

A watercolor illustration of several purple orchid flowers on a green background. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The colors range from light lavender to deep purple. The background is a mix of light and dark green washes, creating a soft, naturalistic feel.

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HARDY ORCHID SOCIETY

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The Hardy Orchid Society

Our aim is to promote interest in the study of Native European Orchids and those from similar temperate climates throughout the world. We cover such varied aspects as field study, cultivation and propagation, photography, taxonomy and systematics, and practical conservation. We welcome articles relating to any of these subjects, which will be considered for publication by the editorial committee. Please send your submissions to the Editor, and please structure your text according to the "Advice to Authors" (see website www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk, January 2004 Journal, Members' Handbook or contact the Editor). Views expressed in journal articles are those of their author(s) and may not reflect those of HOS.

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Cover Photographs

Semi abstract paintings by Julia Wilkinson (see article on page 114)

Front Page: Cool Angels – based on the Common Twayblade

Back Page: Dancers – based on the Green-winged Orchid

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Editorial Note

This issue includes the first part of Sean Cole’s overview of Ghost Orchid history in England. As many will know, Sean has invested a great deal of energy researching this and his *JHOS* article is based on a refereed paper recently published by BSBI in their *New Journal of Botany*. We have some of the 2014 field trip reports in this issue but as the leaders did such a good and comprehensive job in writing about them a few have had to be held over for the next *JHOS*. There is also an interesting and different piece from Julia Wilkinson – her semi-abstract paintings provide the covers for this issue. I am hoping that the journal gets distributed before her October exhibition ends but the details given here have also been on the website for some time.

I have an update on the potential for another Fen Orchid field trip to East Anglia in 2015. I know some people were unable to make this year’s date and doubtless there will be a few who missed out due to not seeing the advance information. RSPB are opening the site again in 2015 but this will not become an annual event. Hence 2015 will in all probability be the last opportunity for some time to see this population in its unspoilt fenland habitat. The species count across the two sites that RSPB manage in the East Anglian broadland came to 5,500 plants in 2014 making this a critically important location for *Liparis loeselii* subsp. *loeslii*. The water abstraction threat remains and I will update information on the website as soon as I get it.

We will add details of the 2015 Fen Orchid visit to the field trip itinerary in the next *JHOS* but the provisional dates are two days across the weekend of June 13th and 14th. If you do wish to attend please let me know by e-mail (moorend@globalnet.co.uk) as I will co-ordinate names for RSPB.

Chairman's Note Celia Wright

Greetings to you all. I hope our UK members have enjoyed the good summer and autumn weather this year. It's certainly helped to be out in the sun rather than the rain when looking for orchids. I really enjoyed our Leeds meeting in September. Rather fewer members came than in previous years but the smaller group made the meeting feel even friendlier than usual. It's a good venue, easy to get to with plenty of parking. I hope more members will join us there next year.

Our next meeting is at Kidlington on Sunday 16th November. There's still time to book. The booking form was sent out with your July Journal, but if you've lost it, you can download another one from our website at <http://www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk>

There's also still time to enter the print classes in our Photographic Competition at Kidlington. Steve Pickersgill, the organiser, needs to be notified (preferably by email – contact details inside the front cover) by 3rd November if you intend to enter. Photographs should be brought to the meeting if possible, but Steve will accept postal entries if you cannot attend. You will need to send him an SAE if you want your pictures returned by post.

I'm also involved at the moment with organising international speaker tours around the European Orchid Congress in London on 9th - 12th April. As our meeting follows a week later, I'm hoping to get a speaker for us. More news on this in our next issue. The Conference includes a hardy orchid symposium on Friday 10th April. If you're planning to register, do so before the end of November as the cost rises after that. More information is available at <http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-london-shows/european-orchid-show-and-conference-2015>

We always welcome involvement of HOS members in what we do as a society. Although we have an excellent committee, contributions from non committee members are very valuable and break the cycle of the same small group of people being the only ones involved. So maybe think whether you could lead a field trip, write an article (or just a paragraph) for the Journal or give a short talk at one of our meetings. I shall be coming off the committee when my term as Chairman ends next April and hope this will allow me to contribute in other ways, perhaps by giving some talks at meetings. Contact the relevant committee member if you'd like more information or help with any of these activities. All the contact details are inside the front cover.

My best wishes to you all.



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Preparing Semi-Abstract Orchid Paintings

Julia Wilkinson

During October 2014 I held an exhibition, in Hampshire, of semi-abstract paintings of English orchids; photographs of the flowers were enlarged and small details copied, including microscopic information, so the effect is of paintings of what one would see in a microscope. Some works are large, and they took about five years to prepare. With layers of glazes and often bright colour, the effect is a little like stained glass paintings.

First I took photographs, mostly on walks with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. I participated in a volunteering day, counting the plants, at Chappetts Wood in Hampshire, where there were masses of Narrow-leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*), quite a lot of White Helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*), some Bird's-Nest Orchids (*Neottia nidus-avis*), a few Fly Orchids (*Ophrys insectifera*) and a flowering Common Twayblade (*Neottia (Listera) ovata*). On other days I took photographs of Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) on Old Winchester Hill, Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*) and Pyramidal Orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) at St Catherine's Hill at Winchester, Southern Marsh Orchids (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) near Bishops Waltham in Hampshire and Heath Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza maculata*) near Portsmouth. Also on events led by the Wildlife Trust, I took pictures of an Autumn Lady's Tresses Orchid (*Spiranthes spiralis*) in the New Forest, and Green-winged Orchids (*Anacamptis (Orchis) morio*) at a garden in Emsworth.

People have said that some digital compact cameras take better macro pictures (for close-up photographs) than some digital SLRs, and I found that the compact Fuji that I used had a very good macro zoom. I enlarged the photos massively and then copied the results, with layers of oil or acrylic glazes, on canvas, including microscopic details such as tiny veins, hairs and groups of cells. Because the pictures are so close-up, the results are mostly semi-abstract. In many ways, I identify with the plants, for example, being complex, romantic and often wearing bright colours, so they are mostly created partly as self-portraits.

