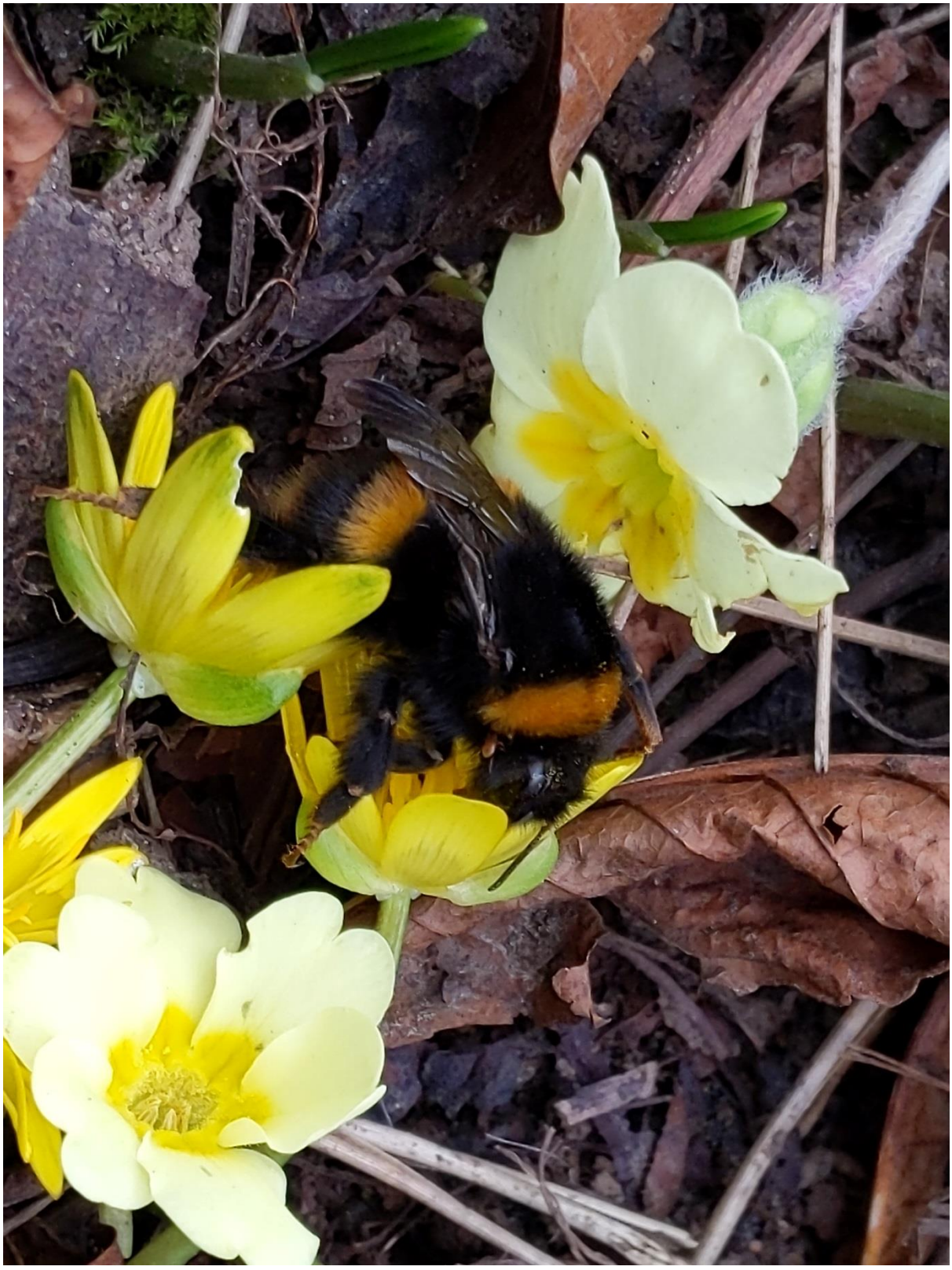
Danes Dyke visit by u3a Wild Things March 2025

It was unsurprising that twenty members turned out on this mild and sunny spring day. We strolled through the woods full of snowdrops and lesser celandines towards the beach where the tide had just turned. There's something for everyone here so the group split: some walked along the cliffs to South Landing, others went south towards Sewerby, some settled for a stroll through the woods while some of us hazarded the rock pools. Here Mervin gave a masterclass in shore creatures and seaweeds, despite there being little at first to see. The bird count was disappointing although David did spot a curlew.

Snowdrops are very nectar-rich so provide an important source of food for early-flying insects like emerging queen bumble bees. The green lines are thought to be pollen guides.

Beryl rescued the Buff-tailed queen overleaf, which was struggling on the path, by feeding it celandine and primrose flowers. It immediately dived in and began to feed. Life is precarious indeed for these early flyers.



The beach was clear, with evidence of a recent beach clean. There were magnificent views for those on the cliff path. Pictures here taken by Denise and Paul, looking north and south.

On page 4 is an example of a ‘hag stone’, a chalk pebble bored through by the delightfully named bivalves, ‘boring piddocks’. There are several species but they all spend their lives in their holes as filter feeders. They glow in the dark apparently, and their luminescent protein has been extracted to

use medicinally to identify infection-fighting cells. The hag stones are so-called as they were hung up to deter witches.

