

U3A Wild Flower Group Report 30 March 22

The first walk of the year for the Wild Flower Group was actually looking at trees to see whether we could identify them in Winter when there are no leaves. 9 of us, including 3 new members, met in Cotherstone to walk around the village and beyond. We were aided by a walk route devised some years ago by the Cotherstone Tree Group. We also used a helpful leaflet from the Woodland Trust which has photos of twigs, we found some of these were quite distinctive. We also had some tree silhouettes to use. We had an enjoyable afternoon looking at trees. We were disappointed that the Wych Elm tree referred to in our leaflet as being the largest surviving elm tree in England is no more than a stump now.

On the 29th March Celia and I took a stroll through Deepdale Woods in Startforth to take a look at the spring flowers. Near the car park we were surprised to see moschatel or town hall clocks. These tiny plants have 5 flowers with 4 facing outwards and 1 on the top, we hope to see them again on our April walk but had not seen them in these woods before. We also saw lesser celandine, dog mercury, snowdrops, daffodils, spurge, butterbur, marsh marigold, primrose, gorse, colts foot, woodrush, dandelion, early dog violet and barren strawberry. The star of the day was the wood sorrel which is covering swathes of ground in the woods. It was charming to hear lots of birdsong and we spotted a dipper in the beck. All in all, a lovely afternoon with more plants in flower than we expected due to the good weather the previous week. I may well include a March walk in the 2023 programme.

Our next walk will be to look at spring flowers meeting at Egglestone Abbey at 2pm on Wednesday 13th April. Our route will include roadside verges, meadow and woodland. The milder the weather the more flowers we should see. New members are always welcome.

Kate Keen