



## **RINGWOOD NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

### The Avon Valley from Downton

Date: 31st August 2018  
 Weather: Sunny spells, 22 degrees  
 Walk Leaders: Maz & Will Russell  
 Attendees: 6

Downton Wiltshire is close to the Hampshire border and straddling the channels of the River Avon south of Salisbury. The town centre is known as The Borough with its wide and pretty green and thatched timber-framed cottages which gives it a village feel. The medieval Downton was built as a 'new town' by the Bishop of Winchester around 1205, close to The Moot an earthwork that was once the site of a palace built in 1138 by Henry de Blois for the Bishops of Winchester. Also there is Moot House, an 18th-century mansion set in landscaped grounds that include an amphitheatre, lily pond and viewpoint. Nearby stands the Manor House, formerly the parsonage, an Elizabethan house once owned by the Raleigh family. Downton was made a borough in the 13th century, entitling the town to hold markets and fairs, it supported a mayor and sent two MPs to Parliament between 1395 and 1832. The town continued to prosper as industry and commerce flourished, lace was produced as a cottage industry. It has long been associated with flour and paper-milling handmade paper was produced until the end of the First World War. For centuries the village has supported thriving trout fisheries and today Downton is renowned as an angling centre for the Wiltshire Avon.

We headed north beside the River Avon with its intricate form of irrigation of a floating water-meadow system, that controlled river flooding by turning it to its advantage. After crossing the river and passing a mill we came to a large mansion set in parkland dating back to the 18th century, once known as Standlynch House, it was acquired by the Treasury in 1814 and renamed Trafalgar House after being given to the heirs of Admiral Viscount Nelson, in recognition of the services of Britain's greatest seafaring hero. The Nelson family continued to live here until 1948. We made the short detour to visit the redundant chapel, once the Nelson family's private chapel, with the Nelson name on some of the gravestones.

<b>Flowering Plants</b>	<b>Flowering Plants cont.</b>	<b>Butterflies</b>	<b>Birds</b>
Dandelion	Lesser Stitchwort	Red Admiral	Wood Pigeon
Great Willowherb	Water Mint	Small White	Grey Heron
Herb Bennet	Red Clover	Speckled Wood	Cormorant
Common Fleabane	White Clover		Pterodactyl
Hemp Agrimony	Common Ragwort	<b>Damselflies</b>	House Sparrow
Hedge Bindweed	Hawkweed sp.	Beautiful Demoiselle	Moorhen
Purple Loosestrife	Oxeye Daisy		Blue Tit
Scarlet Pimpernel	Shepherd's Purse	<b>Fish</b>	Grey Wagtail
Yellow Balsam	Himalayan Balsam	Brown Trout	Mute Swan
Monkey Flower	Common Comfrey	Perch	
Lady's Bedstraw	Aster		
Enchanter's Nightshade	Buttercup sp.		
Water Speedwell	Agrimony		
Common Mallow	Herb Robert		
Cranesbill sp.	Woody Nightshade		
Forgetmenot sp.			
White Dead Nettle			
Yarrow			



Bridge over River Avon at Downton by John Gurney