

## **Wildflower Group**

### **March 2020, Report by Rose Pude**

Due to Coronavirus our walk planned for 27<sup>th</sup> March was cancelled but I walked the route by myself on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, taking advantage of the glorious sunshine.

The walk started at the entrance to the Deepdale Nature Reserve in Startforth. Just a short distance on the righthand side of the path were some scarlet cup toadstools. These beautiful toadstools are well worth looking for but hurry as soon they will be over.

The part of the reserve I walked through is wet meadow with some hollows that are full of water at this time of year. In one hollow I saw some marsh marigolds and lots of yellow flag leaves. The flowers of this native iris should be out in May. Other moisture-loving flowers seen were Opposite-leaved Golden saxifrage and butterbur.

There were lots of alder trees; some catkins were visible, but I only saw the female flowers on blown off branches on the ground. Alders thrive in wet ground and are widespread in Teesdale growing by rivers and in woods. The catkins resemble those of hazel bushes, but the alder can easily be identified at this time of year by the dead cones from last year on the branches and the purplish-grey leaf buds. Hazel leaf buds are green. For more information about alders look at the Woodland Trust website.

When I reached Raygill Beck I turned back had a look at the small meadow where Deepdale Beck runs into the Tees. Here I found alternate-leaved golden saxifrage. The flowers and leaves are similar to the other golden saxifrage but the arrangement of the leaves, either opposite or alternate, make distinguishing them easy.

I crossed the Tees on the silver bridge and as I reached the Barnard Castle side, just before I went down the steps, I noticed some easily visible female alder flowers on a tree growing on the riverbank.

Next I looked at the grassy area by the Tees. I saw plenty of coltsfoot flowers emerging out of some sandy areas near the river. The leaves will come later.

Finally, I walked up the path by Percy Beck in Flatts Wood. There were plenty of wood anemones in flower, but the exciting finds were some toothwort and yellow star of Bethlehem. Toothwort is a parasitic plant with whitish flowers that appear in the spring. The flowers were underneath some trees growing between the path and the beck. The yellow star of Bethlehem was growing a bit further up the path beside a tree stump. Only a few flowers were out but there were plenty of buds.

This was where I intended to end the walk but, as I live in Woodside at the top of Flatts wood, I continued up the path and noticed a large clump of moschatel. This small green flower is common in damp places but easily overlooked.

I have asked members of the group to let me know what they find on their walks and I will forward their emails to the members of the group and then prepare a monthly summary to go on our webpage.



Yellow star of Bethlehem Phil Johnson March 2019



Scarlet cup Rose Pude March 2020



Toothwort Rose Pude March 2020



Moschatel Rose Pude March 2020



Female alder flowers Rose Pude March 2020