

WYCOMBE and SOUTH BUCKS
WILDLIFE NEWS
JUNE 2025



Unidentified Amanita fungus found on Burnham Beeches walk (see page 186)

Issue 106

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Wycombe Wildlife News is published 3 times a year to promote the Group and wildlife issues, and to inform members and the public of its activities.

Edited and produced by Roger Wilding. Proof reading by Frances Wilding. Illustrations by Frances Wilding and Fiona Lanyon.

All photographs taken by Roger Wilding.

Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Group.

For the purposes of management of the Group, membership information is held on computer.

Wycombe Wildlife Group is a registered charity No.1075175 with the following objects:

To conserve the environment, mainly using volunteers, for the benefit of the public.

To educate the public in the principles and practice of conservation.

Within and around Wycombe District the Group:

Surveys wildlife habitats and their associated flora and fauna, giving those taking part plenty of opportunities to increase their knowledge and identification skills.

Resources permitting, helps manage local wildlife sites by undertaking practical conservation work and provides advice to schools, other bodies and individuals on all aspects of wildlife.

Stimulates public interest in wildlife and its conservation, organising walks, talks and other activities covering a wide range of wildlife topics.

Provides advice on and encourages wildlife gardening.

Co-operates with other groups with similar aims.

Editorial

Having been unsuccessful in finding sufficient active support to continue operations and meet Wycombe Wildlife Group's charitable objectives, the Trustees had no alternative to proposing the dissolution of the Charity. At a meeting on 12 April 2025, members had the opportunity to discuss the matter and those present voted in favour of the proposal.

The newsletter write-up on talks and other activities arranged by our group has provided a permanent record of what the Group has done since it was created and, using the index that is currently updated with every new issue, members have had easy access to this information. It also enabled members who have been unable to attend our events to be informed of the content of talks and what was seen on outdoor events.

Providing sufficient material to keep the newsletter going will require a greater input from members which could include articles, more fauna and flora sightings in members' gardens and the local countryside and wildlife related articles.

Gardening for wildlife is a topic of interest to many of our members and opportunities to promote this topic could become a worthwhile activity within the group.

With less activities being arranged, the content of our newsletter will have to change, and instead of it consisting of reports on what the Group has done, we will need to include articles about current wildlife and environmental issues. This issue includes an article about Plantlife's "No Mow May" campaign and how it benefits the environment. The article refers to suggestions that have been published by Plantlife on how to implement their recommendations in ways that will not result in a garden that looks unmanaged. In this connection, we would be grateful for ongoing feedback from members who decide to apply some of Plantlife's suggested practices for implementing the changes. We can then publish our members' views and inform Plantlife of any member comment that we consider would be of interest to that organisation.

As always, I would welcome contributions to the newsletter, including any interesting local wildlife sightings.

I will do my best to keep the Group's newsletter going but it will require as much member support as possible, particularly in relation to the submission of local wildlife sightings.

Roger

A message from the Chairman

Winding up the Wycombe Wildlife Group Charity

The Trustees have been unsuccessful in finding sufficient active support to continue operations and meet the Group's charitable objectives. Therefore the Trustees proposed the dissolution of the Charity and at a meeting on 12 April 2025 the members present voted in favour of the proposal.

Members at the meeting expressed concern at the potential loss of information on the Wycombe Wildlife Group website.

In light of the comments the following elements will remain available on-line after the Charity's closure:

Newsletters – the full set

Wildlife Sites – information about local sites

Resources – including these pages: Wildlife Walks, Members' Photos, Wildlife Guides, Projects, and Links.

For members interested in joining other local wildlife groups to continue their support for wildlife, the existing 'Links' has been extended to include details of some additional local Groups of which the Trustees are aware.

The Trustees are now working through the Charity closure process which they expect to be completed by the autumn this year.

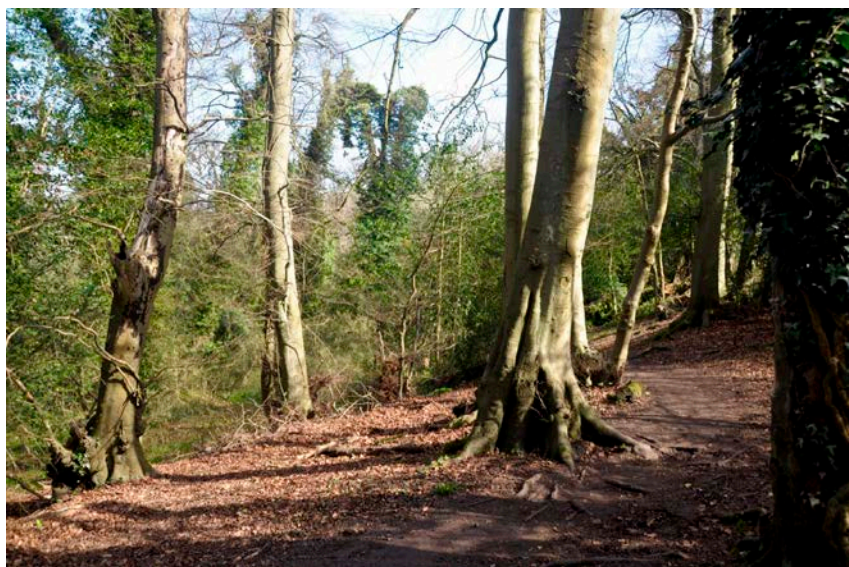
During this period there will be no events or meetings organised by the Group but a final Wycombe Wildlife Group Newsletter will be issued later this year.

