

FLORA GROUP NEWSLETTER



AUTUMN 1995

Dear Flora Group Member

We hope you enjoyed the events held earlier this year and look forward to seeing you on some of the events which have been planned for the autumn and the early part of the coming year.

A membership form is enclosed with this newsletter. If you are not already a member of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, please consider joining; if however you are already a member, please pass the form on to someone who may be interested in joining

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 15 October 1995 10.30am

Wild Service Tree

(*Sorbus torminalis*) in the New Forest

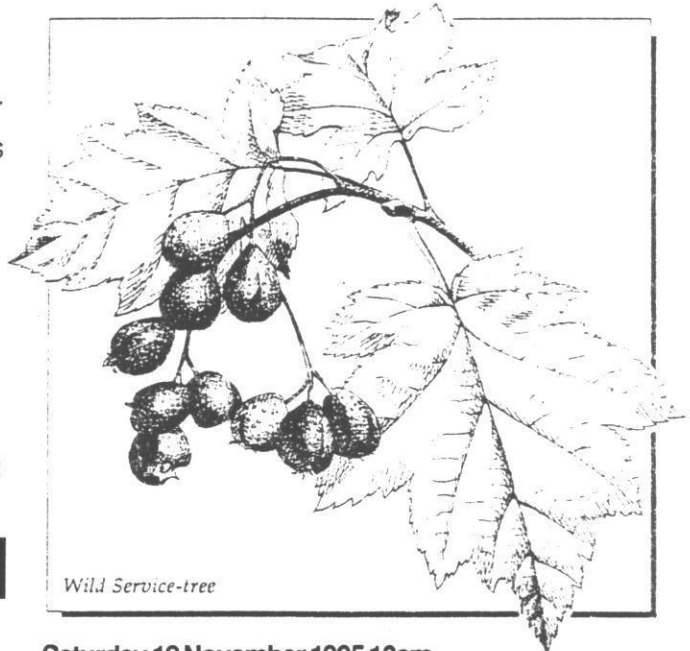
Neil Sanderson and Clive Chatters have agreed to lead a day studying the wild service tree in the New Forest. The aims of the day are to enjoy the trees in their autumn colours, to describe the communities in which they are found and to describe the epiphytes which they support.

Meet at 10.30am in the car park by the cricket pitch at Busketts Wood (grid reference SU 311111).

Wednesday 8 November 1995 7pm

Plant Identification and Recording Evening - Longstock

The North West Area Group has arranged a Plant Identification and Recording Evening to which Flora Group members are invited. The session will be led by Mike Wildish and will be held at 7pm on Wednesday 8 November in the "small room" at Longstock Village Hall. Entry fee £1.



Wild Service-tree

Saturday 18 November 1995 10am

Red-tipped Cudweed

(*Filago lutescens*) at Fleet

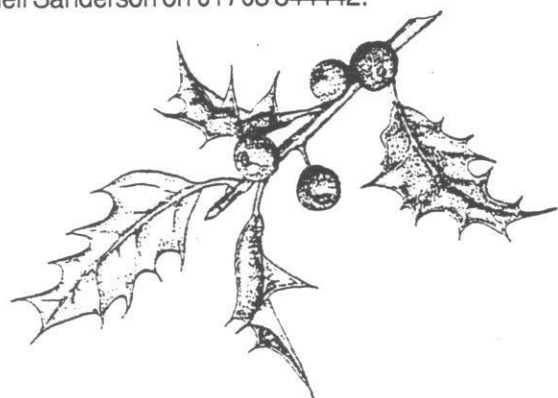
Chris Hall has agreed to lead another task at Broomhurst Farm, Fleet, at the red-tipped cudweed site. This task will be held on Saturday 18 November 1995 and will start at 10am. Meet at grid reference SU 813563 on the B3013, just north of the M3. It would be helpful if those who intend coming could telephone the Wildlife Trust office (01703 613636/ 613737) to let Clive Chatters know so that the correct number of tools can be provided. A report on this species is included in this newsletter.

It is clear that the work carried out by Flora Group members at this site in recent years has been successful and this winter we plan to continue to tackle the invasive scrub. This cudweed is one of Britain's rarest plants, being confined to a handful of sites in SE England. The plant is listed in the Red Data Book and is specially protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act. Organiser: Joan Cocksedge.