All the rocks were pockmarked in a lesser way by a variety of creatures such as worms, and Mervin identified this cast above as that of a

Keeled Worm called *Spirobranchus Triqueter*. This secretes a calcareous tube in which it hides to filter-feed when the tide is in. The Limpet however, moves around when covered with water, rasping algae off the neighbouring rocks, with its very strong teeth, described by a Royal Society journal as 'the strongest biological material known to man'. Almost as strong is its suction foot which resists extraordinary forces of storms (and predators like man) for moorage when it's exposed.

There was a lot of Hornwrack around, like this *Flustra foliacea,* which is not a seaweed but a colonial animal. On close inspection you can see the individual cells housing each creature. We wondered whether the tiny protruding tubes were ovicells, reproductive features, or whether they were the creatures' feeding apparatus. All very mind-boggling.

Mervin identified another similar Bryozoan *Membranipora membranacea,* or Sea Mat, this one growing attached to seaweed, Toothed Wrack or *Fucus serratus* (page 6). Once we got our eye in, we could spot this everywhere.

We found a couple of Beadlet Anemone, *Actinia equina,* normally red if seen underwater but brown if exposed on a rock (page 11). Their tentacles will only emerge underwater, where they will sting and capture their prey, such as small fish or shrimps, as they pass by.

Mervin identified several species of seaweed, as on the attached list, though some IDs were tentative.

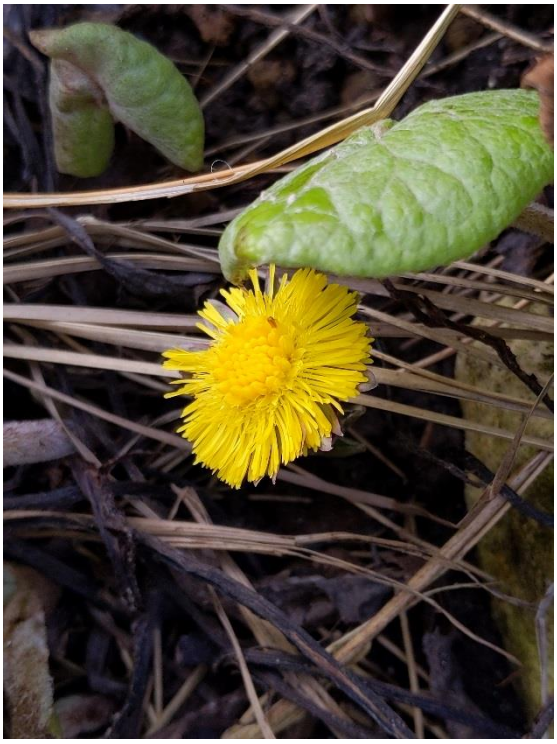
This was a whole new world to me and my appetite is whetted to learn more.

Above: Bryozoan colony growing on Toothed Wrack. Page 7: Seaweeds including a red seaweed, Sea Lettuce and *Laminaria saccarina,* bottom left, also known as Sugar Kelp, or Poor Man's Weather Glass. It is a food source and was used in past times to predict bad weather, if hung outside. When dry it meant fine weather, if limp then rain was on the way.

Angela found a very heavy and lumpen rock which must be haematite. We liked to think it was a meteorite, but It is probably an erratic brought down by the ice from the iron ore deposits around North Yorkshire.

We didn't find many obvious fossils, though they can be common around here. This piece of chalk contains, I think, a fossil sponge.

We were foxed by the strange shapes above, but Mervin decided they were probably cystocarps from one of the red seaweeds. These are fruiting structures produced in red algae after fertilisation.



I was pleased to spot my first Coltsfoot flower of the year in the ravine. Still used as an ingredient in cough medication, this plant's flower emerges before the leaves, covered in woolly hairs to protect it from the cold.

Altogether a fascinating trip, from which I learnt a lot of new information, and we all loved the weather.

Report HK. Photos from Denise, Helen, Mervin and Paul.

Below: examining a large erratic.

Mervin's species list:

BEVERLEY & DISTRICT U3A
WILD THINGS VISIT TO DANES DYKE MONDAY 3 MARCH 2025

Seaweeds
Ulva lactuca - Sea Lettuce
Laminaria digitata - Oarweed or Tangle (parts only)
Laminaria saccarina - Sugar Kelp, Poor Man's Weather Glass
Fucus serrâtes - Saw Wrack, Toothed Wrack
Fucus vesiculosus - Pladder Wrack
Chondrus crispus - Irish Moss, Carragheen
(Rhodymenia palmata - Dulse; on stalk of Laminaria I think!!)
(Acrosiphonia arc - possibly this on rocks left behind by the tide not sure though!)

Sea Anemones
Actinia equina - Beadlet Anemone

Worms
Pomatoceros triqueter - (the keeled worm casing)
Hydroides norvegica - (case without a keel) I think!

Snails
Patella vulgaris - Common Limpet
(Acmaea tessulata - Tortoiseshell Limpet I think!)
Littorina neritoides - Small Periwinkle
Mytilus edulis - Common Mussel smashed shells

Crustacea
Chthamalus stellatus - Star Barnacle

Bryozoa or Polyzoa
Membranipora membranacea - Sea Mat (the "square" one encrusting seaweed)
Flustra foliacea - Hornwrack (the self-supporting one, washed up, v common)

The "slime mould"-like structures are possibly cystocarps from a red seaweed

Left: Beadlet Anemone, *Actinia equina*