense group of young tree seedlings. The ground flora becoming apparent included Wood, Pendulous and Remote Sedges, Wild Arum, Barren Strawberry, Yellow Pimpernel and Three-nerved Sandwort.

The wooded area opened out by Oak Lodge to a rough pasture, Potwells, now grazed by sheep. Past this cottage and on the side of narrow, muddy path was Grey Sedge, Sheep's Fescue and Wild Strawberry and on the bank some Cherry-Plum Trees in full, splendid flower with a good view of a busy Buff-Tailed Bumble Bee. Approaching Cagsley Grove Wood were some Blackthorn bushes just coming into flower.



After Cangsley Grove the route turned into an easterly direction but most members voted to continue to St Mary's Church, North Mymms. In the churchyard there was an unusual population of Pink Purslane and on one of the graves Whitlow Grass and Bittercress in flower. Meanwhile, while we were wandering about looking at flowering plants, Paula was fully occupied searching for lichens. Her list is included at the end of the report. We were tempted to stop here for lunch as there were benches available but we retraced our steps to continue on the route towards Love Lane.

In Love Lane we stopped for lunch near a small concrete building with no door, windows and some of the roof missing this has puzzled members on previous walks so could only guess at its past use. After some research on the Local History website the mystery was solved. Between 1911 and c. 1960 it was part of a group of wells and wind pumps in North Mymms which supplied water to eleven isolated homesteads nearby. At a guess the concrete building as seen in photograph, might be a water storage tank, whilst nearby the two slabs of concrete on the ground, could be a well cover.



Photo by Merle Gwyn

After lunch, with variable success sheltering from the wind, we continued on towards the A1 then cut back West towards the oddly named Vinegar Spring and through Mymmshall Wood with a large plantation of Scots Pine.

Near the Park exit we were admiring a large Magnolia shrub just coming into bloom and hung with a number of bird feeders when suddenly a Sparrowhawk weaved past us chasing a group of Great Tits. The way it changed its flight direction to negotiate the nearby hedge was remarkable - we think the birds escaped this time.

Bird List

Song Thrush, Blue tit, Magpie, Red Kite. Wren, Crow, Sparrowhawk Great tit, Cole tit, Blackbird and Green Woodpecker.



Lichens

Dimerella pineti On an Oak trunk, *Chaenotheca ferruginea* On an Oak trunk, *Evernia prunastri* On a fallen branch, *Flavoparmelia caperata* A very large thallus on Oak branch, *Parmelia saxatilis*, *Parmotrema perlatum* On a fallen branch that just missed William and Simon!, *Hypogymnia physodes*, *Hypogymnia tubulosa*, *Punctelia jeckeri*

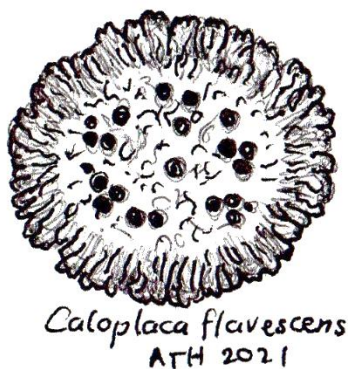
Physcia aipolia On a fence rail close to the corner of Cangsley Grove, spotted by William



Physcia aipolia photo by Merle Gwyn

Ramalina farinacea On a twig collected by Merle

North Mymms Church



Church walls – on mortar

Caloplaca limonia

Churchyard, Granite *Polysporina simplex*, *Catillaria atomarioides*

Limestone *Caloplaca flavescens*, *Protoblastenia rupestris*, *Lecanora albescens* *Acarospora fuscata*, *Lecanora polytropa*

Sandstone *Candelariella vitellina*, *Psilolechia lucida*, *Lepraria incana*,

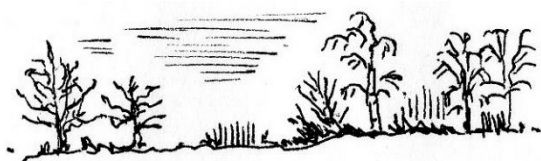
Concrete Paving slabs *Lecanora muralis*, *Lecanora campestris*

