

A Taste of the Local Flora

Every year I make a determined effort to get to grips with the flora of Turvey and its immediate neighbourhood (within a radius of six miles): to track each species as it emerges or flowers and to tackle some of the more difficult species such as the grasses or the pond-weeds. But every year the inevitable happens: the first few are manageable - the first Sweet Violets, Aconites, Snowdrops, Primroses and Cowslips, but then the rush begins, and other activities take their toll, and the records become patchier and less certain. Many's the time that I've come home with a leaf or a flower only to find the shrivelled <sup>remains</sup> several days later still in the pocket or on the windowsill in a now dried up jar. But this year, I promise myself, it will be different, spurred on by the wonderful new field guide by Marjorie Blamey (now 86), Richard Fitter (now 91) and his son Alistair. If they can compile a field guide at such ages I can surely compile a local flora, albeit with far less expertise.

We are fortunate in having a variety of habitats close at hand - with the river and the gravel pits at Harrold, a run of woods on the boulder clay and limestone directly beneath us. Highlights for me so far have included one site nearby which can produce several thousand orchids in some years: mostly Common Spotted but also many Pyramidal with a few Common Twayblade and, occasionally, Bee Orchid. This site also has the rather local Sulphur Clover, Quaking Grass and Houndstongue. Several of the woods provide splendid displays of Bluebells still and one at least has a small colony of Early Purple Orchids too. Spurge Laurel is a common component of many of our hedgerows and one of the first of our plants to flower. Two ponds within the parish have produced Greater Spearwort in recent years, and the many limestone walls are good for several species of fern and Rue-leaved Saxifrage. Well, that's a start, only four decades left to get the rest done.

Br. John