

WILD FLOWER WALKS - 2025 REPORT



Wood Sorrel

Our new group held its first meeting in early April when weather conditions were perfect. We explored Happy Valley in Coulsdon, getting to know each other and finding a good selection of early spring flowers including the beautiful Wood Sorrel.



By May things were warming up and the list of flowering plants we found on Kenley Common was much longer. Most impressive were the large swathes of cowslips in some of the meadows.

June is always a perfect time to visit Farthing Downs and it did not disappoint in spite of this year's unusually dry conditions. The wild orchids were stunning and we found 6 different species, including the nationally rare Man Orchid, Fly Orchid and loads of Chalk Fragrant Orchids (which really do have a lovely scent).



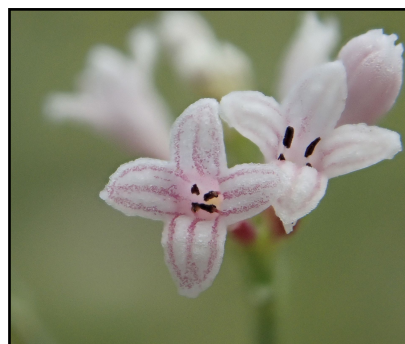
Fly Orchid

In July, at Riddlesdown, it took us almost 15 minutes to get away from the car park area due to the large number of flowers covering the surrounding grassy banks. The meadows were full of golden grasses mingling with the mauves of Common Knapweed and Scabious. I think we recorded our longest list of flowers to date which had managed to survive despite the ongoing dry conditions.

August found us at Reigate Hill, another chalk grassland site with stunning plants and views. Harebells, Common Centaury and the tiny, but impressively named, Squinancywort were some of the highlights - as was the café when we finished the walk!



Harebell



Squinancywort



Common Centaury

In September we visited Chipstead/Banstead woods on another beautiful sunny and warm day. Many meadows had already been cut but we found several plants in bloom and also enjoyed looking at the variety of trees and shrubs found here.

We then got carried away discovering some of the many kinds of galls which have appeared in great numbers this year. These are abnormal growths produced by a plant as a result of activity by other organisms, such as tiny gall wasps and gall

flies. The variety of forms is amazing and fascinating. We finished the morning by exploring the brilliant Narnia trail in the woods.



Galls on Oak Trees



For our last trip of the year we returned to Happy Valley. Although there was little in flower after such a warm dry summer, we still found plenty to entertain us. There has been a real abundance of fruits and berries this year and the photo shows a selection of some we looked at. We finished by exploring the woodland areas and finding lots of fungi, which also seem to be having a bumper year.



The interest and enthusiasm of the group has made the trips really enjoyable. Although wild flowers is our main focus, it has been a real pleasure to extend our interest to other areas such as trees, birds, butterflies, fungus etc and we look forward to discovering even more in 2026.

Moira Smith