

## Forum report Wild Flower Group May for June Forum

During May the Wild Flower Group managed to meet for 2 walks. The first walk was from the Bowlees Visitor Centre. The weather on the afternoon turned out to be far wetter than forecast, despite this 19 hardy souls turned up for the walk. Soon after starting out the rain stopped and we ended up having a lovely afternoon. We welcomed 4 new Members on the walk.

Even before leaving the car park we had seen around 10 wild flowers. We walked up to the Bowlees quarry and saw numerous plants in flower including Marsh Valerian, Bugle and Crosswort all out in abundance.

We then passed through two meadows and over to Wynch Bridge. We saw the first Early Purple Orchid on the bank of the river in a precarious position but later saw around 40 of these orchids by Low Force at the side of the path and in the meadow. We were also able to see the lovely globe flowers in full bloom by the river and could see these at close hand. A white flowered plant by the waters edge which none of us could recognise and turned out to be Pyrenean Scurvygrass. We rounded off the afternoon with tea and coffee at the Visitor Centre.

Our second walk was in a new location for us of South Bank Meadows in Richmond. A small group met at The Station in Richmond, to explore three of the meadows owned and managed by the Richmondshire Landscape Trust. There are five meadows sloping down to the south bank of the Swale, and we visited the Bridge, Middle, and the Top Fields. The weather forecast wasn't good, but the sun came out and we avoided all the showers!

The spring flowers, such as lesser celandines and bluebells, were nearly over and the meadows were dominated by the white of the pignut and the yellow of the buttercups. The yellow-rattle was beginning to open, and we spotted the first buds of the oxeye daisies. We spent some time distinguishing between the meadow and bulbous buttercups and the various types of speedwell. Germander speedwell dominated but there was also wood, and thyme-leaved speedwell. Meadow saxifrage was seen in all three fields.

The fields have small micro-habitats within them because of variations in soil type, height, slope, aspect, shade, and drainage. In addition to the meadow flowers, there were species that preferred the damper ground around the pond and puddles, these included last year's bulrushes, water avens, yellow irises, bugle, wavy bitter-cress, brooklime, and bog stitchwort. Bog stitchwort has very tiny white flowers, with petals shorter than the sepals. In the shadier sections under the trees were wood crane's-bill and sanicle. The greater stitchwort seemed over but there was wood stitchwort, which has oval pointed, rather than narrow, leaves.

In total we counted 44 wildflowers. We might have recorded more grasses, but none of us were experts on those and we ran out of time! We finished our walk at The Station with a cup of tea (and some of us couldn't resist the coffee cake!).

Our plans for future walks include:

- 08/06/2022 Bowlees over Wynch Bridge
- 22/06/2022 Hayberries
- 13/07/2022 Smardale Gill Nature Reserve, Kirby Stephen

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