After the Charity is closed Roger Wilding will maintain a web site, and prepare and issue an email Newsletter from time to time. In due course you will be invited to register your email address with Roger if you would like to receive Newsletters from him after closure of the Charity.

Thank you for your support.

Opportunity to attend a guided walk around Section 2 of Wycombe Wildlife Group's Round Wycombe Walk in October 2024

No-one took advantage of this opportunity included in the events programme to attend a guided walk around the second section of the Group's Round Wycombe Walk on Saturday 5th October.



The published meeting place for this walk was the Three Horseshoes restaurant at Burroughs Grove where there is a bus stop on the route from High Wycombe to Reading. The weather was good and the walking conditions were OK despite the fact that the large field which needs to be crossed to commence this section of the walk was being ploughed as I waited for others to turn up. No-one else was waiting when I arrived at the meeting point but, in case anyone planning to come

had been delayed, I waited for about 15 minutes after the advertised starting time, and then had to decide whether to cancel the walk and go home, or walk it by myself. I decided to do the latter and crossed the field that the farmer had by then finished ploughing. Walking across this large field, just after it was ploughed, in a straight line to reach the point where the path continues into an area of scrub, was quite challenging but having crossed this field enough times to know where the public footpath leaves the field, I used a compass to help me walk in a straight line.

Both the weather and the ground conditions were good throughout the walk, although recent site management tasks made it difficult to keep to some of the paths through areas of young woodland.

The walk which follows the Chiltern Way as far as the point where an uphill bridleway to the right needs to be followed until the entrance to a Woodland Trust nature reserve on the left is reached. There are some interesting distant views from this nature reserve, including one of Windsor Castle from where the height of the reserve's boundary hedge has been reduced. The weather conditions were not good enough to see the castle on this occasion, however.

There is a wide range of new and old habitats within this reserve, including young trees and shrubs and a steep slope along the Marlow Bottom side of the reserve which is covered by ancient woodland. A path at the North West end of the reserve enables the visitor to leave it and pass through a residential area at the North end of Marlow Bottom. Where the road leaving Marlow Bottom towards Handy Cross turns uphill to the right, a public footpath continues northwards with woodland on the left. After a short distance, taking a path uphill through the wood on the righthand side of the path leads to an area where Buddhist "stupas" have been created and placed. The lady responsible for creating this unusual site died in tragic circumstances but it is good to see that these structures have been retained and are being cared for, as they provide an unusual and peaceful place to sit and rest for a while before continuing the walk.

The path to Booker leads to a tunnel under the M40 where care is needed to avoid the broken glass and other rubbish that tends to accumulate there. The path between the motorway and the John Lewis store and car park had become much more overgrown than when I last walked it but, when the path reaches Booker, it is much clearer and it looks as if someone is managing this section of the path. On reaching the motorway road bridge, the route of the Round Wycombe Walk turns back to follow Cressex Road

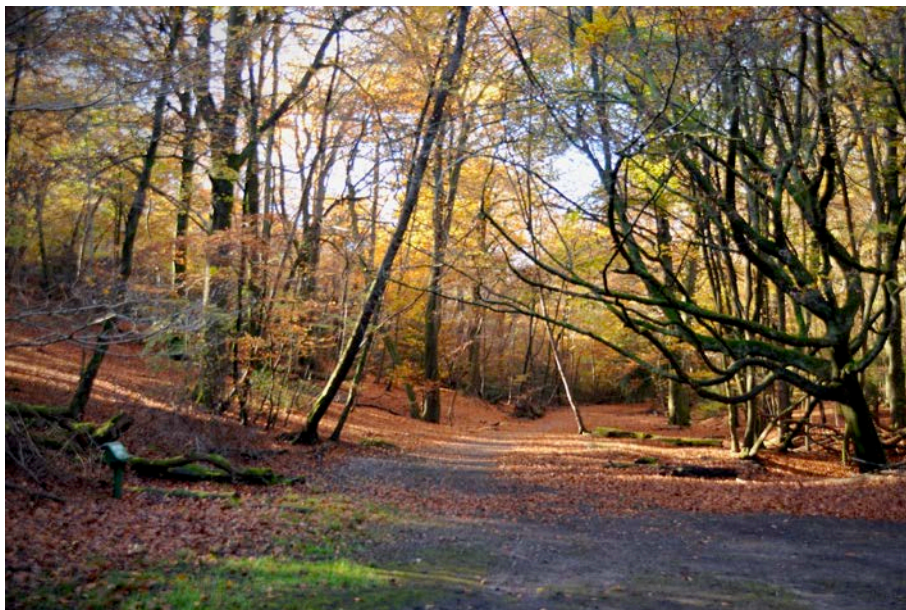
before taking a left turn into Limmer Lane to reach Booker Common. The challenge on reaching the wood beyond the Common has always been how to choose the best path to take you safely down through the wood to a point where you can cross Lane End Road and take the public footpath on the other side which takes you through the Booker and Sands woods as far as the end of Sunters Wood from where a public footpath needs to be taken across open ground flattened by vehicles used by shooting parties from the West Wycombe Estate.



