

Chorlton Water Park

6 January 1996

Twelve of us set out on a blustery but dry day. After the intense cold of the Christmas period most of the plants and wildlife seemed to have disappeared ! We did see redwing, plenty of herons and a cormorant and in the edge of Sale Water Park some lesser reedmace was noticed; this has narrower leaves, a more slender spike and a gap between the male and female parts of the spike, compared to common reedmace or bulrush which has no gap.

At the Visitor Centre Margaret showed us the nest of the solitary potter wasp. This was like a Chinese lantern, little larger than a thimble, and is built by the wasp attached to branches of bushes and trees.

Tatton Park

20 January 1996

Following an exceptionally mild spell of weather, the temperature fell dramatically at the weekend and the strong wind blowing in from the east, made it a bitterly cold day. However, five members ventured out and we walked along the main Mere from the Knutsford entrance.

Our first sighting was a cormorant and another was seen later on Melchett Mere. Mute swans were also seen and shortly afterwards a large flock of Canada geese flew in. Gulls, ducks and waterfowl were busy feeding on the far side of the Mere but were not as numerous as on other occasions; those identified included : black-headed and herring gulls, tufted ducks, wigeon, pochard, coots, moorhens, great-crested and little grebe. After lunch taken under the shelter of some trees at the far end of the Mere, we walked around Melchett Mere, and then returned along the tree-lined track on the west side of the park. Apart from a pied wagtail which flew over, there was a complete absence of small birds, usually seen in this area. However, as we came to the end of the walk, we were suddenly rewarded by the sight of a huge flock of chaffinches and bramblings, probably wintering here from Scandinavian forests.

Haughton Green

24th February 1996

We stood outside St. Mary' s church, and waited. . . . but no one came! Whilst we waited, we looked for lichens on the wall - and found quite a number too.



Fletcher Moss Gardens**30th March 1996**

After the longest and coldest winter for many years there were few signs of spring. In the Parsonage Gardens the early-flowering *Helleborus corsica*, *H. orientalis* and *Iris unguicularis* were in bloom but *Acacia baileyana* in spite of a sheltered south-facing position, had not survived.

In previous years we have been able to enter the Orchid House but it is now locked on Saturday and Sunday because of vandalism. The Alpine House in Fletcher Moss is also closed but through the windows we could see *Fritillaria michaelowski*, *Muscari*, Heavenly Blue, and *Primula marginata caerulea*. On the terraced gardens colour was provided by scattered groups of daffodils and tulips, the pink-flowered *Saxifraga x Jenkinsae* and the snowdrops *Galanthus ikarae* and *G. plicatus*.

After lunch we strolled down Stenner Lane and along the river bank, seeing the first flowers of lesser celandine and dogs mercury and leaves of last years autumn crocus. I did not make a note of any birds so they must have been as scarce as the flowers !

Wythenshawe Park**13th April 1996**

On a bitterly cold day 8 members met near the Horticultural Centre and first went round the walled garden with formal plots of fruit trees, a centre rockery and many fine shrubs and climbers. The outstanding plants in flower were whites: pulmonaria, daphne, chamomiles; pinks: camellia and one cherry; yellows: small narcissus; blues: chinodoxa. One greenhouse was full of hyacinths and primulas, solid bright colours not to everyone's taste especially the salmon pink hyacinths.

In the Safari walk we got nice and warm as it reaches tropical heat at the far end. The citrus flowers had a lovely perfume and the kumquats had fruit on. We were made most welcome for our lunch in the cafe by the volunteer helper. Afterwards we walked round the back of the Hall and found the old tulip tree propped up but with a flourishing youngster nearby. We followed the brook where celandine was in flower and plenty of leaves of ramsons, dogs mercury and Jack-by-the-hedge and ended up in another walled garden.

Finally we looked at the front of the Hall originating from the C14th and owned by the Masseys, Tattons, Tatton-Egertons and finally bought by Lord and Lady Simon and given to the people of Manchester. Cromwell's statue stands in front but this was brought here in the 1970s from outside Manchester Cathedral. The house was emptied of its contents during the Civil War but Cromwell himself never set foot here !