On some of the works - less abstract and not so much self-portraits - I painted texts referring to the threats from countryside destruction. As readers will know, English orchids are threatened by habitat destruction, habitat change and human predation and some species are vulnerable to extinction in Britain. One painting has 'PROPOSED BUILDING SITE!' painted at the base of it; another has 'WILDLANDS HOUSING HERE SOON!' on it. The exhibition also includes conceptual art: the Summer Lady's Tresses Orchid (*Spiranthes aestivalis*) is extinct in Britain (since 1952), and old photographs won't show as much detail as the others, so I couldn't do a similar

painting. Thus I included it as conceptual art – the buyer will receive absolutely nothing. The idea is to emphasize how much we would miss the other species if they died out.

The exhibition includes thirteen paintings plus the conceptual art. Five of the works are almost a meter high (90x60cm (36x24’’)). It has been time-consuming, painstaking work, trying to copy the details exactly, but overall it has been an enjoyable project.

**A Bee’s View (British Orchids): Paintings © by Julia Wilkinson
2nd October - 31st October 2014**

**Stubbington Library, Stubbington Lane, Stubbington, Fareham,
Hampshire, England. PO14 2PP. Please see library website or contact
library for opening times and days (closed Wednesday and Sunday, closes
1pm on Saturdays).**

www.juliawilkinson.net

**French Holiday 2013: Part 2 Aude
Hilary & Steve Pickersgill**

We had endured a very mixed bag of weather in the Millau area and while the orchids were fantastic, and we had enjoyed wonderful views of the gorges in late evening sunshine, we were ready for a move to the Aude. We hoped the weather would be kinder and we would not have to wear two fleeces by day and attempt to dry saturated walking boots overnight. As we headed south and drove out of the hills we left behind the gloom of the low cloud and had to contend with strong winds instead. The roadsides of the Languedocienne were bright with pseudacacia and deep pink antirrhinums. On the outskirts of Perpignan patches of grassland within a complex road junction were ablaze with cornfield flowers. That was one occasion when slow traffic was an advantage. We parked the caravan at a site west of Perpignan and looked forward to exploring new sites.

On Day 1 the wind was something approaching gale force so we felt confident that we would find something worth photographing and headed for Coustouges on the Spanish border to see if we could find *Ophrys catalaunica*. It was an interesting road up into the Pyrenees and clearly not a busy route as most drivers we met were travelling at speed down the middle of the road! The early morning cloud had cleared and we reached Coustouges in brilliant sunshine. Novices that we are, we thought the fields looked very unlikely sites for orchids. How wrong we were. When we found

the right place the orchids were so numerous it was hard to put a foot down without trampling them. *Op. catalaunica* did not disappoint and we also found some hybrids, we think with *Ophrys scolopax* and *Ophrys sphegodes* though the only *Op. scolopax* we found were some distance away on the other side of the road and there was no sign of an *Op. sphegodes*. There were many spikes of *Orchis anthropophora* in flower and huge numbers of *Gymnadenia conopsea* in bud. The wind was quite strong and we were pleased to have our trusty wind-break to hand – a clear plastic umbrella purchased for the princely sum of £1! Don't knock it, it does the job or rather it did until an unexpectedly fierce gust of wind carried it off across the countryside and deposited it high in a tree. Of course Steve climbed up to retrieve it (not without risk to life and limb) – where were we going to find a replacement out in the sticks? We chose our route back via Montferrer and stopped to take the path up to the château. With hindsight we should have allowed a lot more time as it was further than we had anticipated and the path was quite tricky in places. We made it to the ridge and the panorama was superb from the snow-capped Mount Canigou to the Mediterranean. Beside the path we had seen odd plants of 8 different species of orchid but on this occasion nothing new to add to our list.

Day 2 started with glorious sunshine and we decided to head for the area near Bugarach where we had details of several sites. Our route took us through the Gorges de Galamus. The scenery was very impressive but it is not the sort of road to negotiate often. We were encouraged by the reappearance of orchids at the roadside – something we had missed on day 1. We started at a site behind a derelict transformer. This site seems to have changed significantly in recent years and while we did find good numbers of orchids on a patch of scrubby ground up the hill we could not match the list seen by others. We did find our first *Serapias* here, *Serapias lingua*. Our next stop was by a bridge where we dodged the showers and explored both sides of the road. It was a very generous site with huge numbers of *Op. scolopax* in an impressive range of colours. *Op. sphegodes* had gone over but *O. anthropophora* were in full flower. We also saw *Ophrys sulcata*, *Orchis militaris*, *Orchis purpurea*, (plus hybrids), *Anacamptis morio* (over), *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (bud), *Cephalanthera damasonium*, *Cephalanthera longifolia*, and one *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* in full flower. A second site by a bridge further along the road yielded a similar treasure trove with the addition of *Ophrys insectifera*, more *D. fuchsii* and a new species for our list, *Ophrys vasconica*.

The rain was getting worse so we decided to call it a day. As we headed up the hill I spotted a wonderful show of *Anacamptis laxiflora* in a field and we stopped to

Fig. 1: *Ophrys catalaunica*

Fig. 2: *Ophrys magniflora*

Fig. 3: *Ophrys speculum*

Fig. 4: *Ophrys picta*

Photos by Hilary Pickersgill

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2



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4



take photographs. The field was clearly a gem but my camera battery was flat and the rain was getting heavier so with great reluctance I got back in the car and we moved on. However, that was not our last stop. Further up the hill I spotted *Orchis provincialis* high up on a bank. Well, that had to be worth a photograph so the battery was changed and I got out of the car once again. It had stopped raining but the wind was ferocious and I failed to get a reasonable photograph. We would be back! Later I discovered these two sites were already on our list to be explored.

Days 3 and 4 were sightseeing days. We can recommend Les Orgues near Ille-sur-Tet, the view from the hermitage at Fort Real, the solar furnaces near Font Romeau and the medieval town Villefranche-de-Conflent. By Day 5 we were getting twitchy so returned to our site list and went in search of orchids. We spent some time in a wonderful meadow at a road junction near Col St Louis. We were looking for *Neotinea conica*, a new orchid for us. It was worth exploring every bit of the meadow as different species had their own favourite spots but while we saw what by now were all the usual suspects, *N. conica* seemed to be absent. Not to be defeated we had lunch and then resumed our search which yielded two plants in very poor condition and one just starting to go over in one of the other fields where there was apparently nothing else of interest. We looked at a few other sites but found nothing new and decided to head for the *A. laxiflora* field. This was the only site in the Aude where we found *Dactylorhiza viridis* and *Neottia (Listera) ovata*. There was also one plant of *Ophrys apifera* in flower. Our last stop was to photograph the *O. provincialis*. The plants were past their best and I struggled to find a good one but as I adjusted my position to get a better shot I spotted a group of *Ophrys speculum*. That is one of our favourite orchids and we believe quite rare in this area so that was a real treat. One other new orchid to add to our list at this site was *Neotinea maculata* but the flowers were well past their best.