After crossing this area of open ground, the public footpath to the right follows the edge of the field to where it turns right leading to the Sands Bank Local Nature Reserve. This area looked a bit different from when I last walked it as a result of recent management work, but importantly I reached the bench which provides a convenient place for a rest and refreshments whilst admiring the views. Following the path northwards from the bench a path to the left leads to the village of Towerage from where a road to West Wycombe completes this section of the Round Wycombe Walk. As I was the only participant in this walk, I decided to walk home via central Sands rather than travelling from West Wycombe and High Wycombe by bus. Because of a public event being hosted by Adams Park, I had to walk through the crowds attending this event and put up with the loud pop music provided for their benefit. I must admit that I was pleased to get home that day and relax in the peace and quiet of our garden.

A November visit to Burnham Beeches

Both Frances and I attended the walk at Burnham Beeches which Paul Bowyer had arranged on Thursday 14th November to see and hear any birds present and to look for fungi. The only other attendees were Dr Jim Wills and Caroline Kay. Although it was a fine day, it was very cold and there was a lack of birdlife. We did see a few fungi but the only spectacular find was an immature *Amanita* growing on a pile of gravel which had been spread over the ground between the path and the edge of one of the series of ponds along the stream which descends to the south west corner of the site. Both Jim Wills and I examined the fungus and came to different conclusions as to its identification: I thought it was an immature Fly Agaric and Jim thought it was an immature False Deathcap. Jim did point out, however, that it was difficult to distinguish visually between these two species when they were immature. Fungi growing in Burnham Beeches can only be collected with a permit, so in the absence of being able to collect material for microscopic examination, we had to agree that only one of us could be right and we had to be satisfied with the photograph I was able to take.



As both Jim and I are members of Bucks Fungus Group I sent a copy of my photo to Penny Cullington of BFG and her response agreed with Jim's view that it is not possible to distinguish between these two species when immature, without microscopic examination. She did add that the only way of deciding the most likely identification of this fungus would be to identify the tree most likely to be its host. The attached photograph I took showed a large number of fallen Beech leaves which could indicate that one of the nearby Beech trees could be the host of a False Deathcap, but there were also quite a few young Birch trees growing nearby along the edge of the adjacent pond, which could have hosted a Fly Agaric.

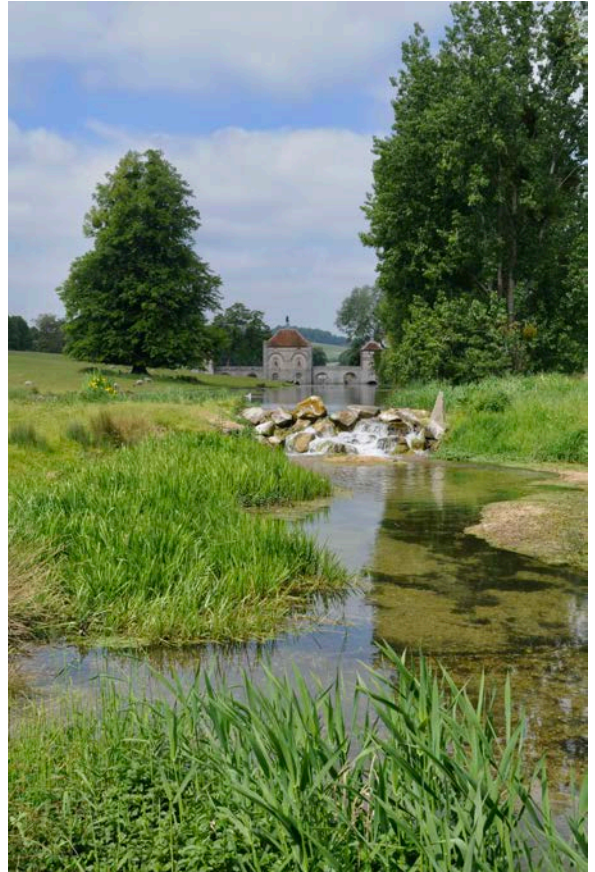
I thought it might be worth revisiting the site to see if the fungus had developed sufficiently to identify it, but 3 weeks had elapsed before I managed to fit in another visit and I could not find any trace of the fruiting body. I must admit that I would have been very surprised to have found what I was looking for in such a well visited location but I always enjoy a walk in the Beeches and was pleased to have another walk there before the onset of the extremely wet and windy weather which arrived shortly after my second visit and closed the nature reserve to visitors. As I expected would be the case, there was no sign of the fungus on my second visit so the title of my photograph that I was so pleased with will have to remain "*Amanita* sp."

