

Affpuddle & Turnerspuddle Parish Wildlife Newsletter

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Violets in the parish. Text & Photos by Ian Cross.



Picture 1: Common Dog-violet

Jane Courtier's article on violets (newsletter 95) is timely. It has certainly been an astonishing year for these lovely plants, with magnificent displays in many hedge banks, along road verges and bordering woodland rides.

By far and away the commonest violet in the parish is the aptly named Common Dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*) – picture 1. Clusters of this violet (picture 2) are an attractive feature, not only of woods and hedges, but often also in short turf in acid grassland and along the edges of heathland tracks. A violet with pointed sepals and a pale spur, with a deep notch in it, will be this species (picture 3).



Picture 2: Massed Common Dog-violets on a parish road verge



Picture 3: the pointed sepals and pale, notched spur on a Common Dog-violet

The second most abundant wild violet in the parish is the Sweet Violet (*Viola odorata*). Normally, violet identification takes a little care, but for once our task has been made easy. Like many violet species, Sweet Violet comes in both violet and white forms. It just so happens that most (possibly all) Sweet Violets in the parish are of the white variety *dumetorum* (picture 4).



Picture 4: Sweet Violet – most, if not all, parish plants are of the white variety *dumetorum*

There are magnificent displays of *dumetorum* along the track from Turner's Puddle to Black Hill (picture 5), along The Hollow and in many other places besides. Indeed, I have yet to see a genuine violet-coloured Sweet Violet growing wild in our area.



Picture 5: a display of variety *dumetorum* near Turner's Puddle

The Early Dog Violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*) is far less frequent than the Common Dog-violet. Identification of this species is tricky as the spur characters of the commoner species can be quite variable – I prefer to rely on the relative length of the sepal appendages.

Ironically, one violet that seems to be genuinely scarce in the parish is the Heath Dog-violet (*Viola canina*). There are old records for our area but this is a declining species. Often, Common Dog-violets growing on heathy tracks get hopefully misidentified as this species. I would love to know of any recent sightings in the parish.