Normal folk would probably have called it a day at this point but the sun was shining, it was warm (at last) and there was the promise of another new orchid, *Ophrys magniflora*. We headed for a site near Talairan. Those of you who know the area will realise how crazy that was. We also trusted our satnav to take us by the best / fastest route. It didn't. Fortunately there is an orchid trail at this site between the vineyards of Domaine Serre Mazard, so with boards to guide us our task was made easier. *Op. magniflora* was present in good numbers and we also added *Serapias vomeracea* to our list so it was well worth the detour. One question still to be answered – *Op. catalaunica* and *Op. magniflora*, are they one and the same?

Fig. 5: *Anacamptis laxiflora*

Fig. 7: *Orchis pallens*

Fig. 6: Pink *Dactylorhiza sambucina*

Fig 8: Yellow *Dactylorhiza sambucina*

Photos by Stephen Pickersgill (Fig. 5) & Hilary Pickersgill (Figs. 6-8)

5



6



7



8



On Day 6 the forecast promised two good days but we woke to thick cloud. As we ventured into the hills we drove up into the cloud and eventually out the other side where we caught eerie views of dark hillsides breaking through thick cloud banks. Our mission for the day was to find *Orchis pallens* and pink *Dactylorhiza sambucina*. We also wanted to check another site for *N. conica*. We headed for the Col de Jau and checked our first site for *D. sambucina*. There were a few yellow flowers and three pink ones but they were in a poor state. At the next site there were more plants but we struggled to see them as the cloud was so thick! The pink ones were poor once again. We tried several sites for *O. pallens* and eventually found it alternating with *Orchis mascula* high up on steep roadside banks. They were all in superb condition, perhaps because they were away from danger. There were lots of *C. longifolia* in bud and they would put on quite a show as the *O. mascula* faded. Rain was never far away but we did check one more site for *N. conica* only to find it occupied by cows and closely cropped. We decided that it would be prudent to move closer to Carcassonne as this would put us closer to other sites so Day 7 was to be a day for travel, once again. After heavy rain overnight it was no surprise to find the next campsite partly flooded and we had to search for a pitch that was dry enough to set up our unit once again.

On Day 8 we awoke to glorious sunshine! That soon gave way to sunny intervals, showers and a ferocious wind. We headed for the Trebes transmitter site, just up the road and hard to miss as the transmitter is visible for miles. It is always encouraging when the orchids are clearly visible from the car. There was a sizeable area to explore and we wondered if it had once extended beyond the transmitter where, now, there is a young vineyard. There were huge numbers of very striking *S. vomeracea*, *Op. sphegodes* types, and *Op. apifera*. In addition to the standard *Op. apifera* there were a few plants that looked close to var. *trollii* and a lot that had features part way between the two. *O. purpurea* had gone over but *A. pyramidalis* were in full flower. There were many sturdy shoots of *Himantoglossum hircinum* and a few late flowers indicated a good population of *Ophrys lutea*.

Our next quest was to find *Dactylorhiza insularis*. On the way we were struck by some magnificent stands of *O. anthropophora* at the roadside. We stopped for a closer look and also found our first spikes of *Epipactis muelleri* but they had been damaged by workmen. At the *D. insularis* site we were able to explore one field without too much difficulty but the others were surrounded by 4 or 5 lines of electrified fence and, yes, it was live! We were struck by the fact that so many of the orchids here were well past their best or over. Perhaps their exposed habitat had some bearing on this. There were the last remnants of two orchids that were indeed *D. insularis*. The gusting wind was strong enough to knock me off my feet so we decided to move on. We stopped on

Fig. 9: *Serapias vomeracea* Fig. 10: *Ophrys apifera* var. *trollii*
 Fig. 11 *Ophrys vasconica* Fig. 12: *Dactylorhiza viridis*
 Photos by Hilary Pickersgill

9



10



11



12



the road to Polycarpe to investigate some splendid *Platanthera bifolia* at the top of a high bank and while I scaled the steep muddy slope, Steve investigated the road verges and found that they were packed with *S. lingua*, *S. vomeracea*, *Op. scolopax* and *O. anthropophora*. Nothing new but the sheer numbers were impressive.

On our last day in the Aude, many of the sites were roadside verges and did not throw up any new species but they were worth visiting for the variety of species at each site and the magnificent stands of *O. anthropophora* and *C. longifolia* en route. A stretch of verge near Arques with eleven different species was also worthy of note for its large colony of roman snails. The shell patterns were exquisite. At this site there was a large group of *Ophrys picta*, a new orchid for our list. We started to explore a site at the Col des Fourches. Most of the orchids had gone past their best or were completely over but enough flowers remained to identify a group of *O. provincialis* with *A. morio*, *A. morio picta*, *O. anthropophora*, *O. purpurea* and a few *O. mascula*. At Col d'Al Bosc we found another group of *Op. picta*. The side lobes appeared to be longer in this population. The spikes of *Op. sphogodes* at this site were very tall. The *O. anthropophora* appeared in large striking groups along this road. At one point we stopped to look at a group of *Limodorum abortivum* which were still in bud and also found several spikes of *Epipactis* in tight bud. We think some were *Epipactis muelleri* but lack the expertise to identify the others. Another abundant orchid was *S. vomeracea* appearing in such numbers that it was easy to spot from the car even through rain-soaked windows.

The last site we explored was a farm track running along the edge of a field just outside St Hilaire. Heavy rain had set in for the rest of the day but the rich orchid flora was enough to tempt an already wet orchid lover out with her camera. Eleven species were logged and while there was nothing new to add to the list the flowers were wonderful and made a fitting end to our time in the Aude. Overnight the rain continued to hammer down and we woke to find that large areas of the campsite were flooded. The campsite owner described the weather as 'une catastrophe' and the television news continued to detail flooding and amber weather warnings in the area. It had been our intention to end our holiday walking in the Pyrenees but the weather was so bad we changed our plans and headed for the Vercors where we hoped to find orchids we missed in 2012 and some sunshine if the forecast was to be believed.