Roger

Round Sands Walk

Introduction

After publishing the Round Wycombe Walk, I decided to follow this up with other shorter walks in and around our area which would provide opportunities to enjoy more local sites with wildlife interest, scenic views and history. Although the Round Wycombe Walk covered these subjects, the length of the total walk, and even its five component sections, seems to have resulted in little interest from members when opportunities to attend guided walks around the area have been arranged. Although I had decided on a route for a much shorter Round Sands Walk and had walked it some time ago, unavoidable delays in its implementation have resulted in a need to make some amendments to take account of minor changes to the paths, grassland and scrub areas resulting from management action to maintain their floral interest and to improve access and safety. Where scrub and diseased and damaged trees are cut down in areas managed by the Chiltern Rangers, the cut material is often shredded on site and used to enhance the footpaths.



The total length of the Round Sands Walk is about the same length as one of the Round Wycombe Walk sections, but it could be split into shorter walks for those who still feel the total length is too long for them to cover in a single walk.

I have always had an affection for Sands, having lived there with my parents and sister in a house in Mill End Road, which backed onto allotments and Castlefield Wood, for the first 28 years of my life from the 1940s until I married and moved to a house in Deeds Grove. As well as providing a guide to enable its user to undertake a circular walk which incorporates all the accessible woods and open spaces in and around Sands, this article incorporates some of my many personal memories of living there which I hope will be of interest to other Wycombe Wildlife Group members, and bring back a few memories to other older former or present Sands residents who may see this article in our Group's newsletter or on its website.

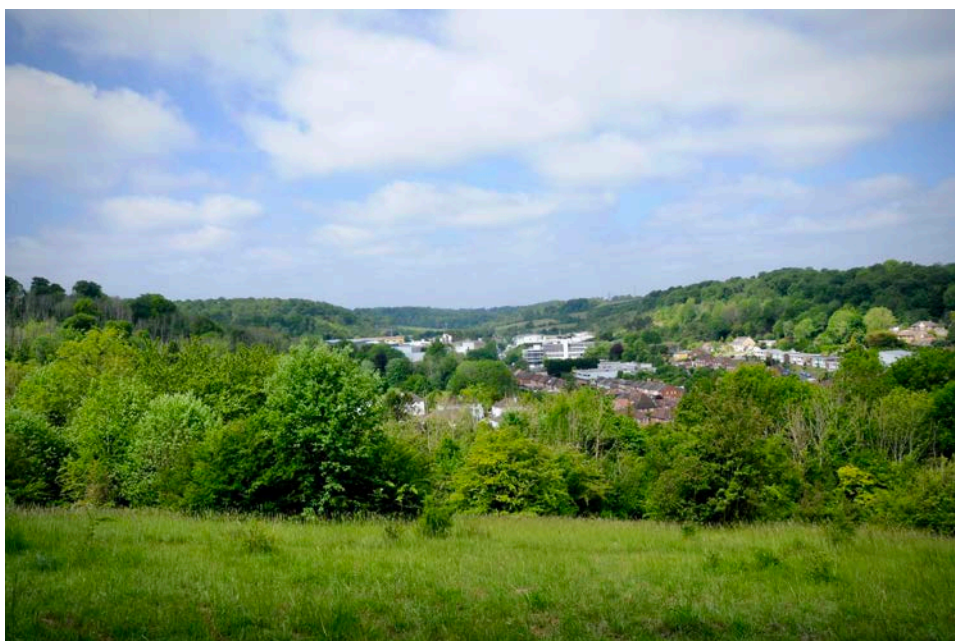
Getting to and from Sands

Finding somewhere to park a car in Sands can be difficult, especially when there is a football match or other event taking place at Adams Park, but there is a frequent bus service which runs between High Wycombe bus station and the Asda supermarket at Booker via central Sands and Bookerhill estate. There is a bus stop in Mill End Road just past the turning from Dashwood Avenue for buses coming from the bus station, and one by the shops in Dashwood Avenue close to its junction with Mill End Road for buses coming from Booker and going to the bus station. The location of these bus stops was the deciding factor in choosing the open space below Castlefield Wood next to the last house on the south side of Dashwood Avenue west of the open space as the start and end point of the Round Sands Walk.

Castlefield Wood

Our walk starts from the open space in Dashwood Avenue where a path with steps takes you uphill to the top of the wood where you need to turn right and follow the well managed path inside the wood. Although there is public access throughout the wood, it is recommended that you keep to the footpaths.

