



Ringwood Natural History Society Mad March Hares at Breamore

Date: March 13th 2018
 Weather: Mild, 10° C and mostly sunny
 Leader: Jean
 Attendees: 25

Our walk started at the church, and followed the footpath across the fields behind Braemore House up towards the Miz Maze, and the large meadows where hares are frequently spotted at this time of the year. None had been seen on the recce, but on this occasion we probably saw more hares than ever before and, for good measure, several roe deer were also seen along the way.

We did not get that far but, on the top of the hill, more than a mile from any settlement, is Breamore Miz Maze, one of three surviving historic turf mazes. A Christian cross cuts through the Cretan design of the labyrinth. In which paths of turf curve in a symmetrical pattern. Unlike conventional mazes, all paths eventually lead to the little mound in the centre. Similar patterns are also found on the floors of some Italian and French churches.

The Miz Maze was originally used on holy days in Pagan times, and modern Druids claim fertility dances took place there. Later both the turf and church ones seem to have been used for penances, according to tradition monks used the maze for their penances, painfully traversing it on their knees.

The labyrinth is enclosed by a grove of yew trees, and enclosed by a fence, which aids its conservation. In early 2010 a few surrounding trees were felled, because water falling from overhanging branches was eroding part of the maze, but the overall character of the setting is unaffected.

Returning down the main track, we passed the front of the Elizabethan manor house, which is noted for its fine collection of paintings and furniture. Breamore House was completed in 1583 by the Dodington family, on the site of Breamore Priory. The House was purchased in the 18th century by Sir Edward Hulse, M.D., Baronet, and physician to Queen Anne and Kings George I and George II. The home is still inhabited by the Hulse family

The House is said to be haunted by the grieving widow of William Dodington, who had flung himself to his death from the tower of St Sepulchre's church in London, following a legal dispute with his neighbours. Christian Dodington, commissioned a portrait of herself in her mourning clothing, had it hung inside the house and, later, as she lay on her death bed, she placed a curse on anyone who ever moved or touched the portrait thereafter.

Flowering Plants	Birds	Mammals	Fungi
Primrose	Wood pigeon	Hares (18-20)	Brown roll-rim
Snowdrop	Buzzard	Roe deer (6-8)	
Red dead-nettle	Pheasant (male)		
Lesser celandine	Fieldfare	Insects	
Daisy	Skylark	Bumble bee	
Daffodil	Yellow hammer	Brimstone butterflies (2 males)	
Dandelion	Nuthatch		
Willow catkins	Chaffinch		
Common field speedwell			
Butchers' broom			
Dog's mercury			
Hazel catkins (male)			