

## ORCHIDS AT THE 'EYES' 2004

The last update on orchids at Woolston appeared in the 2002 Annual Report. In that year it was Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apertifa*) which stole the show and good numbers were present in 2004, though not as numerous as in 2002.



**Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apertifa*)** – photo by David Bowman

The usual small population (about eight flower spikes) was found near the new pump house on No.2 Bed, but in keeping with the often transitory nature of this species only 11 were found on the north bank of No.3 Bed, where 43 plants flowered in 2002.

Excitingly, however, a new population was discovered near the Sandpit Pond in June – at least 18 plants were in flower on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Nearby, the long standing Marsh Orchids put on their best display I can ever remember, with an amazing count of 2003 flower spikes. At least 40 Spotted Orchids were also showing well.

Marsh Orchids also appear in good numbers on the south side of No.1 Bed, adjacent to the west pool and on the 8<sup>th</sup> June a total of 363 flower spikes were counted. Good numbers of Marsh Orchids also grow inside the south bank of No.4 Bed and it is likely that in 2004 between 2500 and 3000 were in flower on the 'Eyes'.



**Marsh Orchid** – photo by David Bowman

The highlight of the year, without doubt, was the discovery by Pam and Cliff Gibson of up to 28 Broad-leaved Helleborines (*Epipactis helleborine*) in the centre of No.3 Bed. Identification of this rare Cheshire plant was confirmed by the County Botanical Recorder who visited Woolston on 10<sup>th</sup> August.



**Broad-leaved Helleborine** (*Epipactis helleborine*)

It is not clear how long this species has been present on No.3 Bed. The specimens found were growing in deep shade amongst nettles and may have been overlooked in previous years.

**Brian Martin**