An alternative route is to use the level path below Castlefield Wood which passes by former allotments which have scrubbed over to provide an interesting wildlife habitat. When I was young, a fenced off area containing allotments used to be a school garden managed by boys attending Mill End Secondary School for gardening and animal management lessons. Girls did not attend these lessons and instead attended cooking and housekeeping classes. Although I did not attend Mill End School, I had several friends who did and, in the school holidays I often helped them with tasks such as feeding the animals, collecting chicken eggs and mucking out the pig pens.



At the south end of Castlefield Wood there is a large open steep grassland area which is a good place to look for wildflowers including orchids. If you followed the path along the top of Castlefield Wood you will reach a viewpoint where there is a bench and an opportunity to see many of the local woods. If you used the level path below the wood you will have a steep climb to reach the viewpoint.

Rowliff Wood and Five Acre Wood

Leaving the top of the hilltop viewpoint, a walk down to the bottom of the woodland facing you on the left will take you into Rowliff Wood. Although you can walk anywhere in this wood, it is best to follow the well-managed footpath along the bottom of the wood. When you reach the end of this wood, you need to exit from it and cross New Road when and where it is safe to do so, and walk to the middle of a semi-circular side road named Five Acre Wood which was built on a previously privately owned part of a wood of this name which was sold for housing. A remnant of Five Acre Wood still remains and the public footpath which passes through it is accessed via a short spur road leading from the road named Five Acre Wood and following the public footpath sign. The path through the wood is clearly marked by white arrows on the remaining mature trees. To exit the wood take a surfaced uphill path with steps which leads between houses in Bookerhill Road. Turn right into Bookerhill Road and walk down this road and Roundwood Road after Bookerhill

Road veers to the right. Cross over Roundwood Road when you reach the entrance to Round Wood on the opposite side of the road and enter the wood.

Round Wood

This is an interesting wood and there are several paths that can be used and all are different. It is worth returning to this wood at different times of the year to fully experience what it has to offer. The grass glades at the west end of the wood support a good range of interesting flora and certainly justify spending more time here than would be available if doing the whole Round Sands walk. The recreation ground below Round Wood is also interesting because of the clumps of trees that were planted there many years ago and have matured to create a much more attractive landscape than is normally found in a public recreation ground.

Sunters Wood

To continue our walk we now need to cross Lane End Road and follow the public footpath to Sunters Wood. There is a path leading out of the corner of Round Wood Recreation Ground immediately below the wood, which enables us to cross the road to get to a stile giving access to a public footpath which passes through fields in which horses are grazed and used for riding lessons. These horses can be rather over-friendly at times but they are harmless and used to walkers. On reaching the woodland, High Barbers Wood is on your left and Sunters Wood is on your right. There are public footpaths to the left, right and straight on, all of which are worth following to explore these interesting woods but, if planning to complete the Round Sands Walk, it is best to take the middle path leading up to the top of the wood where numerous bluebells can be seen at the appropriate time of the year. Turning right at the top of the hill, the public footpath will take you through Sunters Wood, which is very stony underfoot and needs to be walked with care. Having said that, it is not unusual to meet horse riders in this wood who have made their way from West Wycombe Estate via Hellbottom Wood which is private and part of that Estate. Sunters Wood can be noisy at times as shooting regularly takes place just outside the left hand side of the wood before our path emerges onto an area of open ground where frequent vehicle movements by the shooting parties have compacted the soil making it less likely to be muddy to walk on as we cross it to reach the public footpath which turns right. This can be followed uphill to where it turns right again taking us to Sands Bank Local Nature Reserve. Although Hellbottom Wood looks like an attractive place for a walk, it is part of the West Wycombe estate and there is no public right of way through this valley, its use being restricted to the Dashwood family and their guests.

Sands Bank and Wood

Sands Bank is a Local Wildlife Site which, together with Sands Wood, is managed by the Chiltern Rangers. The grassland and woodland are both interesting areas to explore throughout the year. There is a bench which, if no-one is occupying it, provides an excellent location for a refreshment stop and to admire the view of some of the areas where the walk has already taken you. At the appropriate time of the year there is an excellent display of Bluebells at the far end of Sands Wood which should not be missed before you leave the wood.

Although you can walk anywhere within the open and wooded areas of the Local Wildlife Site, the most interesting route is to follow the path along the top of the grassland below the wood and then enter the woodland when you reach a gate providing access to the wood. You need to leave Sands Wood at a convenient point along its boundary with Toweridge Lane, the ancient right of way which joins Upper Sands to the hamlet of Towerage.

Upper Sands

To continue the Round Sands Walk after leaving Sands Wood, either follow Toweridge Lane to where it joins Chapel Lane or take a footpath which turns off to the right and joins Pinewood Road opposite a steep surfaced downhill path with railings which will take you to the junction of Chapel Lane and Gallows Lane, providing views of Castlefield Wood and Central Sands. Descending Gallows Lane will take you to bus stops which will take you to High Wycombe or Booker. If using this route, you might wonder why the steep path you will have descended was once part of an ancient east west route through our area. To continue the Round Sands Walk turn left into Chapel Lane and follow it past the junction with Toweridge Lane.