We would like to thank the members of HOS who helped us with site information and the number of people over the years who have contributed to those records. Special thanks to Alan Blackman for site information and specific orchid identification.

Fig. 13: *Orchis anthropophora* Fig. 14: *Anacamptis laxiflora*
 Photos by Hilary Pickersgill

13



14



The Ghost Orchid in England – a History: Part 1 – the West Sean Cole

“The Paradise” is the local name of the place on the Worcestershire/Herefordshire border where, in 1854, the local vicar’s wife, on her way to visit her brother-in-law, found and picked an unknown flower. The plant was eventually identified as Britain’s first Ghost Orchid (*Epipogium aphyllum*), then known as *Epipogon*. It was an unremarkable specimen with a single flower, although at 15cm tall would embarrass most other British Ghost Orchids that would follow.



Herbarium specimen of the
Ghost Orchid from 1854
Photo by Sean Cole

The vicar’s wife was Mary Anderton Smith, of Tedstone Rectory. The vicarage was walking distance from “The Paradise”, and the footpath still takes one over the Sapey Brook from Worcestershire into Herefordshire and thence southwards towards Tedstone Delamere.

The enormity of the find encouraged Mary’s husband to search the locality, and on 21st August, about a month after his wife’s discovery, William Anderton Smith found a whole group of Ghost Orchids growing from the bare soil of the bank next to the shallow brook. Because the area was being trodden and used by ponies to take away logs, he removed the root mass and plants to the grounds of the Rectory, where three spikes flowered. One remains in the Natural History Museum in London to this day - a 12cm tall, two-flowered specimen.

The tranquillity is belied by the topography of the site, however, which is highly susceptible to flooding; because of the steepness and narrowness of the gorge, water is hurled down this narrow passage in times of heavy rain, and in 2007 the road at the bottom of the valley was inaccessible following the great floods in July of that year. Whole trees were uprooted and cast into the brook, and the banks subsumed by soil and debris brought from upstream. This must have happened repeatedly in the last 160 years, so the original spot must look very different today.



“The Paradise” where the first British Ghost Orchid was discovered
Photo by Sean Cole

So, given there is a single record from the year Britain joined the Crimean War, Edward Elgar was three years away from being born in Broadheath, Worcestershire, and the Great Auk was yet to become extinct, is it sensible to check this site? The removal of both root mass and flowering spikes to the Rectory garden clearly does not bode well. However, a single senescent spike of an unconfirmed plant was seen close to the original locality in 1991, having actually seeded. The observer did not photograph or submit his sighting because the plant was too far over for him to be 100% certain of such a significant record. Because of this putative sighting, the Sapey Brook site is checked annually in case a miracle happens.

Nearby Shropshire, more specifically the woods to the west of Ludlow, were the base of the next records. The first occurrence came by accident when a forester cleared a trench and local lady Miss Lloyd found a specimen of *Epipogium* in the debris. This was in August 1876 (or possibly 1877). The plant had four flowers, the bottom one already over. The specimen was accidentally thrown away by a servant. Two years later another plant, this time a live one, was found by a Miss Peele in the same wood, and this one was transplanted to the finder's garden, where it of course failed to grow. There is a third record in the same wood which came to light subsequently, as it became apparent the “abortive Bee Orchis” found by local chemist Mr Cocking was also of this species. The year of this record is unstated, and there is no specimen

because the observer had disregarded it, but it was in August, and was prior to 1882. It was searched for, but not found, in 1881 and 1883.

On 2nd September 1892 G Claridge Druce, eminent botanist of the day, was shown the wood at Upper Evens where the species had been found. He searched unsuccessfully that day, but the day after did another prolonged search, and found a single specimen growing on a flat area of an otherwise steep, north-facing slope, heavily shaded by oaks. This specimen remains at the Natural History Museum in London, a robust spike with two large, freshly opened flowers. It was searched for at the site subsequently, but not refound.

During the First World War, that section of Bringewood Chase was cleared for timber and subsequently became coniferous plantation. Apart from soil upheaval, the tree species should not necessarily rule out recurrence of the species here, but the presence or absence of mycorrhizal host may. Driving west out of Ludlow along Killhorse Lane takes one past some very suitable-looking Oak woodland on the south side of the road, so this area is checked occasionally at the right time of year just in case of a remarkable surprise. All of the records from this location were approximately one and a half miles out of Ludlow, and not far from the road.

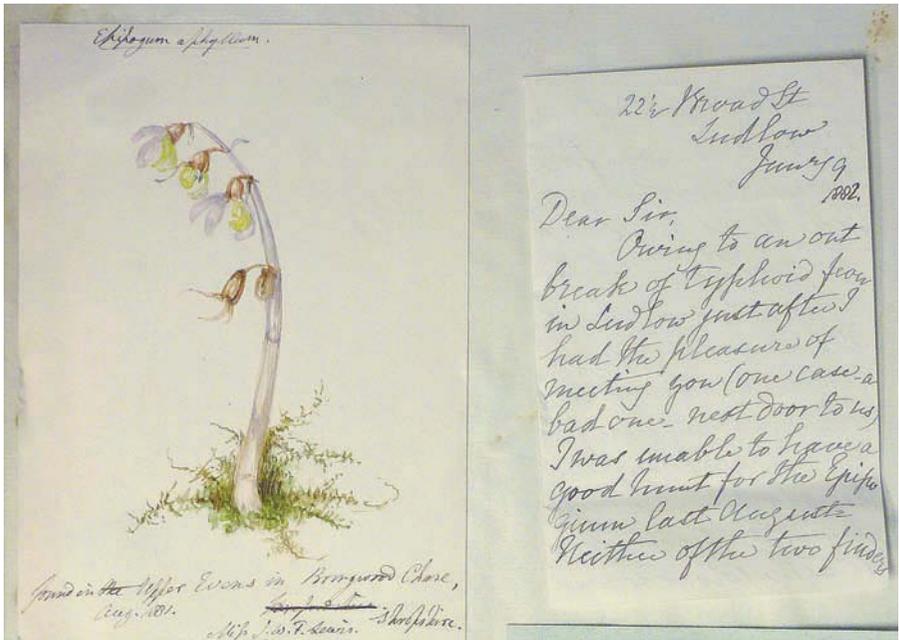
The wider Bringewood Chase, known these days as Mortimer Forest, does have some sections of ancient woodland, especially around the Mary Knoll Valley area, so any prospective Ghost hunters might like to focus their searches on this area too. Shropshire and Herefordshire have many pockets of suitable-looking woodland, so a quick roadside stop at a dark ancient Oak woodland with heavy leaf litter and damp ditches would be a good bet.

