

Central Chilterns Botany Group 2024 Meeting Schedule

All events are on Thursdays and start at 10.30am except where otherwise stated

Members are encouraged to share cars whenever possible, to limit our damage to the environment, and especially as parking space is very limited at many venues. Both Karen (5/6) and Tony (up to 3) are able to take passengers and there is parking space at Tony's house.

To facilitate control of numbers at individual events, please let us know if you intend to come to a particular one, ideally in reply to the reminder that is usually sent about a week before each meeting. Although it is unlikely that we shall get overbooked, it was agreed at our last General Meeting that numbers would be kept to a maximum of 10 to 12 to ensure a good experience for all.

If you are held up on your way to a meeting please phone Karen or Val (07738 999947).

Monday (Bank Holiday) January 1st **New Year Plant Hunt** (in association with BSBI). Meet at Great Missenden Station forecourt. A walk looking for early-flowering plants around the streets of Great Missenden. 1-2 hours. We hope to find a café or pub open for a drink, although we cannot rely on that.

January 25th **Midwinter walk** to see how many plants can be recognised at this time from their dead remains. (This is a regular activity of the Norfolk Botany Group, who call it "necrobotany".) Meet at the car-park in Great Kingshill beside the cricket pitch. Morning only.

Saturday February 17th Start 1.30pm **General walk** starting and ending at Greenlands Lane allotments, Prestwood SP869014. We shall walk Greenlands Lane, Hotley Bottom Lane to bottom, back up to Kiln Road. Early flowering plants, old trees, and target species Winter Heliotrope *Petasites fragrans*. If this is in bloom (as it should be) it will be interesting to see if there are any insect visitors to the flowers.

March 28th (Maundy Thursday) **Spring flowers** A general walk in the Great Hampden area, including Wild Daffodils *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*. Parking limited, so please meet at Tony & Val's house, 49 Lodge Lane Prestwood SP879003, where we shall try to organise everyone into two cars. Morning only.

April 18th **Bledlow Lyde**. Target species Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*. Also introduced species like *Gunnera* and *Lysichiton*. Park in main street of Bledlow near church, where we shall meet for a short walk. Morning only.

Monday (Bank Holiday) May 6th **Literary Flower Treasure Hunt** Search for specific plants mentioned in a poem to be revealed just before. Walk up Mapridge Green Lane from Rignall Road, Great Missenden SP87970209. Starting at southern end of Mapridge Green Lane at SP 8796 0210. Parking on Rignall Road opposite the meeting-point is possible (occupied by commuters on work days) - note that the parking space adjacent to the start of the lane is for residents only.

May 16th, 23rd and 30th **Green-winged and Fly Orchids** Both *Anacamptis morio* and *Ophrys insectifera* are apparently extinct in our area, but there are old records.

The first is a meadow species. One of the old sites has been ploughed up, another has been scrubbed over and neglected (and has already been checked), but there are two fields towards Widmer End where it occurred 1975 to 1979 (reviving after the fields were ploughed up in the war) - SU887975 and SU896972. The final site, our latest record in 1997, was two plants in a private garden at Speen, at a house (Amberlea, Grubbins Lane HP27 0SE) that has since had five different owners, so that continuity of the site as a suitable habitat is very unlikely.

SU887975 designates a field NE of Hawbushes Farm, through which runs a footpath. Google Maps shows it as grassland and scrub with bare patches, probably very disturbed, but worth checking out. SU896972 designates a large neglected old orchard at Holmer Green, adjoining the south end of the playing fields and behind the houses on Watchet Lane opposite H.G. First School. It is reached by a long green channel between the houses from Watchet Lane, via a locked gate. I briefly visited this site with one owner some years ago and assessed it as a promising habitat, plus I did see Common Spotted Orchid and lots of butterflies. She wanted to conserve the site, but the co-owners wanted to sell it as building land. The site on Google Maps seems not to have altered since.