Park Farm

Just past the Toweridge Lane/Chapel Lane junction, take the track to the left which leads to Park Farm. The latter is used by the National Trust as a base for their maintenance equipment. The lodge at the entrance to this track and the one next to Park Farm are attractive well-maintained residences and the gate next to the latter is used to provide a private alternative exit from West Wycombe Park to the main entry and exit gate in West Wycombe Village.



A short walk down past the farm buildings, the footbridge which crosses the Wye stream provides a good viewpoint over the surrounding areas of this unspoilt part of the West Wycombe estate. From the footbridge you can view the former mill, now much changed but provides an attractive residence for a member of the Dashwood family. Looking towards Chapel Lane provides a good view of St Crispins, a mock church that has never been used as a place of worship, its main use being to provide family accommodation for a West Wycombe Estate employee. In wet weather, the land around the stream is often flooded. Another view from Park Farm is of Desborough Castle, an ancient hill fort which we will visit further along the walk.



Returning to Chapel Lane and turning left will take you past an area of often wet ground with a wall topped with wire fencing to keep people out of this area which has been used by poachers to remove fish from the nearby streams which are legitimately used by permit holders. After crossing the back stream, you will soon reach the main stream where there is an ornate bridge known as the Pepper-pots Bridge, each side of which supports a small building with a door but no windows. These buildings are follies and have never been used as living accommodation. This unusual bridge is an interesting feature, however, and the view from the bridge is very attractive. The wetland habitat here attracts quite a lot of wildlife. The small area of woodland between the bridge and St Crispins contains what appears to be the remains of former buildings, but, apart from one cottage, these were created as ruins and have not been former residences. The exception was the cottage once occupied by a lady who sat outside her front door lacemaking and it remained the home of her son after she died. He became a road-sweeper with responsibility for keeping the roads and pavements throughout Sands clean and rubbish free. As he worked his way around Sands with his brush and barrow he would chat to everyone he saw but he did a good job and this resulted in a lot less litter than is found in public streets today.

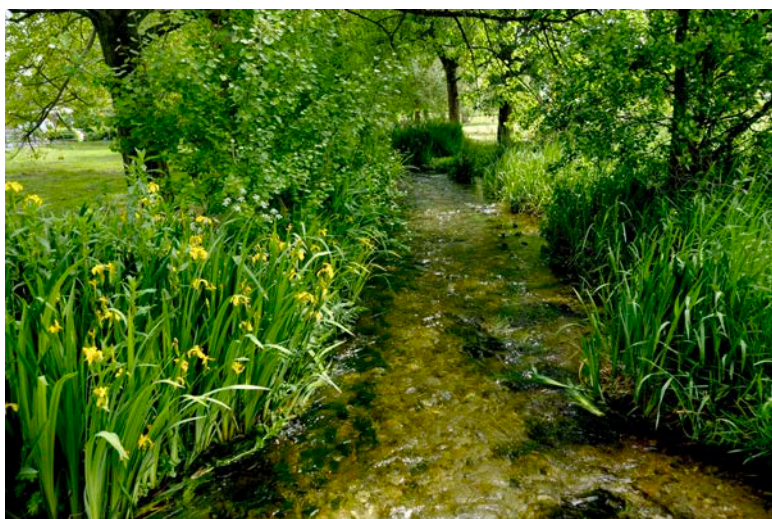
Although there is no public access to it, there is a path which runs from the land on the north side of St Crispins following the stream as far as Park Farm Road where a locked door in the wall each side of the road used to provide access to West Wycombe Park for the estate's gamekeeper. For a number of years the entrance road on the north side of St Crispins led to a wooden building which was built to provide a headquarters for the Sands scout troop and cub packs. Following a decision by the National Trust not to renew the lease, the use of the scout hut ceased although the building remained standing for some years afterwards. Having helped to build the scout hut and undertaken various roles in the scout group, I was very disappointed when its meeting place had to close.

Gilletts Lane

Our walk now follows Gilletts Lane which runs from opposite where the scout hut used to be, to Mill End Road. Apart from an attractive small riverside park that was created at the junction of Gilletts Lane and Mill End Road, the two streams of the River Wye that we were able to view from Chapel Lane now disappear from public view until they reappear in Desborough Recreation Ground. Before crossing Mill End Road, you can view the entrance to one of the three listed buildings in Sands. This one is Mill End House, which was once the home of a local former watermill owner, and is situated on the left side of Mill End Road just a short distance north of Gilletts Lane.

Desborough Recreation Ground

A track leading off Mill End Road opposite Gilletts Lane leads to Desborough Recreation Ground and you can walk along the north side of the main stream of the Wye to where it crosses Fryers Lane and shortly afterwards joins the back stream which has made its way through areas to which there is no public access to Mill End Road where it can be followed along the south side of Desborough Recreation Ground as far as Desborough Park Road.