Fungi List

ASCOMYCETES		
<i>Annulohypoxylon multifforme</i>	Birch Woodwart	On fallen Birch
<i>Daldinia concentrica</i>	King Alfred's Cakes	On fallen Ash branch
<i>Diatrype stigma</i>	Common Tarcrust	On fallen Oak branch
<i>Hypoxylon fuscum</i>	Hazel Woodwart	On dead Hazel wood
<i>Hypoxylon petriniae</i>		On fallen Ash branch
<i>Nectria episphaeria</i>		On old Common Tarcrust
<i>Rhytisma acerinum</i>	Sycamore Tarspot	On dead Sycamore leaves
<i>Sarcoscypha austriaca</i>	Scarlet Elfcup	On soil or buried wood
<i>Xilaria carpophila</i>	Beechmast Candlesnuff	On rotten beechmast
<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	Candlesnuff Fungus	On rotten deciduous wood

BASIDIOMYCETES		
<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>	Jelly Ear	On dead Elder wood
<i>Basidioradulum radula</i>	Toothed Crust	On deciduous stick
<i>Byssomerulius corium</i>	Netted Crust	On deciduous stick
<i>Clitocybe fragrans</i>	Fragrant Funnel	On soil
<i>Coprinellus micaceus</i>	Glistening Inkcap	On soil
<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>	Blushing Bracket	On Willow logs
<i>Exidia glandulosa</i>	Witches' Butter	On fallen Oak stick
<i>Hymenochaete rubiginosa</i>	Oak Curtain Crust	On fallen Oak
<i>Inonotus hispidus</i>	Shaggy bracket	Old fruitbody under Ash
<i>Lycoperdon pyridiforme</i>	Stump Puffball	On buried wood
<i>Peniophora quercina</i>	a crust	On dead Oak branch
<i>Puccinia malvacearum</i>	Hollyhock or Mallow Rust	On living Mallow leaves
<i>Schizopora paradoxa</i>	Split Porecrust	On fallen deciduous branch
<i>Steccherinum ochraceum</i>		On deciduous stick
<i>Stereum hirsutum</i>	Hairy Curtaincrust	On deciduous dead wood
<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkeytail	On deciduous dead wood
<i>Tremella mesenterica</i>	Yellow Brain	On deciduous stick
<i>Tubaria furfuracea</i>	Scurfy Twiglet	On leave debris

Merle Gwyn



WESTON, NEAR BALDOCK

Saturday 7 March

11 members

It was a bit of grey and chilly start to our walk from the pond in the centre of Weston, a village lying south-east of Baldock in north Hertfordshire. We were joined by one of our 'away' members, Peter Smith, now living in Herefordshire, but who was visiting old friends (including BNA) for the weekend.

Just by chance, our gathering happened to coincide with a meeting of the village pond sub-group of Weston Parish Council. A vociferous minority of the PC had been 'pressing' for some tidying up but Chris had been well-primed by a local friend, so BNA had a great opportunity to congratulate the PC on their sympathetic management of the margins of the pond and hopefully prevent a drastic clearance. While the pond discussion took place, Alla and Jean recorded all the plants around the pond and William made a bird list.

We then set off northwards out of the village and across water-logged pasture fields towards Green End. There was little of note in the fields apart from a distant view of three Alpacas (a new record from the tetrad!). Part of the Hertfordshire Way led us over level ground towards Bush Wood and Green Grove. Most of the latter had been clear-felled by the Weston Park Estate and the firewood heaped in large stacks next to the track, with some better-looking trunks still lying in the cleared woodland. Many of the ash logs in the stack were covered in lichens but, sadly, there was no Paula to tell us what they were. Our new member, Claire, was busy recording signs of mammals for the forthcoming Hertfordshire Atlas. These included the tracks of both Fallow and Muntjac Deer and then her list was augmented by a dead rat further down our path. Some of us also had a brief view of a Stoat before it disappeared in the crop on the north side of the track.