The record about which there is the least information is one from 1910 near Ross on Wye. This was found by C. C. Mountfort of Uppingham, who showed it to his friend Francis M Day of Malvern. Day wrote to G C Druce in 1924 with the following information: "it was found in 1910 on the left hand side of the road, some way below Ross Station, and was a solitary specimen." The 'Botanical Society And Exchange Club of the British Isles (now BSBI) report for 1938 states: "Hereford; moist oak wood, Wye Valley, late July 1910, C. C. MOUNTFORT, comm. F. M. DAY. [This is no doubt the specimen referred to by Godfery, Mon. and Icon. Nat. Brit. Orch., 119 (1933), "a solitary example is said to have been found near Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, in 1910." The specimen was traced by Mr Day and at his request Mr Mountfort kindly allowed me to examine the specimen, which is in good condition, having two flowers and a piece of the coral-like rhizome attached.-J, M. HALL.]". So, another casualty of the collector taking the underground parts as well as the flowering spike, meaning only a single specimen to this point was left in the ground to grow.

There is no longer a Railway station at Ross, but the railway line ran parallel to what is now the B4234, running south out of the town. The most likely locality appears to be near Kerne Bridge, opposite Flanseford Priory, where there is an ancient woodland running alongside the road on a steep bank. Although shady, there is quite heavy ground cover, but of course, the ecology of the wood may have changed somewhat in the last 100 or so years. The woodlands on the opposite side of the river nearby, at Goodrich, also look suitable.

There is an uncorroborated and probably erroneous report from Gloucestershire in the 1930s, another possible record, from 1971 or 1972, west of the Upper Evens site, just into Herefordshire. This report is of several plants, in June or July, although nothing could be found in 1974 when two local botanists checked the spot. The description is quite convincing, as is the location. However, Yellow Bird's-nest is known to occur in the area, so a mistake by non-botanists cannot be ruled out.

The west of England went without corroborated records of Ghost Orchid until 1982. This is probably on account of repeated discoveries in the Chilterns, and the regularity and ease with which it could be found there from 1953 onwards.



Painting of the original Shropshire Ghost Orchid of 1876/1877



The 1982 Ghost Orchid (top)
& its site (bottom)
Photographs by S. Richards

Most English Ghost Orchids have been found for the first time entirely by accident rather than by people searching specifically for them – and, curiously, most have been found by female observers. As with the other three locations in the west mentioned here, so it was with the fourth and most recent one – at Haugh Wood, just south-east of Hereford. In 1982, Dr. Valerie Coombs (now Dr Valerie Richards), was out on a walk and was heading back home. It was raining hard and as a result she had her head down. Water was dripping off her fringe and she was feeling somewhat beleaguered. The rain proved fortuitous in the end, because with her head down she saw a single Ghost Orchid flower poking up from leaf litter in a rut next to the cart track she was walking along. She knew immediately what it was and subsequently contacted the conservation bodies. The decision was made not to draw attention to the plant, or the location in an effort to prevent disturbance.

Mark Jannink, after repeated searches in 2009, was rewarded by the finding of another single specimen in Haugh Wood. This one was growing out of bare soil, and also bore a single flower. The co-incidence of dates is remarkable – 27 years and one day after Valerie Coombs’s find. Both plants lasted to the 1st October, when predatory slugs got the better of them. Valerie’s plant had two flowers, Mark’s a single one.

A more comprehensive conservation strategy was devised this time, which in the short term has meant the felling of some trees in the area of the 2009 plant, allowing light ingress and understorey development. In the longer term the regeneration of native Oaks is the aim. The trees in the area of the plant were planted between 1950 and 1959, so it may be that underground parts were brought in with those trees.

However the Ghost arrived here, this does give some indication as to the life expectancy of the plants, and how long they may remain underground. The 2009 site has been checked annually since, but without success. That record proved once again

that long absences do not necessarily mean the plant is not present, and this is one of the mantras of the Ghost Hunter, to try to provide hope that one day the Holy Grail should be found.

The species was also found in the Chilterns during the 20th century, and details of its occurrences there will be featured in part two of this article.



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WANTED: Members willing to run Field Trips for 2015

If you have ever been on any of the HOS Field Trips you will know what good fun they are, so here is your chance to put something back into the society.

I am asking for members who would be prepared to lead a field trip next year, ideally to a site the society has not visited before. If you are willing to do so, please contact me by e-mail (alan.bousfield@ukgateway.net). In particular, I would like someone to lead a field trip in Scotland. As can be seen from the last two years, we have members wishing to attend, but I am unable to run one as I now live near Hasting and it is a long journey north.

Reports from the 2014 HOS Field Trips – Part One

Alan Bousfield

The following reports from the first part of the 2014 field trip programme have been prepared by the relevant leaders

Monday 5th May: Samphire Hoe, Kent. Leader: Mike Parsons

The Early Spider-orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*) was in bloom early this year. A group of twelve enthusiasts assembled in sunshine on the 5th of May at Samphire Hoe to find that, although there were a good many flowers, most of them were past their best. Fortunately, there were enough to provide some good pictures, although we were too late for the one unusual yellow variety. There were three rosettes of Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) but no other orchids, though in the past two other species (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and *Ophrys apifera*) have been recorded here. In the afternoon, a trip to Yocklett's Bank added Lady Orchid, Early-purple Orchid and Fly Orchid, together with the Twayblade and Common Spotted-orchid. The Fly Orchids were having a really good year, but the "Ladies" were less profuse than usual.