The development of industrial premises on the land between Chapel Lane and Mill End Road resulted in a missed opportunity to provide a wetland nature reserve with an accessible public link between the wetland habitats west of Chapel Lane to the existing riverside paths east of Mill End Road.

Desborough Castle

Instead of following the back stream as far as the point where it joins the main stream, the Round Sands Walk leaves Desborough Recreation Ground crossing the footbridge over the back stream and takes us up Fryers Lane to Dashwood Avenue. After crossing over Dashwood Avenue, taking the surfaced track opposite will take you to where Copyground Lane coming from the left veers left around a bend. At this point you will see Desborough Castle a short distance away on your left as you walk past a steep grass bank. You will soon get to a point where you can walk on the level from the roadside footpath to the interior of Desborough Castle. This is the safest way of entering and viewing the inside area occupied by this ancient hill fort. After exploring this wooded area, leave by the way you came in and take a walk around the outside of the hill fort. The grass here is not cut regularly but it is worth viewing as much of the outside of the hill fort as you can. Before leaving the site, look at the views towards West Wycombe and Downley and you will see why this site was chosen for a hill fort. The present Castlefield Wood is a fairly recent area of woodland which replaced a former plantation of beech trees planted in stony shallow soil which resulted in their loss during a violent storm, but you can imagine what the view towards West Wycombe would have been like before the beechwood was planted. As well as being on a site which provided good defences and opportunities to see any approaching enemy forces, the hill fort, when in use, was near enough to the Wye Stream and its surroundings to obtain supplies of drinking water and fish as well as land for grazing domestic animals.

End of walk

To complete the walk you need to cross the grassland between Desborough Castle and Castlefield Wood, passing St Mary and St George Church, with its distinctive dome, on the right. This is another of the listed buildings in Sands which can be seen from the route of our walk.

The north end of Castlefield Wood is easy going, and at the right time of the year you may even see some orchids in the wood. Those of us that remember the wood before it was flattened by the storm are grateful to all those who undertook the massive task of recreating this woodland and particularly for taking steps to overcome the shortcoming of the original planting which failed to provide sufficient protection to the maturing beech trees which had been planted on shallow stony ground devoid of any protecting ground cover.

I hope those who undertake this walk enjoy it and agree with me that the residents of Sands are fortunate to have these attractive areas of woodland and open spaces on their doorstep. I am sure that long term residents of Sands will remember some of my personal recollections of living there from 1942 to 1970 and visiting my sister who continued to live in the same house until 2003.

Roger Wilding

A feast for our birds

Like humans, birds like eating apples. They are not as fussy as us, and are more than happy to have a supply of small, damaged or overripe fruits which most gardeners would pick up and dispose of in the green waste bin collection. This year I created two piles of apples, one of each of the two species we have in our garden (as I am sure that, like us, birds have their favourites). I remove the fruits that rot before they are eaten and clear away the remaining inedible leftovers of those that have been mainly consumed. This method of providing the bird feast is clearly appreciated, especially by visiting fieldfares and redwings, and it does not make the garden look untidy.



Plantlife's No Mow May Campaign

It is now over six years since Plantlife started its No Mow May campaign which asked gardeners not to mow their lawns during the month of May to enable grassland wildflowers to bloom and provide nectar for pollinators. Thousands of households across the country have applied this policy to their gardens and some councils and schools have also applied the policy to grassland habitats for which they have management responsibility. The benefits of extending the period when lawns are left uncut has also been promoted by Plantlife and "Let it Bloom June" extended the period during which lawns could be left unmown for another month to benefit the insects attracted by the resulting increased number of wildflowers. Even longer periods between mowing which, as yet, have not been given a name, are likely to be promoted because of the overall resulting environmental benefits which include locking away atmospheric carbon below ground.

Like many others, I am convinced that the environmental benefits of leaving areas of grass uncut outweigh any concerns about the appearance of "unmanaged" garden lawns. Plantlife has made a number of suggestions for overcoming these concerns and the easiest to implement is to create regularly mown paths through lawns where grass has been left unmown. This will enable the wildflowers growing there to bloom and provide nectar for butterflies, moths and bees, and the lawn and the wildflower areas will continue to look well-managed. Adopting these practices should result in an attractive well-managed wildflower meadow after a while, with noticeable environmental benefits.

Recognising that many gardeners like their gardens to look tidy, Plantlife have come up with a number of other suggestions for how to leave areas unmown whilst retaining features which show that the uncut areas are deliberate and not a sign of neglect. Creating regularly mown paths through the grassland and applying different mowing practices to sections of the grassland can provide the environmental benefits without creating excessive cutting. Two cutting regimes suggested by Plantlife are (a) mowing either twice a year outside the months of April to July or (b) mowing once every 4 to 8 weeks.

