

## Country Notes for June 2020

June is the month when, hopefully, we slip gently into summer. At the time of writing this, in mid-May, we are experiencing Arctic northerlies, which is quite a shock after a prolonged period of really quite warm weather, so let us hope that June produces fair and gentle warm weather.

There is so much happening in the countryside in June, making it a wonderful month to get out and about. Certainly, our hedgerows, fields and woods are bursting with flowers and everything is an effervescent green. There is so much to see that it is easy to overlook some of our more delicate and small plants. Orchids fall into this category and there are certainly some to be seen in our villages for the eager-eyed walker.

Perhaps the most frequently seen is the Early Purple Orchid. This is one of the first to be seen in spring and by June some of its flowers will be going over. However, it is probably the easiest to identify, as its leathery-green leaves are blotched with strong black spots. The flowers, as its name implies, are purple and held aloft on a small spike. There are a number of beliefs about this plant, one being that the blotches on the leaves are the dried drops of Christ's blood from the crucifixion. Parts of the plant were also considered variously to be a cure for a hangover and an aphrodisiac!

Another orchid which the watchful wanderer might see is the Spotted Orchid. This is probably the most common of our native orchids. The leaves are green with small purple, oval spots. The flowers are a pale pink with slightly darker small pink spots which, like the Early Purple Orchid, appear on a short spike.

The third you might see is the Bee Orchid. Should you be lucky enough to see one, and they often grow in groups, you will be in no doubt about its identification as the individual flowers look just like a bee. The sepals look like wings and the rest looks just like the body of a bee.

I hope that you see some of these as they are really beautiful but, remember that they should be left undisturbed. Perhaps take a picture and then, once you have done so, it is probably best to keep their whereabouts to yourself. That way they will continue to flourish for future years.

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