

U3A Wild Things June visit to Wharram Quarry

Well, everything got off to a good start with most of us finding parking (poor Bev walked the mile, but she did cadge a lift back up the hill). The problems then started trying to find the reserve itself. It was finally spotted hiding behind a parked car. The temperature was just about right for a lazy wander around the basin. For those of you that have been to Kiplingcotes it is very similar.



Top two: Different coloured Pyramidal Orchids



Above left: Moon Daisy; **Right:** a bed of Wild Thyme on an ant mound.

Right: The scarce

Woolly Thistle (*Cirsium eriophorum*)



Left: from Kath Forrest: Ladies' Bedstraw. The flowers as you might expect change throughout the seasons: Cowslips, hawkbits, mouse-ear-hawkweed and birdsfoot trefoil to mention a few.

Right: This is the Thistle Broomrape also known as the Yorkshire Broomrape, which is parasitical on the Woolly Thistle (arrow). This is so rare that two botanists from Southampton University were there doing a study on them. They are only found in a handful of locations in the UK.



Below: The clock of Goatsbeard (Carole Sears), the only member of the dandelion-type family with grass-like leaves.



Below: Bee Orchid), first noticed by Lord Middleton and pointed out to me by of the the researchers.



There were quite lot of the Marbled White butterflies fluttering about but trying to capture them with a camera proved quite a hard thing to do. Well done, Bev. The ringlet was mine.



Above: Marbled White from Bev Toon **Right:** Ringlet

As we were about to leave, we came across this information board which is a font of knowledge, obviously we went the wrong way round. We then noticed that we hadn't seen the Common Blue butterfly which we did see at Kiplingcotes. We also got a bit more information about the thistles on reading the board.

The board also mentioned that the area was maintained by a rare breed of Hebridean sheep, grazing overwinter. The quarry was actively mined during 1919-40.

Wharram Quarry is relatively small but it did gives us some nice experiences and an afternoon in the fresh air and sunshine.

Large woolly thistles (top right) are a prominent species in the grassland. Look closely at the base of the plant and you may see a single spike of **thistle broomrape** (below right), a parasitic plant that depends on thistles for food, having no leaves of its own. Thistle broomrape is a rare plant and its alternative name indicates that this plant can only be found in this county.



Report by Paul.