Glazebrook**20th April 1996**

4 members gathered for this ramble to add records to 10km. square SJ69. We started from Glazebrook Station and walked in a north-easterly direction towards Glazebury and came back along the Glazebrook. We covered four tetrads and a surprising number of species were seen in a variety of habitats. - roadsides, farmtracks and fields, a sewage works, a couple of small woods and a section of mossland. We spent quite a lot of time "revising" and there were plenty of weeds to practise on.

All the spring flowers were seen and it was particularly good to see *Primula veris* (cowslip), *Anemone nemorosa* (wood anemone) and *Adoxa moschatellina* (town hall clock or moschatel), the latter one of my favourite spring plants. We also saw and heard the following birds: robin, peewit, great-tit, willow warbler, green woodpecker, swallow, skylark, house martin, chiff chaff, greenfinch and chaffinch and small tortoiseshell and peacock butterflies. So what looked a rather unpromising area from the map provided a most interesting botanical excursion and of course, plenty of new records for the Atlas 2000.

Carrington Moss**4th May 1996**

On a fine but breezy day 14 members and friends turned out for this walk mainly on the eastern side of Carrington Moss. Amongst our visitors we welcomed the interest of the Lancashire Recorder Peter Gateley under whose expert guidance was listed over a 100 plant species and many mosses, fungi and lichens.

At a recently excavated pond site, part of the Red Rose Forest initiative, we were able to see the blackened remnants of an ancient tree, which had remained until now preserved under the peat layer for countless hundreds of years.

It proved an excellent day for birds. Many spring migrants find their way to these old mosslands and several stay to breed. We saw whitethroat, whinchat and willow warbler along the paths, swallows housemartins and lapwings above us and when we found a sheltered copse to have our lunch we were entertained by the reeling song of a grasshopper warbler who obviously found Carrington Moss to his liking.

Simister**11th May 1996**

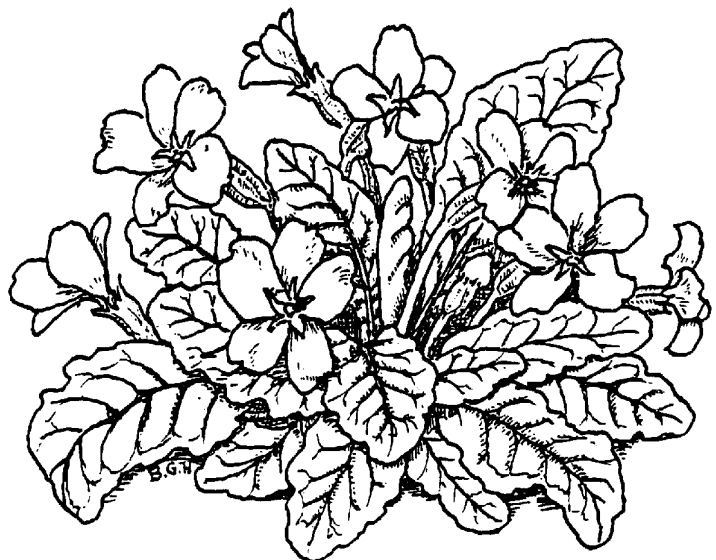
4 members and 3 visitors met in Heaton Park carpark at Smithy Lodge, Middleton Road. The weather was quite good and the sun came out when we sat down for lunch overlooking a little pond with horses in the next field which were very interesting to watch, especially for our youngest visitor, Steven. We had a short shower after lunch and then the weather was fine for the rest of the day. Steven had never seen a llama before so we all looked at the animals in the Chorlton private zoo although we did not go in because I had not arranged a visit with the owners.

Not many flowers were in bloom because of the cold weather so I only recorded ladies smock, greater stitchwort, lesser celandine and yellow loosestrife; we saw a squirrel in Heaton Park at the start of the ramble; birds too were in short supply - thrush, magpie, linnets, blue tit, great tit, robin, wren and willow warblers.

Last week we discovered a new footpath that had been constructed by the motorway workers alongside the M66, so we had a little detour to walk along it but as it is so new there are no plants growing there yet. It brought us out at Heywood Farmhouse and back onto Nut Lane and made a nice change from our usual route.