The second orchid is a woodland species and has old records from Cockshoots Wood (Cobblershill), Hatches Wood (regularly monitored by George over many years, so certainly not present), three neighbouring woods between Pipers and Hughenden (Longrove Plantation, Theeds Wood and Provost Wood) and Dillwyn Plantation (North Dean). The latest of these records is 1991 (the last-named site, where it had also been recorded in the 1960s and 1970s).

May 16 **Widmer End orchard.** Search for *Anacamptis morio*. Parking in Watchet Lane; meet at gate at SU898971. Afterwards Field by Hawbushes Farm. Access yet to be negotiated. Morning only.

May 23 Morning: **Cockshoots Wood.** Search for *Ophrys insectifera*, plus Moschatel, Green Hellebore and Butcher's Broom. Parking SP871042, at top of Cobblershill Lane, off A413 from Wendover Dean.

Afternoon: **Dillwyn Plantation.** Search for *Ophrys insectifera*. There is parking at Naphill Village Hall, Main Road HP14 4SX, roughly SU847970, and we shall meet there unless anything closer can be found.

May 30 **Woods near Pipers.** Search for *Ophrys insectifera*. Parking opposite The Harrow SU861976. Steep walk up from there!

June 6th **Flower Meadow Surveys I.** (a) Bryants Bottom Green. Access from footpath at SU85359960. Park on Bryants Bottom Road (best location to be determined). Open access. Morning only. There are very few records for this meadow.

Saturday June 29th **Flower Meadow Surveys II.** Amersham (Marieke to determine details). Led by Karen and Marieke. May involve more than one location, half day or all day.

July 11th Morning: **Misbourne Wetland Flora.** (a) Doctor's Meadow, Little Missenden. Best local place for chalk stream wetland plants. Access off footpath to be negotiated. Parking on roadside near the church in Little Missenden SU920990.

Afternoon: Banks Pond & Warren Water, Abbey Park, Great Missenden. Parking on London Road near Nags Head inn, or, if we can get their agreement in exchange for a quick pint and snack, in their own car park.

July 25th **Rare arable annuals.** Hampden Bottom Farm. *Valerianella dentata*, *Thlaspi arvense*, and *Legousia hybrida* all possible, among numerous others. Access still to be negotiated, due to recent change in tenancy. Details to follow.

August 8th **Dorney Wood and Burnham Beeches.** Dorney is the only site outside Cornwall for Bladder-seed *Physospermum cornubiense*. The ponds at Burnham Beeches have bladderworts, *Utricularia spp.* Details to be determined. All day meeting with the help of a local guide.

August 22nd **Plants of disturbed land.** Details to follow. Two sites are under consideration. If they do not work out, there is a back-up plan!

Back-up: The Hawkish Complex: Prestwood Park. A search for those confusing "dandelion-like" flowers that mostly begin with "Hawk" - hawksbeards, hawkbits, hawkweeds (and cat's-ear), in order to familiarise everyone with how to separate them. Parking at Holy Trinity Church car-park SU87459990. Morning only.

September 5th **Cock Marsh** One of the rarest plants we missed in 2023, Brown Galingale *Cyperus fuscus*, because it flowers much later in the year than the date of our visit. Both Clare and Inge have scouted it out - fortunately, because I have never found it there. This would be a first for me and perhaps everybody else who does not live in Cookham. As last time, we shall probably meet at Winter Hill National Trust free car-park at SU871861 (SL6 9TW). It will be as well to be shod for very wet ground. All day because of walking involved.

September 19th

Galls and leaf-mines. Hampden Common, general search of short grassland and woodland, with particular look at two uncommon acid grassland plants, Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile* (only one gall recorded so far for this species) and Heath Speedwell *Veronica officinalis* (no galls known for certain on this species; possibility of leaf-miners, for which I shall bring a key). If conditions are right there is the possibility of early waxcaps, of which there are many species here. Park beside the common SP846015.

October 3rd **Botany Group Annual Business Meeting.** Peterley Manor Farm, Prestwood.

All comments and enquiries to Tony at ecorocker@gmail.com.