Sunday 18th May: The Derbyshire Dales. Leader: Cathryn Frost

A group of eight members met on a lovely sunny day at the Red Lion in Litton ready to visit the Early-purple Orchids in Cressbrook Dale. The timing for the orchids was perfect, with what seemed like thousands flowering well, covering the hillside. It was great to see the rarer white variety too. Trollius were also spotted in full flower. Other species in the Dale were Meadow Saxifrage and Field Pansy. After lunch, we travelled in a convoy to Lathkill Dale. This Dale was covered in flowers and because it was such a hot day the butterflies were everywhere: Small Copper, Green-veined White, Green Hairstreak, Brimstone, Dingy Skipper and Orange-tip. We heard Redstart and Whitethroat, and saw Dippers and Grey Wagtail. There were lots of Early-purple Orchids here in amongst Cowslips, Wood Anemones and Mossy Saxifrage. It was interesting to see Jacob's Ladder (a red data species), a couple of which had started to flower.

Thursday 29th May: Kent. Leader: Alan Blackman

Cloudy skies and a bit of light rain greeted eight members as they met up at Stelling Minnis in East Kent. We set off for the first site, Park Gate Down, and as we made our way up the slope of this reserve the skies began to brighten. The target species here was Monkey Orchid (*Orchis simia*) which, although down on usual numbers,

Figs. 1 & 2: Early Spider-orchid in Kent
Fig. 3: Lady Orchid in Kent Fig. 4: Early-purple Orchid in Derbyshire
Photos by Alan Bousfield (Figs. 1-3) & Cathryn Frost (Fig. 4)



provided plenty of plants in good condition for photos. Other species here were Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Chalk Fragrant-orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) both just starting to flower, some nice Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), a couple of Greater Butterfly-orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*) and a lot of gone-over Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*). Also of interest was some very nice *Aquilegia vulgaris*.



Green Hairstreak in Kent
Photo by Alan Blackman

After lunch, during which the sun came out, we set off for the afternoon site – Bonsai Bank. The main species to see here was Lady Orchid (*Orchis purpurea*), and they were here in unbelievable numbers and in pristine condition. Over the last few years a lot of careful thinning has taken place and the “Ladies” have responded in spectacular fashion. Also here in large numbers and good condition were Greater Butterfly-orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*), Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), White Helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*), Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*), and Chalk

Fragrant-orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) just coming into flower. In the area where a lot of scrub had been cleared were some large plants of Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*) and with the sun shining Green Hairstreak, Common Blue, Red Admiral and Duke of Burgundy butterflies and Cinnabar moths were seen.

Friday 30th May: Box Hill, North Downs. Leaders: Gillian and Ken Elsom

Box Hill has a considerable reputation for its orchids: Sankey (*“The Box Hill Book of Orchids”* 2000) lists 23 orchid species formerly present but this number is now greatly reduced due to a number of negative human factors. The timing for the HOS visit naturally eliminated several more but the aim was to cover the principal species of the North Downs in Surrey. The visit was in three parts with the first being to the Brockham Lime Works which was described by Tom Turner in *JHOS* (10: 122-126, 2013). Early-purple Orchid and Violet Helleborine are both found near the start but the walk was too late for the former and too early for the latter. The acidic soils on the top of Box Hill make it a poor place for orchids. The slopes of chalk grassland are much richer but some are subject to excessive people pressure and formerly “collection” with many herbaria containing Box Hill orchids. Brockham Lime Works is some distance from the start but is definitely worth the effort. The site is managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust (Box Hill itself is National Trust land) and is a rich source

Fig. 6: Bird’s-nest Orchid in Surrey

Fig. 7: Greater Butterfly-orchid in Kent Fig. 8: Monkey Orchid in Kent
Photos by Ken Elsom (Fig. 6) & Alan Blackman (Figs. 7 & 8)

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of many forms of wildlife including eight species of bat, which live in the old lime works buildings. The quarry has steep chalk cliffs which helps to isolate the area. There were huge numbers (probably many thousands) of Common Twayblade and hundreds of Common Spotted-orchids and Chalk (Common) Fragrant-orchids in the base of the quarry. The visit was primarily timed for the Fly and Man Orchids, with



Man Orchid in Surrey
Photo by Ken Elsom

about 20 of each here. Also seen in the quarry were about ten Adder's-tongue Fern. The return route was via Duke's Meadow which contained good numbers of Chalk Fragrant-orchids and Man Orchids in the steeply sloping grass, the latter being almost without the red colouration seen in the quarry examples. As a bonus a few Bee Orchids were already in flower (with more to follow), a the sign of an early season. On our way up the meadow we also found several fungi with a chalk-white mealy covering, growing on some cow dung. We think they were *Coprinus niveus*. This was, as advertised, a strenuous walk with significant and extended steep, and sometimes slippery paths; it was a five hour round trip.

The second and much shorter walk started at the car park for Juniper Bottom. More Chalk Fragrant-orchids and Common Spotted-orchids were found in the grasslands leading to Juniper Top. The woodland margins held a number (25 plus) of fine specimens of White Helleborine and the leaves of Broad-leaved Helleborine. The main object was the last of remaining Greater Butterfly-orchids. About twenty were in flower but their site is very sensitive and not really suited to visitors. Apparently they were never very common here. The final short walk – for those left standing – was from Zig Zag Road to see some Bird's-nest Orchids. It appeared to be a poor year for them with significantly more dry stalks from last year than currently flowering plants. We were too early for the nearby Box Hill Musk Orchids.



Fly Orchid in Surrey
Photo by Ken Elsom

There was a curious contrast in these walks, with human influences clearly having a bad effect on the occurrence of orchids with several important species now lost – see Sankey (2000) – yet it is precisely the post-industrial landscape of the Brockham Lime Works which provides the excellent habitat for other species. The rarest plant of the day, found on the edge of woodland on the way to the Lime Works, and again before we reached Duke’s Meadow, was the critically-endangered Green Hound’s-tongue. There is never an ideal time for a walk to see a wide variety of orchids at their best, but the main target species of the day – the White Helleborines, Bird’s-nest Orchids, Greater Butterfly-orchids, Man Orchids and Fly Orchids did not disappoint. It was also good to see healthy populations of Common Spotted-orchids and Chalk Fragrant-orchids with an uncountable number of Common Twayblades and a few early Bee Orchids. We would like to thank Tom Turner for his support and suggestion of visiting the lime works. A donation of £50 was given to the Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Saturday 7th June: Chafford Hundred – Essex. Leader: Mike Parsons

We had a good fine day at Chafford Gorge in Essex on the 7th June. We were very lucky as the weather forecast was rain. Eight members turned up at the very good visitors’ centre which has great views of the other side of the gorge. We looked down, drinking our cups of coffee before heading in the other direction into a grassy walkway which led into the best areas for seeing orchids. We first encountered Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) and Common Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*) in most areas, mainly beside the paths. The gorge is well known for Round-leaved Wintergreen (*Pyrola rotundiflora*) and we were not disappointed.