Jumbles, Bolton**18th May 1996**

Around ten members met in Shady Lane on a reasonably fine day. We set off for the south end of the reservoir through a large field of bistort which seriously distracted the plant gall fans. Then we went up the east side of the reservoir to Turton Bottoms, back to the north side via Chapelton and finally we returned down the west side of the reservoir back to the starting point. Several species of plants were added to the records for the tetrads covered, most noticeably perhaps, water violet found in a vegetative state by Alan Bamforth in the pond between Chapelton and Jumbles reservoir.



Heaton Park**25th May**

On a clear chilly Saturday morning, the leader was walking up and down outside Heaton Park Station, just wondering whether to go home and forget the walk, when a female visitor to Manchester came running and asking if I was the walking party. Very soon, we were entering the Park, via Heaton Park entrance, taking the right hand path we strolled through the park past the lake and bandstand. Eventually coming to the children's playground, where several children were enjoying themselves. Walking further through the park, not noting many wild flowers, but finding some cultivated ones. Soon after, we met up with two other members, so turned around and went into the Rose Garden to eat our lunches.

Afterwards, we started out, but found ourselves blocked by unfinished work. About turn, and walk through to Horticultural Centre, and found a few cowslips and other wild flowers in one spot here, but quite a few cultivated ones.

Although early, we decided to stop the walk and go home, but, we had enjoyed our short walk.

Delamere Forest**1st June 1996**

Apart from a few spots of rain our party of 8 members and 3 guests from Oldham and Saddleworth enjoyed a dry but cool day. (This walk was in place of the traditional coach outing which has become expensive to run if a coach-load can't be guaranteed.)

We started out by walking to Black Lake, which is a boggy 'kettlehole' - a deep depression caused by a huge lump of ice left by the last ice-age. On the way we saw bulbous buttercup, parsley piert and some large groups of healthy-looking hemlock. At the Lake were cranberry (the European one not found in jars at Sainsbury's) and the rare white sedge. Because of the weather there were no darters or dragonflies.

From the Lake we went west to Barnsbridge Gates car park and then through the forest tracks back to the Visitor Centre. Other plants seen along the way included changing forget-me-not, violet, thyme-leaved speedwell, creeping buttercup, honesty, corydalis (masses of this), wood sorrel still in flower, bistort, *Geranium molle*, *Veronica chamaedrys*, St. John's wort and greater stitchwort. A few fungi turned up: the greyish slime-mould *Ceratomyxa fruticulosa*, St. George's mushroom and wood blewit.

All three British species of woodpecker can be found at Delamere and we saw the green and the greater spotted ones. Near the Lake an airborne commotion drew our attention to a large accipiter (hawk), most likely a female sparrowhawk, being mobbed by crows. We heard cuckoo on several occasions and came across a noisy group of newly hatched nuthatch being fed at the nest.

After sampling the Snugbury's home-made ice cream at the station cafe some members departed and a few went on to Flaxmere where they found bog rosemary and sundew.

Little Bollington**15th June 1996**

This Saturday was sunny and hot and 7 members and a visitor met near the tunnel under the Bridgewater Canal. First we strolled past the cottages to look at the River Bollin, crossed by a footbridge. We went under the canal and through a field leading to a wood. Very unpromising Cheshire grass crop fields but on the edge a shout of "field madder!", *Sherardia arvensis*. This very small pink flower is not very common these days.

After the wood the path went by a hedge where we stopped to admire a nest of baby chaffinches then we had to wade through a wheat field, the usual practice to mow a 12" strip, the crop being planted up to the hedge boundary. Over a stile the next field is very undulating with a small water course called Agden Brook on the boundary and a smaller trickle through the lowest centre part. This provides a good boggy area with a wide variety of plants, though most were chewed off by the cows. Some of the party lazed under an ash tree, then we completed the round walk back to the canal, along the west bank to Dunham. A short stretch of road leads to a path round the edge of Dunham Park, back to the Bollin and the village where we started. It is difficult to know what has been planted in this area but the strange boggy field is interesting - were the mounds and dips made by spoil when the canal was dug ?

Torkington

29th June 1996

Weatherwise a dull and chilly day but, apart from a few minutes of rain at the start, it stayed fine throughout our walk. We were fortunate as the previous days had been very wet. Patrick Milligan had had to withdraw from leading the walk but was able to join us on the day, and our party numbered 6 members in all.

