

like so many orchids is highly erratic; one year there may be hardly any and the next year there might be hundreds,

Whereas Bee Orchids have pink sepals, the well-known Early Spider Orchids (*Ophrys sphegodes*) have green sepals. They are probably the rarest orchids to be found within the town boundary since they are quite common on the terraces above the Eastern Docks and on the cliffs near Aycliffe where they bravely survive the salt-laden blasts, dwarfed but sturdy. They used to be common on Old Park Hill if one climbed up from London Road, River, but I have not been in recent years and it looks as though the undergrowth is now too high since they must have short turf like most downland orchids. There is a large garden on Kingsdown Leas where literally hundreds flower despite regular mowing and they are also found on the neighbouring golf courses and on Lydden Nature Reserve.

The same is true for an amazingly abundant orchid which hardly anyone notices, the Autumn Ladies Tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*). This blooms in September and at first glance resembles short spikes of flowering grass. Its beauty is best appreciated by lying on the ground with a magnifying glass so be prepared for suspicious glances from passers by. It is common on Temple Down and the Nature Reserve at Lydden. In fact it can appear almost overnight on uncut lawns when conditions are right.

The last orchid is the most well-known downland orchid—the Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) found on the Western Heights, the area surrounding the Castle, Langdon Cliffs and numerous woodland margins along Alkham Valley (one of the best orchid sites around Dover). Often, it will grow quite happily in gardens where concern for wild life takes precedence over weedkillers and hoeing. In the past I have seen children picking great bunches of the pink/mauve flowers in June but perhaps education as to the general rarity of these beautiful plants has reduced these depredations. There certainly seems to be a greater awareness of the astonishing variety of the wild life in our local area.

*Several of the orchids mentioned are illustrated on the front cover*

# Deadline

## for CONTRIBUTIONS

The Editor welcomes contributions suitable for the *Newsletter*. Illustrations to articles and other appropriate visual materials, are particularly appreciated.

The deadline for *Newsletter* No. 10 is Monday, 1st April. Please note that contributors should state the number of words in any article submitted.

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