Saturday 13 January 1996 10.30am

Holly Cutting, New Forest

The Flora Group will once again be carrying out more holly cutting in the New Forest pasture woodlands this winter to improve conditions for rare epiphytic lichens. Neil Sanderson will be leading the task on Saturday, 13 January 1996. Meet at 10.30am at the car park by the cricket pitch at Busketts Wood (grid reference SU 311111). We will be working in Great Stubby Hat (grid reference SU 306110) where part of the largest colony in Britain of the lichen *Parmelia minarum* is being threatened by the shade of the holly. Tools will be provided but bring your own if you wish. If you require more information please contact Neil Sanderson on 01703 844442.



Sunday 4 February 1996 10am

Scrub Clearance in the New Forest

During February 1995 useful work was carried out near Wootton Bridge by Flora Group members who cleared Sallow which had colonised base-rich mire thereby shading out the slender cotton grass (*Eriophorum gracile*). This population of slender cotton grass (a nationally threatened species) was last seen here in the 1950s by Dr Francis Rose. Neil Sanderson has had a look at the site since the work was carried out last February; although it may be a number of years before any slender cotton grass might reappear, *Sphagnum teres* and *Carex limosa* have appeared. It has been agreed that further clearance work at this site would be worthwhile.

Meet at the car park at Wootton Bridge (grid reference SZ 251997) at 10am. The morning will be spent clearing sallow and in the afternoon we will travel on to Fort Bog to clear very young alder. Expect cold weather and wet conditions underfoot! Tools will be provided but bring your own if you wish. If you require more information, please contact Neil Sanderson on 01703 844442.

Saturday 11 May 1996

Flora Group AGM

A number of events are currently being planned for the spring and summer of 1996. Details are still to be finalised but you might like to make a note in your diary that the Flora Group AGM will be held on Saturday 11 May 1996 and will coincide with a springtime visit to woodlands adjacent to the Beaulieu River. Bob Lord, the North Solent National Nature Reserve Manager, invited Flora Group members to study the plants at Needs Ore earlier this year; he has kindly invited us back to the NNR to explore Sims Wood and Spearbed Copse which are important habitats on the Beaulieu Estate. Full details of this and other spring/summer events will be given in the next Flora Group newsletter. Events currently being planned include a visit to meadows at Newtown on the Isle of Wight and a trip to Ashford Hill National Nature Reserve.



Perham Ranges

Sunday 18 June 1995

On Sunday 18 June, there was a Flora Group walk at MoD Perham Ranges on the Hants/Wilts border. It took a while to get off the piece of waste ground where we parked the cars, as there were *Papaver hybridum* and *Crepis biennis* to see amongst the weeds. Once on site, there was a wide variety of the regular chalk grassland species, noteworthy being *Platanthera chlorantha* and also less often encountered species such as *Cynoglossum officinale*, *Myosotis ramosissima* and *Lathyrus nissolia*. The abundance of *Potentilla anserina* on parts of the down was noticeable, and the occurrence of plants associated with damp meadows - *Geum rivale* and *Scrophularia auriculata*. Stands of *Vicia hirsuta* and *Vicia tetrasperma* growing together enabled comparison of these similar species.

A number of fields on this site are set-aside at the moment, and this provided a good show of arable weeds including *Carduus nutans* and *Epilobium parviflorum*. The best sighting of the day (first spotted by Ann Rutherford's keen and experienced eyes) was a stand of about 100 *Hyoscyamus niger* at the margin of one of the fields.

Mike Wildish

Needs Ore Visit

Saturday 24 June 1995

The Group was made very welcome to this part of the North Solent National Nature Reserve by the new Site Manager, Bob Lord. We enjoyed a full day in this particularly beautiful area exploring the complex of habitats of inter-tidal muds, the vegetated gravel and beach and the brackish marshes. The very hot dry season had meant that many of the plants that flowered early in the year were well over. We however saw very extensive populations of the nationally scarce divided sedge in the brackish grasslands as well as attractive stands of thrift and sea campion on the gravel. The gravel habitats appear to have

changed since the mid-1970s with a growing dominance of ranker grasses, sedges and scrub. The shallow ponds scattered over the area were somewhat disappointing with species such as the black sedge, dyer's greenweed, marsh pennywort and devil's-bit-scabious somewhat lost in the taller vegetation. The reported last colonies of wild chamomile associated with short grazed grasslands were not refound.