Starting from Torkington Park we walked along Macclesfield Road, and onto quieter roads, where we stopped now and then, to look at the cultivated plants in the many well-kept gardens. A road led us into woodland and alongside a path beside Norbury Brook. The wayside and woodland plants seen included fumitory, common vetch, lesser knapweed, bittersweet, lesser stitchwort, hedge mustard and herb bennet. Birdlife was not conspicuous but we did see a family of wrens. After lunch in the woods, we crossed the A6 and into a grassy area near Hazel Grove Golf Course found sweet cicely (*Myrrhis odorata*). When crushed this plant smells of aniseed but the commercial aniseed is from a Mediterranean plant *pimpinella*.

Crossing the Golf Course was quite tricky - too many players about ! However, once on the other side we relaxed and, sauntering down the Club access road, we saw a weasel, surely a rare sighting for most people. Back in Torkington Park the walk was ended with a look round the walled garden adjacent to Torkington Lodge. This garden is said to be over 120 years old. It has some attractive plants and bushes, also several seats should you feel like a sit-down.

A little bit about Torkington Lodge - a large house built 1780 as an 'occasional residence' for the Legh family of Knutsford. In 1835 it became an exclusive 'School for Young Ladies' (fees 50 guineas a year), and in 1858 the home of the Barlows a prominent local family. A lake in front of the house overflowed in 1844 causing the deaths of 6 people. When Hazel Grove UDC took over and converted the house to offices in 1936, the lake was filled in.

Adlington, Cheshire

13th July 1996

Eight of us passed down a very showy lane of sweet cicely just setting seed, and along the Middleton Way the flowers were abundant including marsh orchids. Next to Stypersons Pool there were helleborines in the woods, and a short climb up brought us onto heathland with more flowers.

It was a surprise to find that opposite Whiteley Green Chapel a corner of the wasteland had been planted with meadow flowers - corncockle, mallow, corn marigold, large daisies, rue, lucerne and cornflowers. Audrey Locksley found in a hedgeside a lesser stitchwort with chocolate coloured stamens (usually yellow) and growing beside the canal a dainty golden oat grass (*Trisetum flavescens*) and a tall stout grass which has yet to be identified.

Arnfield**27th July 1996**

Only five people turned up, but we did have one new member, who paid up on the spot! We walked from the parking space by the Gun Inn, along the 'Foot' path, a path which goes between two gardens. Each side has taken their pound of flesh, then planted a hedge in what remains, leaving a space which would be very uncomfortable in wet weather (does this constitute an obstruction?). Then, over to Meadow Bank, with its incredibly muddy farmyard (as this situation is almost permanent, does it also constitute an obstructed path?), and on up towards Hollingworth reservoir. Lunch was taken beneath the old Beech tree, which has a limb reaching out an incredible distance.

The 'Nature Reserve' is in the bottom of where the reservoir used to be, which has now been drained, except for a small pond in the bottom, and the dam has been removed. An area on one bank has been 'creatively landscaped' with all sorts of wondrous things growing there. In many of these old reservoirs, lime was thrown in to sweeten and clear the water, leaving a calcareous area on the bottom, so it may just be more sensible than it first looks.

We do a circuit of the reservoir enclosure, very slowly, as we are looking at all these plants! After all this, we return around the other side of Arnfield reservoir, which still works, and eventually back to the starting point.

Mobberley**24 August 1996**

The weather was looking showery when 5 members and a visitor met at the station. We passed over the bridge of Mobberley Brook and turned left along Pepper Street which develops two banks with many different plants, as it gets nearer to the railway bridge over it. At the field path on the right we consulted the map and the faint markings either side of the railway line, in the field were sloping banks almost as if a road crossing had been planned to be there in the past. In the long grass on the south side of the bank, right by the fence to the railway was a patch of an umbellifer, burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, a new find for me.

Further along this field the path goes across the railway line and as no trains were in sight we had a quick look around and found one plant of blue scabious which will have to be checked next summer. The next field was wheat with a narrow strip mowed for the path so it was single file but quite a few weeds were present. Next we passed through an arch in a hawthorn hedge, over a slippery stone bridging the ditch, and felt it was time to eat. Just settled down, the cows decided it was time to investigate and were so inquisitive and prancing about we retreated through the arch. The other side of the hedge was a field track which proved to be a more fertile source of flowers one of which was the now elusive scarlet pimpernel.

