

Parish Walks, a free and easy way to enjoy our countryside

Isn't it a relief to come back to our Parish after a day in London? Open skies with buzzards wheeling around instead of noisy planes. Soft green grass under our feet instead of foot-aching, grey pavements. Trees clothed in gentle green, instead of garish billboards screaming at us to buy, buy, buy. But here in the Parish, we have so much that is glorious and free. We found all this to be true on our Spring Flower Walk with Jonathan Simons and if you walk around our Parish in the weeks to come, then you too will see some interesting things.



First, the simple things in life. Can you find a primrose and cowslip that have got together to produce a primrose flower on a tall, cowslip stalk? We can't encourage you to pick the cowslip flowers, as did our forebears in order to make cowslip wine, but you could perhaps collect the white elder flowers (not leaves or stalks) from bushes later on in the month and use google to find a recipe to make a cordial drink? And then, there's the tiny, five petalled flowers of the wild strawberry promising far more flavour come summertime than the large supermarket strawberries we buy all year around. But especially, have you seen the huge, wonderful seas of wild garlic in our woods this month? (See photo above) Their white flowers are stunning and give off a gentler smell than the garlic we buy in the shop. Their young leaves can be washed and gently wilted, rather like spinach, and then added to butter to liven up a baked potato, make garlic bread or decorate soup. Here is even a recipe for garlic pesto to add to pasta dishes and if you try it, then it's a free gift from nature. Of course, getting children or grandchildren to help you look closely in our fields and woods and then use what they've found is your free gift to the next generation.

Ingredients for pesto: 300ml of olive oil, 130 grams of hard cheese such as Parmesan, 300 grams pine kernels, pinch of salt and pepper, 4 handfuls of garlic leaves (no buds or flowers), then blend together in a food processor. (Thanks to Penny Bullen for this recipe). Plenty of wild garlic can be found in Nutham Wood which can be found by walking north up the Downs Link from the car-park at Copsale, taking the first footpath sign on the left and following it around until it meets the Downs Link further up. Then just turn right and walk southwards back to Copsale car-park. Two warnings. The wood can be slippery after prolonged rain. Make certain you know what wild garlic looks like before picking and eating it.



As you can see from the photo, lots of us joined Jonathan on this wild flower walk. We learned a lot, marvelled at how lovely our woods and fields are and thoroughly enjoyed our bacon butties and tea at Copsale hall afterwards, though these are £4.50 and not free! We thank Jonathan for his specialist input, Penny Bullen for help organizing the walk and George Walker and Joanna Hartland for allowing us onto their private land.

Walks like this one (usually without Jonathan) are organized by the Parish Council every other month on Sundays, starting at 9.30am. They are not long, usually 2-3 miles. They help us to get to know people from other parts of the Parish, are always friendly, and children and dogs are welcomed. To find out where they start from, which varies each time, look on the Parish Council noticeboards or website. We look forward to seeing you at our next walk. If you look on the Parish website homepage under "Ten Circular Walks around the Parish", you will find walks that you can print off and do anytime that suits you and your family.

Carol Hydes and Councillor Owen Hydes, leader of the Parish walks