Our route then moved off the boulder clay (where we at a height of 143m above sea level) and down through a dry valley in the chalk landscape. From here there were great views north-east along the chalk 'edge' towards Wallington and we could also see the very tall radio mast at Sandy in the far distance. Claudi and Chris started to find a few winter fungi in the wooded

edges of our path down Newfield Hill. We followed a very decrepit hedge to Wellbury Farm, now totally derelict and being engulfed with brambles. Our efforts to find signs of Barn Owls in the barns were completely thwarted. Five Pied Wagtails were hunting flies in the puddles and we tried hard to find hares in the large arable fields lying in front of us, but no luck. So, we turned east on the Icknield Way Path towards Clothall. The bird list was improved by no fewer than five Red Kites wheeling over a nearby hill and we spent ages trying to distinguish, in the poor light a long way away, a small bird sitting on an overhead wire which seemed to be trying to sing. We decided it was a Yellowhammer.

We gradually ascended Ashanger Hill along the former post road between Buntingford and Baldock, which here has a good hard surface with hedges each side. Just before the cottages at Hickman's Hill, the leader decided to find a lunch spot out of the wind and we made ourselves comfortable on the side of the field, unaware that Claudi and Claire had continued on, having failed to notice the rest of us turn off! Happily, they eventually re-appeared.

Our afternoon walk continued southeast on Back Lane but our good surface degenerated into a horribly rutted morass between flailed hedges. We staggered along for about half a mile concentrating on our feet more than anything else but, at a gap in the hedge, we gave ourselves a pause to survey the fields. With his amazing eyesight, William found us a one hare. Not long after this, we turned south off the track, hoping for a better field path. But it was a bridleway and just as churned up, so there was little respite! However, it was interesting to find a very large clump of Butchers Broom growing on the edge of the tree belt close to Back Lane. Further along the bridleway, a huge old willow was growing in the ditch. It had been coppiced a very long time ago so each of its limbs was thick and heavily fissured. Its young twigs made a nice 'crack' when snapped, so it was probably a Crack Willow.

A short section of the path across a field was carefully marked out by a double line of bamboo canes – a well-meaning but feeble attempt to keep everyone on the straight and narrow, but sadly ignored by everyone on two legs because the horses had done their worst to it. With great relief we got back on to a good firm track past Weston Bury and here the banks had Primroses, Dog Violets and Hart's Tongue Ferns.



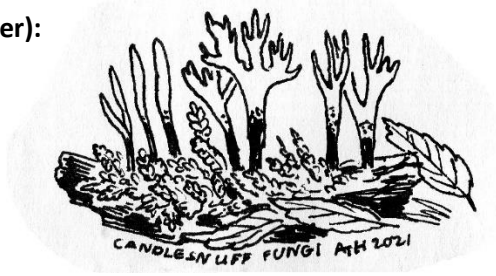
Having reached the edge of the village, we were now on the home stretch. Chris led the group up Church Lane to the churchyard wherein lies the grave of Giant Jack O'Legs, a 14th century local Robin Hood character who annoyed the rich by robbing them to pay the poor. Eventually the wealthy bakers of Baldock ambushed him, but before his execution, he asked to be buried wherever his arrow landed. It reputedly flew 3 miles and landed in the churchyard where two stones 14 feet apart mark his grave. We duly admired the grave and then noted an owl box in a tree. William checked for pellets but found none and there was no Paula to examine various substrates for lichens. We did however, look at some stones and admire some of the growths on them.

Our walk continued along tree-lined paths across the recreation ground and past the sodden church meadow back to Maiden Street. From here, some of us went on to Ashwell to have tea with Chris and Trevor.

Chris James

Birds seen or heard (William Bishop): Mallard, Red Kite, Buzzard, Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Pheasant, Herring Gull, Black-headed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Collared Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Robin, Blackbird, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Long-tailed Tit, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Wren, Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Linnet, House Sparrow, Starling, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw.