Across the road in the field leading to the edge of the Tatton Estate we had to shelter from a downpour and then a herd of bullocks congregated round the stile made me suggest a detour. Again this was a more fruitful way, though there is a little stream which I would like to explore sometime when no livestock around. We re-crossed the railway then walked towards Mobberley village but soon turning left along a road of bungalows and on to a lane which goes right round the Ilford Works. Taking the path to the right is alongside some old woodland, it eventually drops down about 12 steps over the early part of Mobberley Brook. The path emerges onto the road and there is immediately another path by a former farmhouse. Off to the left we had tea in an old cricket pavilion then continued down to cross the brook once more and then left to Wee Bridge Farm. The gates carved with four lines of a poem are gone (see Report 1991) An aeroplane passed very low over head as we went up the hill, where there is an old bank with Wood Mellick *Melica uniflora*, and so back to the station, where it is no longer possible to explore the yard as the station is now a private business.

Quarry Bank Mill

7th September 1996

A bright sunny morning with the promise of a fine day ahead, Joan and Betty Charleton were unable to lead this walk and I was here, in the role of deputy leader. The meeting time at Wilmslow Station came and went but no-one appeared until a lady came up and introduced herself as a new member. After a few minutes nobody else turned up, so we drove to the car park near the Parish Church and started the walk from there.

Following the path by the River Bollin, we recorded Himalayan balsam (such a lot in places), great and rosebay willow herbs, lesser knapweed, yarrow, marsh thistle and red campion. A walker out with his dog, stopped to pass the time of day and told us there were kingfishers along the river but that we needed to be there early in the morning to see them. Also, he said, sand martins had returned to the area and their nesting holes could be seen further along in the river bank. After leaving our chatty informant, we found what we thought were the nesting holes, but no sign of any sand martins. Still, we did see a lovely family of grey wagtails - 2 adults and 2 juveniles - pecking about in the shingle near the water. Other birds seen were moorhen, mallard and kestrel. Just before reaching Quarry Bank Mill we stopped on the pathway to admire a beautiful hornbeam with a really showy display of winged fruits.

After a brief rest by the Mill we walked up the tarmac road passing, on our left, the path to Morley. This used to be the old Packhorse route between Northwich and Yorkshire - salt to Yorkshire, wool to Cheshire. It was too late to explore this old road today, and we carried on towards Twinnies Bridge. Then it was a leisurely stroll beside the Bollin back to Wilmslow.

Philips Park, Prestwich

21st September 1996

12 members met at Prestwich station. An unpromising start on the main road turned out to be interesting thanks to a good patch of waste ground. We made our way down Ogden Clough and ascended into Philips Park, returning along the far side of the motorway. Several interesting species were observed notably green bristle grass outside Prestwich station, small toadflax on the above-mentioned waste ground and large trefoil spotted by Christine Walsh in the recently seeded grass bordering the motorway.

Wigan

19th October 1996

Most people have heard of Wigan Pier but this time the walk went north towards Haigh Hall and for most of the time followed the River Douglas. The leaves were just beginning to turn and we climbed gradually through the woods. The four of us had good views over Lancashire when we reached the Hall, and a leisurely walk along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal brought us back to Wigan. The yellow water lilies were beginning to sink beneath the canal water which looked extremely clean. Quite a few common flowers were still in bloom including evening primroses. There were very few fungi.



Five of us walked in Lyme Park on a day which proved to be much better than the forecast had suggested.

For the time of the year there were a number of wild flowers in bloom - herb robert, oxeye daisy, red campion, mouse-ear hawkweed, daisy, buttercup, dandelion, tormentil, mouse ear chickweed, and ivy-leaved toadflax.

Almost as soon as we entered the Park we spotted a group of 20 or more deer and later saw another similar group. The rut was probably over as they were silent. We also saw a large flock of sheep.

So far as trees were concerned a few had lost their leaves. Of the rest about half were showing their autumnal colours and the leaves of the remainder were green. Fungi were varied and plentiful, but we had no expert with us to identify them.

At our lunch tables near the pool, mallards and chaffinches were showing interest in sandwiches, and there were blue tit and great tits about. Later we walked up to Lyme Cage where the wind was gusty and strong, and then made our way to the main entrance gates.

