

Witney U3A Nature Group

New Year Plant Hunt –Saturday 3rd January 2026

A small group of five of us visited Mill Meadow to record plants in flower as part of the BSBI (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland). The aim of this activity is to provide nationwide data about wild and naturalised plants and how they respond to the changing climate. The preliminary results from this year can be found on the BIBI website. In addition to plants in full flower, the BSBI asked that plants the stage of other flowering plants (bud, vegetative, fruit, dead) were also recorded.

<https://bsbi.org/take-part/activities/new-year-plant-hunt>

We had a beautiful sunny day but with a temperature nominally about 3-4° with added wind chill from a lively breeze.



The A40 underpasses were flooded and we decided to extend our walk from Mill Meadow to Langel Common via a stop at Cogges Farm Cafe for a warm drink. Our route took us along the eastern side of Mill Meadow, across the old railway embankment and back along the western side of the Meadow.

As expected very little was in flower. The meadow was mown at the end of the summer and all our observations were made along the river bank. Shepherds Purse is quite common and showed some small flowers at the tips of older growth. A single rather straggly example of a Cats Ear or Hawkweed was found

on the river bank. White deadnettle is widespread and was quite commonly in flower. Groundsel is just coming into but with no open flowers.

Other common plants stinging nettles, yarrow, ground ivy, cleavers, cow parsley were not in flower. Hedge mustard was not also not in flower or in bud – just a solitary flower was recorded.



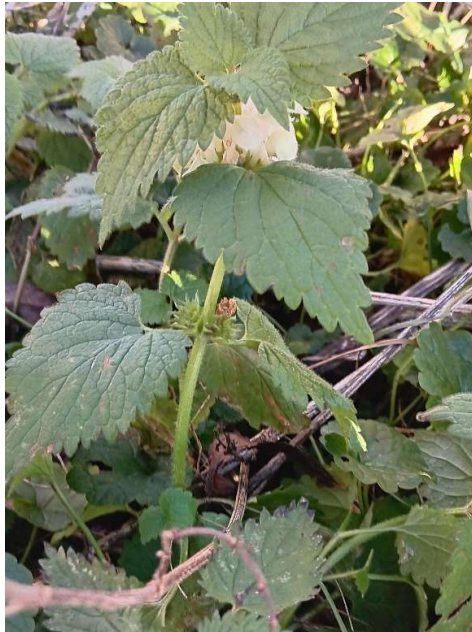
Groundsel



Shepherds Purse



Cars Ear



White dead nettle

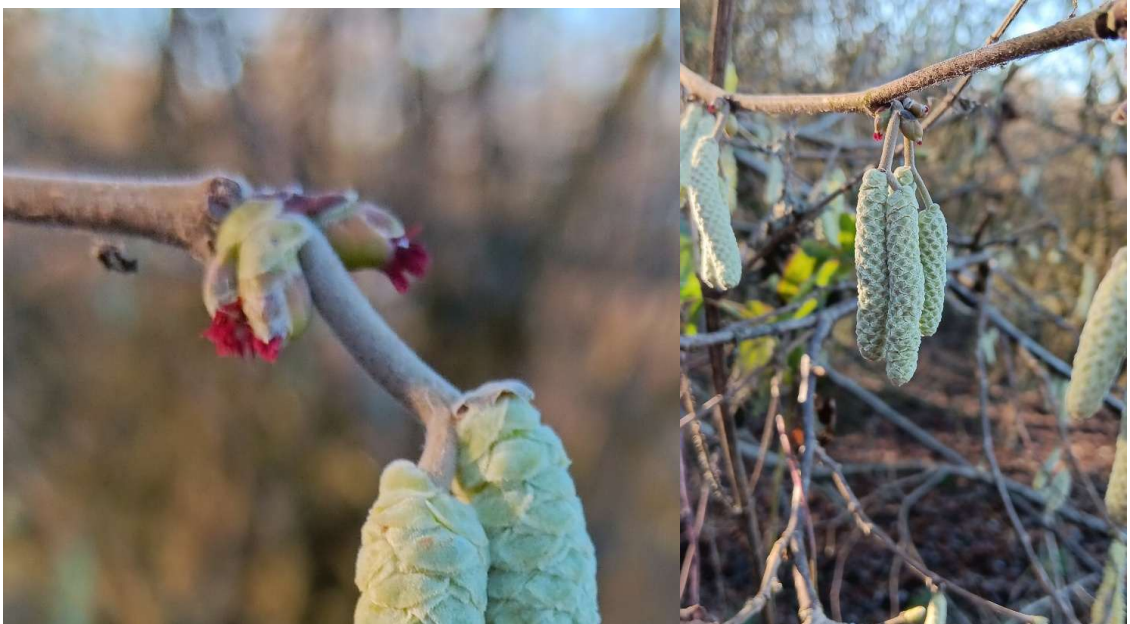
This is a good time to look at trees in their winter state. Many of the trees have catkins and we had a closer look at two types on our walk.

The alder trees along the river look magnificent at the moment with very showy long red male catkins and the smaller female catkins. They will start to open in a few weeks.



The tiny seeds which are retained in the small woody 'cones' provide food for finches like siskins and goldfinches through the winter

We had a close look at the hazel trees along the embankment. The red female flowers are developed in most cases.



From Mill Meadow we walked back along the footpath to Cogges Farm Café for a warm drink and meetup with other group members. No further flowering plants were identified during a short walk over Landgdale Common but it looks like an interesting area to keep an eye on and perhaps return to in the spring.



We recorded our observations on our own proforma and submitted the data afterwards via the BSBI ap. as it does not collect all the data we might want to record. Maps showing data recorded across the country can be seen on the BSBI website.

It was a useful exercise to observe and record winter in the Country Park and being part of a national scheme added to the interest. We will certainly repeat the exercise next year.

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