Further on we found some Bird’s-nest orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*). The site on the floor of the gorge, where the Man Orchid was found growing in profusely in 2013, had none showing. It looked as though it might have been adversely affected by winter floods. However, the site at the top of the gorge had over one hundred spikes, and it was noticeable that a number of these were unusually large (over a foot in height). We speculated that the effective drainage at that point might mean that the increased

rainfall in the winter had been beneficial. Otherwise there was a reasonable showing of the Common Spotted-orchids and some Pyramidal Orchids. Two fine spikes of the Bee Orchid were growing within sight of the visitors centre. The only orchids not found this year but found last year were Green-flowered Helleborine (*Epipactis phyllanthes*) and the previous year were Southern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) and Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*).

Thursday 19th June Oxfordshire. Leader: Bill Temple

Eight members requested a place on this field trip to see the Bee Orchid variant *Ophrys apifera* var. *belgarum*. The original date of 5th June had to be changed due to later than normal flowering at the site. Unfortunately, this meant that a number of people who made reservations for the earlier date were unable to attend. Those who did make the trip were rewarded with a fine day and hundreds of flowering Bee Orchids. There were at least a hundred var. *belgarum* plus one very odd Bee Orchid (see image). There were also two Common Spotted-orchids and a few Pyramidal Orchids in flower and hundreds of White Helleborines that had unfortunately gone to seed. Lunch was taken on top of the hill with wonderful views and in good company.

Saturday 21st June: Bedfordshire. Leaders: Geraldine and Richard Hogg

An earlier field trip was organised on 14th June for six HOS members. Four sites were explored starting with Cowslip Meadow (CWS), Luton. This is a large area of grassland by the A6 that is surrounded on two sides by houses. Orchids can be found scattered over much of the site, but an area called “The Scrape” which gets flooded in the winter, has less vegetation and contains an interesting chalk flora. Common Spotted-orchids, Southern Marsh-orchids, and many hybrids, some large, were seen here. The second site was near to the village of Streatley, north of Luton, where there are a number of Green-flowered Helleborines beneath beech trees. The orchids were found in bud, both on the top of the hill, and nearby down the escarpment. The last visit of the morning was to Sundon Extension Graveyard where there is a superb display of Bee Orchids, with a few Pyramidal Orchids and Common Spotted-orchids. The orchids have been protected here this year by simple staked string fences covering three small areas. There were literally hundreds of Bee Orchids flowering here, with some really impressive groups, and many tall plants, some with up to 14 flowers. The last visit of the day was to Knocking Hoe (NNR), which was accessed by a path along the edge of a wood. There were a few White Helleborines here, but all had finished flowering. The first orchids seen on the reserve itself were Common Spotted-orchids which included a large group with over 10 stems. There were also

Fig. 11: HOS field trip to Sundon, Bedfordshire

Fig. 12: Hybrid orchid *Dactylorhiza* × *grandis*, Cowslip Meadow, Luton

Fig. 13: Atypical Bee Orchid in Oxfordshire

Photo by Richard Hogg (Figs 11 & 12) & Bill Temple (Fig 13)

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Sundon hundreds of Pyramidal Orchids, and several scattered Bee Orchids. Burnt Orchids were seen on the side of the hill at the north-west end of the reserve. There were still a few in flower, but most were finished. Other orchids seen in this area included Chalk Fragrant-orchid, Pyramidal Orchid and Twayblade. Colin Metherell suggested a different way back to the car-park, where hundreds of White Helleborine plants were seen, many with large seed pods.



Ophrys apifera var. *belgarum*
at Totternhoe
Photo by Richard Hogg

The second trip on the 21st June again attracted six HOS members. The morning was taken up with visits to the same first three sites as the earlier trip. In the afternoon, Totternhoe Nature Reserve (BCN Wildlife Trust) was visited. This is an old chalk quarry where many orchids were in evidence, including Man Orchid, Musk Orchid, Common Spotted-orchid, Bee Orchid and Twayblade. One *Ophrys apifera* var. *belgarum* was found. Frog Orchids can also be found at this site, but none were found during the field-trip. A few days later Francis Buckle showed me the location of the Frog Orchids at Totternhoe, with 12 flowering plants.

Sunday 29th June: Noar Hill – Hampshire. Leaders: Nigel Johnson and Rosemary Webb

Ten members met Nigel and Rosemary at the parking place in the lane below the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Trust Reserve of Noar Hill near Selborne. It was a lovely sunny morning, warm, and looking at the blue sky it was obviously going to stay that way.

Noar Hill is the site of medieval chalk workings which provide a variety of habitats on the ridges, banks and hollows where chalk-loving plants can thrive. Twelve species of orchid have been found through the year at Noar Hill but the site is also special for over 35 species of breeding butterflies. It is always a problem deciding when to go to Noar Hill because there is always something of interest here. This year has been a warm winter and spring, so picking the right time to see the orchids was to a certain extent a problem. There is always going to be something that is over or yet to flower. We decided that the end of June was the best time to see the Musk Orchids (*Herminium monorchis*) for which the reserve is most notable. In most years at this time, there will be a good display of Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) and Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*) which flower early, with Frog Orchid (*Dactylorhiza viridis*) and Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) which are among the later flowerers.

Full of anticipation, we set off up the track beside Charity Farm to the reserve entrance. As soon as one goes through the gate the extensive hollows and ridges are obvious and there will always be a few orchids to greet you! There were some Common Spotted-orchids, nearly over and some Pyramidal Orchids in full flower. In spring there are Early-purple Orchids (*Orchis mascula*) here but of course these are in advanced seed today. A bridleway goes straight on – this is the edge of the reserve – a grassy path gently rises to the left, edged with some very beautiful wild roses. One can follow tracks and paths and visit all the hollows and this was the route we took. From now on we would be surrounded by orchids.