One of the more interesting outcomes of the day was the opportunity to concentrate hard on species familiar to us but growing in very stressed habitats. We were therefore finding particularly fleshy plants of bird's foot trefoil which seemed remarkably different from those normally found in inland grasslands. The difficulty of separating heath bedstraw from lady's bedstraw in non-flowering plants was finally resolved by finding the natural hybrid *Galium x Pomeranicum*. A full report and species list of what we found on the site has been prepared by Neil Sanderson, copies of which are available from Catherine Chatters, Flora Group Secretary (see end of newsletter for address) upon receipt of a large stamped addressed envelope.

Warnborough Greens

Saturday 1 July 1995

Neil Sanderson very kindly led a walk around the Trust nature reserves of Warnborough Greens to help people identify grasses, sedges and rushes. The range of expertise was very wide and the morning was very pleasantly spent getting to grips with this occasionally rather difficult group. Particular note was taken of the difference between the grazed parts of the green and the ungrazed parts. The Wildlife Trust has only recently managed to re-instate grazing on to the Greens and this was very clearly opening up the tall rank grassland and revitalising the very species-rich vegetation which survived beneath it. Species such as the round-headed rush (*Juncus compressus*) and flat sedge (*Blasmus compressus*) were abundant. Whilst we did find some attractive

North Warnborough *cont'd*

and noteworthy plants in the ungrazed sections of the Greens, these were almost universally dominated by false oat grass and only revealed their true interest after close examination. This was a firm lesson in the dangers of dismissing a site because it looks superficially dull. Much can survive in rank fenland if only we have the time, and ability to find it.

In the afternoon a small group stayed in the area to visit the Greywell Moors nature reserve. The reserve is now being increasingly cleared of scrub alder and converted back to open fen communities through cattle grazing. What, until recently, had been tall fen dominated by trees and reeds was now very species-rich, short, mossy fen with an abundance of plants such as red rattle, yellow sedges and marsh fern as well as some of the rarer specialities such as the marsh helleborine and the cotton grasses. As this restoration work progresses we hope that there may be a natural re-appearance of great fen sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) and slender cotton grass (*Eriophorum gracile*) which were both known from the Fen until the 1960s.

Clive Chatters

Whilst at Warnborough Greens on 1 July 1995, Flora Group member Jack Oliver found a 52cm marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*) plant with one terminal and five (probably six originally, but one knocked off) lateral cones. Jack mentions that variegated horsetail and its hybrid Mackay's horsetail can have cones on non-terminal branches. Rose (1989) mentions cones "sometimes on side branches" in marsh horsetail, but a symmetrical ring of cones on the tips of the uppermost branch whorl, around the central cone, seems unusual. Martin Cragg-Barber (editor, "That Plant's Odd", dealing with aberrant forms) thinks that potential damage to the central axis had caused the sporulating impulse to be transferred to the uppermost branch whorl and he has forwarded the specimen to Kew for comment.

The Flora of Hampshire Appeal

At the time of preparing the Flora Group newsletter the Flora of Hampshire is finally coming together. The Flora Committee and other volunteers are proof reading the text and preparing the index. The book should be with us before Christmas. It will be some 400 pages with nearly 600 maps together with photographs of habitats and plants.

The Trust has found great difficulty in finding commercial sponsorship for the cost of producing the book. We are therefore inviting all those interested in botany to sponsor the publication. Those contributing £25 or more will have their support printed in the book. Please let us know how you would wish your name to appear. If you can help please do so. Donations should be sent to the "Hampshire Flora Appeal" at the Trust office to arrive by 6 October. Cheques should be made payable to the "Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Ltd".

Please see pre-publication offers in the next Trust's autumn "Wildlife" magazine.