Fungi (Claudi Soler):

**ASCOMYCETES**

<i>Bisporella citrina</i>	Lemon Disco	On deciduous stick
<i>Daldinia concentrica</i>	King Alfred's Cakes	On Ash dead wood
<i>Diatrype stigma</i>	Common Tarcrust	On dead Blackthorn branch
<i>Hypoxylon fuscum</i>	Hazel Woodward	on Hazel stick
<i>Hypoxylon petriniae</i>		On fallen Ash branch
<i>Hysterium angustatum</i>		On old fallen branch (Ash?)
<i>Nectria episphaeria</i>		On old Common Tarcrust
<i>Rosellinia aquila</i>		On dead Blackthorn branch
<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	Candlesnuff Fungus	On rotten Hazel wood

BASIDIOMYCETES

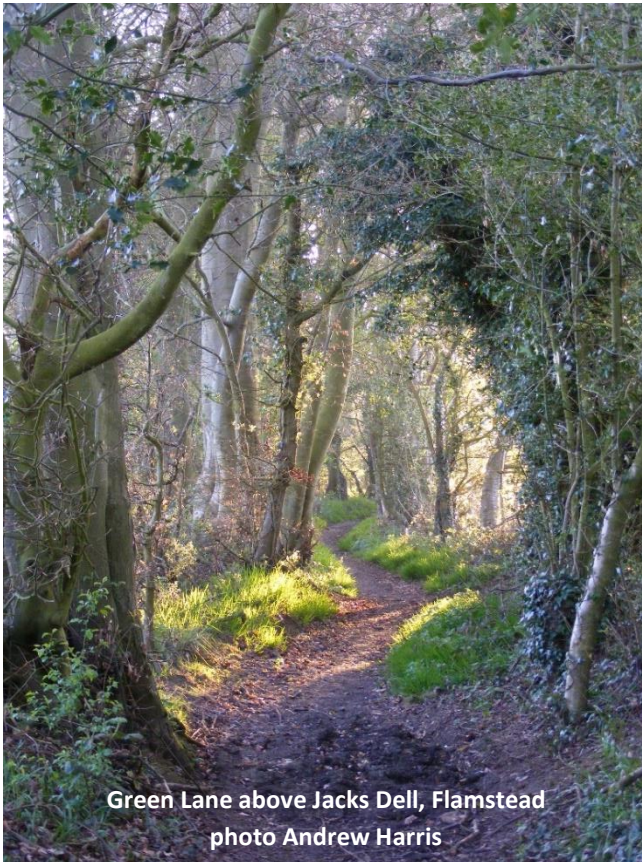
<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>	Jelly Ear	On dead Elder wood
<i>Ceriporia purpurea</i>		On fallen Ash branch
<i>Dendrothele acerina</i>		On living Maple bark
<i>Hypodontia sambuci</i>	Elder Whitewash	On dead Elder wood
<i>Inonotus hispidus</i>	Shaggy Bracket	On the ground under Ash tree
<i>Melampsora euphorbiae</i>	a rust	On living Euphorbia peplus leaves
<i>Panaeolus semiovatus</i>	Egghead Mottlegill	On dung
<i>Stereum hirsutum</i>	Hairy Curtaincrust	On deciduous fallen branch
<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkeytail	On dead Hazel and Ash wood

MYXOMYCETES

<i>Metatrichia floriformis</i>		on rotten deciduous wood
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This outing turned out to be the last one for Herts Branch before a national 'lockdown' took place to try and control the spread of Covid-19, a virulent coronavirus that spread throughout the world. Although some of the stricter measures were lifted later in the summer, our group activities were still put on-hold for the rest of the year, a great sadness to all our active branch members.

Chris James



Nature has been a solace in lockdown – bulletin 141 will be a special edition featuring members' lockdown activities and reports



Back Lane at Clothall was very muddy!

Saturday 7th March 2020

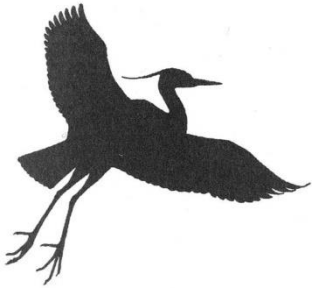
Photo: Chris James



An enormous Butcher's Broom attracts attention near Back Lane, Clothall

Saturday 7th March 2020

Photo: Chris James



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