



RINGWOOD NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Vernditch Chase and Martin Down Walk

Date: 22nd April 2025
 Weather: Sunny spells
 Walk Leaders: Lyn and Gerry Traves
 Attendees: 18

Vernditch Chase is situated within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, on the county boundaries of Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset and is maintained by Forestry England. This mixed woodland mainly consisting of Beech is on the edge of (but not part of) Martin Down NNR and shares an entrance and car park with the extensive downs off the A354. There is also a neolithic long barrow on the main path into the wood on the left and Grim's Ditch an ancient boundary network running through the site, only a low mound remains, overgrown with trees in open beech woodland. A Roman Road also runs along the eastern boundary of Vernditch.

Having walked around the woodland, admiring a magnificent show of English Bluebells and wildflowers along the way, we returned back to our cars to have our lunch overlooking Martin Down. Afterwards we walked over the Down, passing the Rifle Range then walking alongside Bokerley Ditch, then returning back to our cars. The rolling downland landscape of the National Nature Reserve covers approximately 336 hectares, jointly owned and managed by Natural England and the Hampshire County Council. Although one of the largest areas of undulating chalk grassland in the country, Martin Down represents a small remnant of downland which once covered the chalk. The site includes flower rich grassland, scrub and woodland, supporting a wide range of wild flowers, insects and birds. The down is rich in archaeology, dating from Neolithic Bokerley Ditch to the Rifle Range used during the Second World War.

Flowering Plants	Flowering Plants cont	Birds	Butterflies
Common Gorse	Greater Stitchwort	Song Thrush	Speckled Wood
Dandelion	Moschatel	Whitethroat	Green-veined White
Wayfaring Tree	Hairy Violet	Kestrel	Red Admiral
Herb Robert	Crosswort	Chaffinch	Small White
Ground Ivy	Common Milkwort	Red Kite	Large White
English Bluebells	Chalk Milkwort	Skylark	Dingy Skipper
Lesser Celandine	Hawthorn	Buzzard	Grizzled Skipper
Dog's Mercury	Blackthorn	Chiffchaff	Brimstone
Common Dog Violet	Germander Speedwell	Wren	
Early Dog Violet	Wild Parsnip	Robin	Others
Ransoms	White Clover	Nuthatch	Millipede
Cowslips		Blackbird	St. Mark's Fly
Wild Arum	Grasses	Cuckoo	Dark-edged Bee-fly
Wood Spurge	Wood Sedge	Goldfinch	Seven-spot Ladybird
Wood Anemone	Wood Melick	Skylark	Buff-tailed Bumblebee
Thyme-leaved Speedwell		Dunnock	Copper Greenclock Ground Beetle
Barren Strawberry		Blue Tit	Adder
Primrose		Great Tit	Common White Wave Moth

Yellow Archangel		Magpie	
Garlic Mustard		Yellowhammer	Mammals
Columbine		Great Spotted Woodpecker	Fallow Deer
Cow Parsley		Rook	Brown Hares



Adder at Vernditch Chase by Martin King



Bluebells at Verditch Chase by Gerry Traves