Alien Plants of the British Isles

Flora Group member Eric Clements is the co-author of the recent BSBI publication titled "Alien Plants of the British Isles: A Provisional Catalogue of Vascular Plants (excluding grasses)". The book is the culmination of over 15 years' work and provides data on over 3,000 taxa of alien plants found growing wild somewhere in the British Isles. Many are not included in either Stace's "New Flora of the British Isles" or Kent's "List of Vascular Plants of the British Isles". Families and genera are arranged in the order of Stace and the book runs to 590 pages. The records are divided into the periods pre 1930 and post 1930. Data given include frequency of occurrence, areas of origin, possible means of introduction, references to descriptions and illustrations, location of herbarium material and numerous synonyms. Eric is well known as a leading authority on alien plant species and this will

be the first comprehensive volume on the alien flora of these islands. The book, price £15 (including postage and packing) is available from F & M Perring, BSBI Publications, Green Acre, Wood Lane, Oundle, Peterborough PE8 5TP, tel 01832 273388, fax 01832 274568.

Filago Lutescens monitoring

The 1994 season produced a good number of plants at Broomhurst, with a peak count of 132. Most were dead by late August but two plants were still in flower on 26 September. The site was checked on this date because it is sometimes stated the main period for seed germination in this species is late summer and autumn until late November, with plants overwintering as small rosettes. No seedlings were found, though the early autumn rains had caused the germination of grasses and some herbs.

Management of the site took place on 12 November. No seedlings were noticed on this occasion either, and at Broomhurst the species has always successfully germinated after management in the period November to January. Five patches of variable size were dug over using forks, to remove perennial grasses, bramble and gorse. Larger roots were removed by mattock. One experimental plot was deep dug by fork and thoroughly cleared of grass roots, but the other plots were lightly forked as in previous years.

The next site inspection was on 23 March 1995, after a very wet period which lasted from mid-January until mid-March. Rainfall up to 20 March was 282 mm. The winter was, however, mild and relatively frost-free. Most of the ground dug over in November was still bare. A single *Filago* seedling was noted, together with seedlings/young plants of *Aphanes* sp., *Cerastium* sp., *Rumex acetosella* and grasses.

The spring turned out to be very dry, with high temperatures in early May. Total rainfall on Fleet from 21 March until end of May was only 45 mm. Broomhurst was visited on 25 May, when the site was

found to be very droughted. There was more bare ground, and fewer annuals of all species, than would be expected by that date. The total count for *Filago lutescens* was only 26 plants, almost equally divided between the plot by the Broomhurst entrance and the plot midway along the bank (where best numbers have consistently occurred. There were also four plants of *Scleranthus annuus*.

By the farm entrance were two young plants and 12 seedlings of *Filago*, the seedlings all in a cluster and crowded. On the central bank were twelve scattered, dwarf young plants.

No seedlings of *Filago* were found on the deep dug plot. Small numbers of the following annuals were noted: *Aphanes arvensis*, *Cerastium fontanum*, *Erophila verna*, *Papaver dubium*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Spergula arvensis* and *Viola arvensis*. The dry weather continued into July. By 10th of the month only 18 mm had been added since the end of May. Broomhurst was visited again on 7 July. Again the observation was made that the proportion of bare ground was higher than would be expected at this time in the summer. Also there was evidence of more intensive rabbit grazing and scratching. Even gorse is well browsed. Only 13 plants of *Filago* were located, 12 of them on the central part of the bank but only one by the Broomhurst entrance. The others have presumably been lost due to drought and/or rabbit activity. Those plants which have survived were in full flower, sturdy, but rather small and unbranched.

The deep dug plot had no *Filago* but two plants of *Scleranthus* had appeared since the last inspection. These annuals were noted: *Aphanes arvensis* (frequent), *Anchusa arvensis* (2), *Aira praecox*, *Anagallis arvensis* (1), *Papaver dubium* (2), *Rumex acetosella*, *Spergula arvensis* and *Viola arvensis*.

Chris Hall, 10 July 1995

Guides to Water Buttercups, Ferns and Sphagnum Mosses

On 2 April 1995, Dr Sarah Webster led a fascinating morning studying water buttercups in the New Forest. She has kindly produced a guide to the characteristics of *Ranunculus omiophyllus*, *R. tripartitus* and their hybrid *R. x novae-forestae*. If you would like to receive a copy of this, please send a stamped addressed envelope to Catherine Chatters, Flora Group Secretary (see end of newsletter for address).

