

Field Meeting, Stoke Wood, April 2007

Caitlin and James Potter

Stoke Wood is an ancient woodland, dominated by ash but also containing oak, birch, hazel and crab apples. The wood has a rich diversity of flora, including the beautiful orchid *Orchis mascula*, Ladies Smock, Meadowsweet and bluebells, all of which were flowering when we visited. However, many of these species are threatened by deer allowed in by hunters. The wood is managed by The Woodland Trust and contains both actively coppiced and old growth areas.

Our group, comprising Rosemary Hill, Ron Boyce, Caitlin Potter and James Potter met at Market Harborough Train Station, before meeting up with the forest's warden at the wood's car park. The day was bright and sunny throughout with low humidity, the tail end of the driest April on record. In short conditions likely to encourage most land molluscs to keep a low profile.

We began near a stream running through the wood, as everywhere else was parched. We found *Columella edentula* at grid reference WP 438 SP 80334/85937, as well as *Cochlicopa* cf. *lubricella*, *Cochlicopa* cf. *lubrica*, *Arion subfuscus*, *Arion*

ater agg, *Arion distinctus*, *Oxychilus alliarius*, *Aegopinella pura*, *Aegopinella nitidula*, *Vitnea crystallina*, *Clausilia bidentata*, *Trochulus hispida*, *Cepea nemoralis* and *Arianta arbustorum* (both albino and regular forms). After a break for lunch we sampled further along the stream bed (resulting in several wet feet!). The streambed was full of limestone that had been washed downstream, containing fossilised scallops and oysters. The species we found (*Arion distinctus*, *Arion subfuscus*, *Arion ater* agg., *Deroceras reticulatum*, *Oxychilus cellarius*, *Oxychilus alliarius*, *Aegopinella nitidula*, *Discus rotundatus*, *Euconulus* cf. *fulvus* seg., *Cochiodina laminata*, *Clausilia bidentata*, *Trochulus hispida*, *Trochulus striolata* and *Arianta arbustorum*) were remarkably similar to the species found at the previous site. We also checked the north edge of the wood, where the only species we hadn't found previously was *Acanthinula aculeata*.

Rosemary also took a leaf litter sample, which was found to contain *Cepea hortensis*, *Arianta arbustorum*, *Clausilia bidentata*, *Cochiodina laminata*, *Cochlicopa* cf. *lubrica*, *Aegopinella nitidula*, *Columella edentula* and *Columella aspera*. Then we called it a day, stopping to photograph the hazy patchwork of yellow and green rolling over the horizon.