The Pyramidal Orchids were at their peak – huge quantities everywhere in a range of shades from magenta purple to pale pink. Some were unusually dark in colour. There were a lot of Twayblades but these were mostly way past their best although they keep their shape and make striking silhouettes. We had expected the Common Spotted-orchids would be over as they flower early here and the weather has been dry and warm. A few were still in good flower in the shadier spots. The real surprise was how quickly the Chalk Fragrant-orchids (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) had gone over – two weeks earlier they were wonderful with plenty of buds. They were all but over now and some had well-developed seed heads. They are very common here and make a magnificent display but today that honour goes to the Pyramidal Orchids.

From now on, we were exploring hollows and ridges and taking photographs. We soon found the first of the Musk Orchids. Many of them are quite small this year but there are also some larger spikes and some lovely groups which gave excellent photographic opportunities. We climbed up another ridge on top of which were two diminutive Frog Orchids. On the other side of the ridge is another hollow which tends to be ignored by most people. It was full of colour; there were some quite fresh Common Spotted-orchids here and the usual mass of “Pyramidals”. Standing out, much taller than the other plants was a huge spike of what looked like a large Common Spotted-orchid in colour with very dense flowers. Closer investigation revealed it to be a hybrid between Common Spotted-orchid and Fragrant-orchid (\times *Dactyloдения st-quintinii*). This was a lovely addition to the much more common orchids. This hybrid is known from Noar Hill but this is only the fourth time I have seen it in 40 years. In spite of the huge quantities of Common Spotted-orchids and Chalk Fragrant-orchids on this site, the hybrid is uncommon.

We moved through several more hollows and across more ridges. The masses of Pyramidal Orchids and the relics of Common Spotted-orchids and Chalk Fragrant-orchids were everywhere. Good spikes of Musk Orchids became more common in the very short turf. Some sporadic Frog Orchids could be found here – they are a very red-brown colour throughout and can be confused with the flower heads of salad burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*). Anyone who is unfamiliar with or knows only small

colonies of Musk Orchid would not realise that this was not the best year for them on Noar Hill. There were plenty of flowering spikes but sometimes they almost colour the ground yellow in a good year.

Moving on, we were making for a pit where a very special Noar Hill orchid flowers. This is in a pit off to one side and to get there we pass another Noar Hill speciality - Juniper. The bushes were past flowering but many berries were forming. At the end of the pit a patch of woodland is situated on the ridge above. This provides shade in the middle of the summer and the ground is obviously cooler and damper. Here we could find Common Spotted-orchids and Chalk Fragrant-orchids still in good flower and in the open, sunny spots the fine array of the orchids we had seen so far continued. We were looking for the colony of Fly Orchids (*Ophrys insectifera*). It was obviously very late in the season but a couple of flowers were still in reasonable condition. In particular, this colony has, in most years, the white variant (*Ophrys insectifera* var. *ochroleuca*) which has flowered here at times since 1994. In spite of now being a very well-known site and the removal of plants by the selfish and unscrupulous, there is usually at least one plant to be found. This year the plant produced two flowering spikes and we were able to show members flowers that, although past their best, were still recognisable.

We moved on through the last hollow in this series, through an overgrown path, up a bank and on to a wide track which is the continuation of the second path giving access to the reserve. This path leads into a beech wood hanger on the north east side and is private land, not part of the reserve. We took the track to the side which is a continuation of the reserve, past an area which was absolutely covered with orchids – now mostly ‘Pyramidals’ but earlier, Common Spotted-orchids and Fragrant-orchids were abundant. The path goes through a shaded area onto another large open hollow with the wood above. This is a site well-known for Duke of Burgundy butterflies. It is less visited than some parts of the reserve but it is a good site for Early-purple Orchids in April and has the usual display of the summer orchids. It also contains patches of another scarce Noar Hill plant - Dragon’s-teeth (*Tetragonolobus maritimus*). This has long-stalked, pale, lemon yellow flowers and the spiky lobed leaves give it its name. This pit also contains very many Chalk Fragrant-orchids and a highlight for those looking for variety was two spikes of pure white flowers (*Gymnadenia conopsea* var. *albiflora*) one of which still had good flowers at the top of the spike.

Fig. 15: *Anacamptis pyramidalis* var. *emarginata*

Fig. 16: ×*Dactyloдения st-quintinii* – hybrid between Common Spotted-orchid and Fragrant-orchid

Fig. 17: Marbled White butterflies on a Pyramidal Orchid

Photos by Nigel Johnson (Fig. 15) & Rosemary Webb (Figs. 16 & 17)

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17



We moved on to the last hollow at the very end of the reserve, passing under some ancient beech trees and an overgrown area of nettles and scrub left for the butterflies. This last pit is also more overgrown than the others at this time of year. However, there are still plenty of orchids and this is also a good site for Early-purple Orchids which had some large seed-heads developing. This pit contains some areas with the yellow rock rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*) which was in full flower. At the far end of the pit there is a side extension and there was one good spike of albino Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii* var. *albiflora*) which was of interest to some of us.

We retraced our steps through these last two pits, back onto the broader path, heading to the west. The broad path turns to the right a bit further on ending in the lane where we parked the cars. We went straight on, past a fenced experimental area for the propagation of juniper and on to another deep pit extending westwards. There is a very steep path down and another along the rim of the pit. From here you can look down and see all the orchids on the slopes and at the bottom as if you were above the audience in an ancient amphitheatre. Again, it was the Pyramidal Orchids stealing the show but this is an area where Frog Orchids can be found.

We went on round the pit and descended at the other end by an easier path. On a north-facing bank on the right, as we looked back up the pit, were some Musk Orchids and some very small Frog Orchids. Walking back in the direction that we had come from but at the bottom of the pit, there were many Pyramidal Orchids with remarkable colours and lip formations. Perhaps the highlight here for some of us was a good spike of the rare *Anacamptis pyramidalis* var. *emarginata* with an entire lip and a surprisingly different overall appearance.

After photography we looked at some much better Frog Orchids on a bank overlooking a recently cleared area at the bottom of which there is an area of hawthorn and hazel. There is a colony of White Helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*) under the hazel which is often still in flower in the shadiest places. However, there has been much coppicing during the year and the plants had flowered much earlier and were in seed. We had now toured the whole reserve and people were free to have late refreshments, continue to photograph plants or just take in the ambience of this lovely place. Dare I say it, some people might even like to start their journey home!

The collection for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust came to £40.

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