A useful key to sphagnum mosses was produced by Dr Michael Proctor in connection with his sphagnum training day held during October 1994. Copies of this can also be obtained from Catherine Chatters (on receipt of a SAE).

During September 1992, Dave Winsland led a fern identification training day at Roydon Woods nature reserve. Dave produced an excellent guide to ferns typically found in Hampshire/Dorset and, again, copies of this can be obtained from Catherine (on receipt of a SAE).

Tree Health Alert

Everyone is aware of Dutch Elm disease, and occasionally other diseases reach the countryside from overseas. There are two at present that are being watched carefully by the Forestry Authorities.

Alder dieback disease

This disease appears to be spreading mainly, but not exclusively, along water courses and both the Forestry Authority and the National Rivers Authority are gathering information about disease sightings. Infected trees are distinct because of abnormally small, sparse leaves that fall prematurely. Closer inspection of the base and the trunk will reveal weeping tarry spots (approximately the size of a 50p piece) on the surface. The disease is caused by a fungus *Phytophthora* species which invades the roots and kills the tree from the base upwards.

Phytophthora itself does not cause actual wood decay but other organisms invade the dead tissue and hasten the progress of damage. All species of alder commonly found in the UK countryside are susceptible eg common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*); grey alder (*A. incana*) and Italian alder (*A. cordata*).

If you see any alder displaying these symptoms please contact the Forestry Authority, Alice Holt, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey GU10 4LF.

Copies of a coloured leaflet explaining how to identify *Phytophthora* root disease of alder can be obtained from the Forestry Authority at Alice Holt.

Cherry Leaf Scorch

Less worrying but very distinctive is another fungal disease *Apiognomonia erythstoma*, this time on cherries [wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), bird cherry (*P. padus*) and some sweet cherry cultivars]. The leaves die, become brown and shrivelled but remain on the tree. This disease has become more prominent since 1992 so again the Forestry Authority is monitoring the situation. Spores of the fungus develop on the dead leaf undersides and infect young leaves as they expand in the spring, these in turn develop brown blotches, yellow margins and then die. Although aesthetically unattractive the disease does not appear to be too debilitating although theoretically early leaf death could gradually weaken the tree. Protective fungicide sprays as the young leaves are unfolding can help to control the disease (the Forestry Authority can advise an appropriate chemicals), alternatively removal of all the dead leaves will reduce reinfection in the spring but this is not practicable on large trees.

Copies of an information sheet and report form can be obtained from Catherine Chatters (see end of newsletter for address) on receipt of a SAE.

Sarah Ball

Bee Orchid in Winchester

In June 1995 Flora Group member Rosemary Horne reported that a bee orchid had appeared on the back lawn of her garden in Winchester. She described it as a "magnificent specimen ... with 4 flowers fully open and another 5 plus buds on the way". Her husband had spotted the rosette of leaves back in the winter and they had watched it expectantly ever since, being very careful to avoid it when mowing. Does anyone else have any records of orchids appearing on their lawns?

Catherine Chatters came across a patch of green-winged orchids in a lawn on the edge of Totton whilst doing a door-to-door collection for the Wildlife Trust earlier this year.

Arable Weeds in Gardens and Allotments

A suggestion has been made by John Moon for a survey of allotments and gardens. Corn parsley (*Petroselinum segetum*), a local species in Britain, has been present in his vegetable patch ever since they moved into their house eight years ago. He writes - "I do not think my garden is unique and suspect that there must be quite a few other local gardens and allotments with this and other species of interest. Actually, there could be far worse places to look for unusual weeds - after all many have been in continuous cultivation for a long time and most have escaped blanket herbicide applications."

A number of other examples of interesting plants appearing in gardens and allotments spring to mind. For example, royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) colonises the drains on the allotments at Lyndhurst; field cow wheat (*Melampyrum arvense*) is known as a native relic in a Wiltshire garden; mousetail (*Myosurus minimus*) is a garden weed in the south of the New Forest and in East Hampshire; small fleabane (*Pulicaria vulgaris*) grows in a fruit cage in a Dorset garden; fumitories are abundant in Lake Allotments on the Isle of Wight.