We would be delighted to hear from members who have adopted or will be adopting grassland management practices to achieve the environmental benefits of reduced grass cutting, or have created or plan to create an attractive wildflower lawn with mown access paths. If anyone has any alternative suggestions relating to this subject, I would very much like to hear from them.

Roger

Local Tweets

On October 1st, 3 Chiffchaffs were bathing in the dew on the lawn - a very pretty sight.

On 6th October, we had a Grey Wagtail on the edge of the birdbath - a bird that I often see down by the bridge over the River Wye by the Police Station, but rarely in the garden.

On October 27th, I heard the soft calls of Redwings from the trees at the top of the garden, and later in the day, I looked out of the window to see loose flocks of Fieldfares drifting overhead, in all between 750 and 1,000! I have never seen so many together! A very thrilling sight.



Grey Wagtail



Fieldfare

Whilst I was waiting for a bus at the Bus Station on 19th November, a huge flock of Feral Pigeons rose up in a panic, flew away in complete disarray from the Bus Station roof, and, like an arrow a Peregrine Falcon shot in hot pursuit. It did not catch one, so I imagine this was one of the youngsters from the Parish Church tower. (It is possible for a Peregrine to dive at up to 200 mph!, though not, I imagine, in a town centre). They are lethal hunters.

On December 20th, I saw, to my great delight, a Song thrush on our lawn! Imagine my thrill, therefore, to discover we had not one, but two in the garden. I do so hope they are a pair. We have since seen them regularly, and they have become 'our garden birds', along with a small flock of Chaffinches, Robins, Blackbirds and young Crows.

All winter, we have had 4 garden Robins. They display to one another, but fighting seems to be a thing of the past, perhaps because so many people now feed their garden birds. A couple have now paired up, going by their 'flirty' behaviour.

On 16th January, a Goldcrest ventured very close to the house. We do have these lovely little birds in our conifer trees at the top of the garden, but never very near the house. We also have a male Blackcap coming to the Callicarpa berries.

The Blackbirds are so busy chasing each other from the lawn, that other birds are nipping in and nicking their food! (27th Jan).

All in all, we have had a great variety of birds so far this winter, A very cheering fact at a dismal time of year.

Frances

Sightings

4th December 2024 - rare bird sighting in Wentworth Close. WWG member Graham Giles reported that he had been visited by a Firecrest. This is not the first time that this species has come to his garden, but it is rare, and he is very lucky to see one in his garden.



Firecrest



Chicken of the Woods

Mid December 2024 - 9 Little Grebes on Dyke. Very difficult to count, as they all bob up and down, at different times, like corks.

1st January 2025 - 2 Robins feeding together on lawn, meaning they have paired up. 2 Song Thrushes and several Chaffinches on lawn throughout January.

Male Blackcap on Callicarpa berries on and off throughout January.

16th January 2025 - Goldcrest close to house. Song Thrush singing full song. All in Deeds Grove garden.

29th January 2025 - Kingfisher on Dyke, also 5 Mistle Thrushes singing, and Stock Doves calling.

19th June 2025 - 'Chicken of the Woods' fungus seen growing on a wild cherry tree growing in London Road by WWG member Lisa Dodd.

Starling murmuration



Roger and I have been thrilled to have our very own Starling murmuration in late January - not on the scale of a Somerset Level one, I hasten to add, but roughly 50 in total, wheeling round and collecting strays up as they go. They exhibit the same behaviour as their famous wetland cousins, fly round and then suddenly dive, into our large Leylandii tree. So exciting!

Frances

Contacting Wycombe Wildlife Group

Wycombe Wildlife Group can be contacted by visiting its website www.wycombewildlife.org.uk and sending us an email via the "Contact Us" page.

As well as for general enquiries, this email can be used to send us details of interesting local wildlife sightings for inclusion in the newsletter we circulate 3 times a year, giving us the species, date and location of the sighting and any associated information likely to be of interest to our members.

Joining Wycombe Wildlife Group

To join our Group, please complete a copy of the form on the right and send to

The Membership Secretary,
15 Cherrywood Gardens,
Flackwell Heath, HP10 9AX

Subscription £6 per annum, if paid by Standing Order, or £7 per annum, if paid by cash or cheque.

Please enrol me as a member of Wycombe Wildlife Group

Name
Address
.....
Telephone
Email

EITHER Payment by bank standing order
To Bank
..... Branch
Address.....
.....

NEW standing order instruction:

Account to be debited (your account details)

Sort code
Account number
Account name

Beneficiary bank and payee details

Lloyds, 27-31 White Hart Street,
High Wycombe, HP11 2HL
Sort code 30 99 50 Account number: 69994368
Account name: Wycombe Wildlife Group

Payment details

Amount of payment: £6.00 Six pounds
Frequency: Annually
From:
Number of payments: Until further notice
Signature Date

OR Payment by cheque or cash

I enclose cheque/cash for £7.00,
payable to Wycombe Wildlife Group.