Any records of interesting weed species found in gardens and allotments can be sent to Mary Flatt (see end of newsletter for address) who has agreed to collate the records; the findings will be mentioned in future newsletters. Some ideas of species to look out for include green field speedwell (*Veronica agrestis*), gallant soldier (*Galinsoga parviflora*), shaggy soldier (*Galinsoga ciliata*), weasle snout (*Misopates orontium*), rusty-back fern (*Ceterach officinarum*) on walls and broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) in gardens around Havant built on ancient woods!

New discoveries & interesting records in Hampshire & the Isle of Wight

Chris Hall has suggested that the regular publication of new and interesting plant records would be of great interest and of value as a future source of reference. At present there is nowhere for interesting new records to be published or communicated to other botanists in the county, and one only gets to hear of some of them on the 'grapevine'. The Surrey Flora Group publishes an annual list of the most interesting records for the year and Chris notes that 'the old natural history journals had pages of records and are a priceless source of historical data'.

Chris suggests that such a list could include new records for nationally scarce species, notes on new records for any plants unusual in the county or for lowland England, and the refinding of sites where there has been no record for some time.

It has been decided that a list of new and interesting records will be a regular feature of our newsletter. Records will be collated by Mary Flatt (see end of newsletter for address).

As a start the following records have recently been received.

Apera spica-venti (loose silky-bent) - plentiful in a field at Elvetham, SU 7856 (C Hall, 1994). A

nationally scarce species but not considered a truly native species in Britain (Steward A, Pearman D A and Preston C D, 1994 Scarce Plants in Britain, JNCC).

Carex distans (distant sedge) - track on Eelmoor Marsh, SU 8452 (A Branson, 1994).

Carex hostiana (tawny sedge) - Eelmoor Marsh (C Hall, 1994), first record since 1956.

Carex pulicaris (flea sedge) - Hazeley Heath, SU 7458, (C Hall, 1994), first record for 20 years.

Chamaemelum nobile (chamomile) - Hazeley Lea, SU 7458 (C Hall, 1994), two sites. A nationally scarce and rapidly declining species.

Elatine hexandra (six-stemmed waterwort) - Fleet Pond, SU 8254, reappeared after marsh was severely trampled by conservation volunteers around a bonfire site! (C Hall, 1994). A nationally scarce species.

Gentiana pneumonanthe (marsh gentian) - Hook Common, SU 7252, 9 flowering plants on 4 September 1994 (C Hall). A nationally scarce species which has declined significantly in recent years through loss of habitat.

Ophrys apifera (Bee orchid) - one magnificent plant with at least 9 flowers appeared in Rosemary Horne's lawn in Winchester in mid June 1995. The rosette of leaves was first noticed in the winter and mowing was avoided.

Parentucellia viscosa (yellow bartsia) - Pyestock Hill, SU 8252, 3500 plants (A Mundell, 1994). A species restricted to south and west Britain.

Pinguicula vulgaris (common butterwort) - Eelmoor Marsh, SU 8252, 285 plants 1994 (C Hall).

Ricciocarpus natans (uncommon aquatic liverwort) - Basingstoke Canal, SU 7250, one frond, first record since 1987 (C Hall, 1994).

Thelypteris palustris (marsh fern) - Fleet Pond, SU 8054, covering some 50m², first ever record (C Hall, 1994).

Utricularia minor (lesser bladderwort) - Eelmoor Marsh, choking a small pond, SU 8452 (C Hall, 1994).

Chris Hall mentions that 'New Forest based botanists should remember some plants which are plentiful there are rare in VC12!'

Mary Flatt

IDEAS FOR FUTURE EVENTS

As always, ideas for future events are extremely welcome. Please give suggestions to any of the Committee members:-

Dr Sarah Ball, Conifer Cottage, The Dell, Kingsclere, Newbury, Berkshire RG15 8NL.

Joan Cocksedge, 38 Sycamore Crescent, Church Crookham, Fleet, Hampshire, GU13 0NN.

Neil Sanderson, 52 Cygnus Garden, Dibden, Southampton, Hampshire, SO4 5UH.

Mary Flatt, Chalk Cottage, Soames Lane, Ropley, Alresford, Hampshire, SO24 0ER.

Clive & Catherine Chatters, Ivy Cottage, Ashurst Bridge Road, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 7EA.



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