

Sussex Botanical Recording Society

Newsletter

No. 53

January 2002

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Mary Briggs

Our main achievement in 2001 was the SBRS team project of *The Sussex Rare Plant Register*, published in May. This has received favourable reviews and commendation, and there are many to thank – first to all of you who sent in the records. Alan Knapp has remarked that the production of the SRPR would not have been possible ten years ago, without the concentrated and localised recording for the BSBI *Atlas 2000* by SBRS members, together with the computerization of our records.

In Sussex a firm base for our current recording was laid down by the *Sussex Plant Atlas* 1980, As the Sussex Flora Society, from 1966 many members recorded by tetrads across the two Counties. Joan and Peter Hall, the authors of the SPA, were meticulous in their quest for accuracy, and in their assessment of the status of each species as known in Sussex. These assessments were invaluable for comparison with their status in 2001. When the *Sussex Plant Atlas* was published in 1980, we had for the first time a quick visual estimation of those species becoming less (or more) common across the Counties. Selecting those species recorded in less than 7 tetrads in either County, we began to build up habitat and population notes for these less common species; this was developed through our Sussex recording card, on which these 'plus' species were marked with a request for more detailed information.

The computerization of our records was pioneered by Peter Donovan, George Forster, Ron Clough, Paul Harmes, Arthur Hoare and Alan Knapp. Alan in particular devised a programme for our *Atlas 2000* records, and this year processed all the records for the new *Register*. The selection of the species for inclusion in this took much longer than we anticipated – many hours of work by Paul, Alan and myself! We must also thank the authors of the species accounts, and later the team of proof-readers from the SBRS and from the Sussex Biological Records Centre, which also published the *Register* for us. Thanks to all who helped, to Mike and Olwen Hollings for providing the beautiful cover photograph, and especially to those SBRS members whose enthusiasm and perseverance with the fieldwork produced the records.

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Secretary's Note

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 23rd March 2002

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 2.00 p.m. at Staplefield Village Hall followed by a showing of members' slides and finishing with tea and cakes. The hall will be available from 1.30 p.m. Nominations for new committee members, agreed by the nominee, should be sent to the Secretary a week before the A.G.M.

Saturday 16th November 2002

The Autumn Get-together will be at Staplefield Village Hall. The hall will be open at 10.00 a.m. and the meeting will start promptly at 10.30 a.m. Soup and jacket potatoes will be available for lunch with tea and cakes later in the afternoon. Pat Donovan will be showing slides of Sussex Coastal Plants. Members are invited to bring books and plants for sale as usual and any items of interest or specimens for display.

Please look for details in this Newsletter of the Staplefield Conservation Group's meetings. They would very much welcome help with identification of plants from any SBRS members who are able to join their meetings.

Rita Hemsley

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CONGRATULATIONS!

By Mary Briggs

Congratulations to Howard Matcham, who has been elected Vice-President of the British Bryological Society. Howard, in addition to being a competent recorder of vascular plants, has specialised in mosses and liverworts, and he is an SBRS Committee member as the Bryophyte Recorder and Referee. The BBS has the procedure that the elected Vice-President automatically becomes President – our Society will be proud to include the President of another national society, when Howard in due course becomes President of the BBS.

Book Review

By Arthur G. Hoare

David Lang's '*Wild Orchids of Sussex*' has had rave reviews in numerous publications. Although it seemed long awaited it's a pity it could not have waited just a little bit longer for the inclusion of yet another variety of *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid), discovered in Sussex just after the book release. This new variety was seen and named by David as *O. apifera* var. *atro-fuscus*. It is well illustrated by line drawing, (albeit upside down) in BSBI News No. 88. There is also a fine photograph of the specimen in the same edition along with other bee orchid varieties, one, a peloric form again printed upside down, (tut-tut); not an error on David's part I hasten to add.

Each species of orchid ever found in Sussex is described and beautifully portrayed with excellent colour photographs with notes on habitat and clear distribution maps, in fact all you need to know about orchids is there. The text is laced with many anecdotes about the orchid hunters and their antics that makes for easy reading. His 'Botanologia' on the past orchidophiles is a joy to read.

This book is a must not only for botanists and orchid admirers but also for lovers of the Sussex countryside.

Spirodela punctata

A possible new aquatic alien

By Alan Knapp

At the BSBI annual exhibition meeting in London one of the exhibits drew attention to yet another aquatic plant which is being sold by garden centres etc. and which could escape into the wild. It is called *Spirodela punctata* and its general habit and appearance are very like *Lemna minor*. Fortunately it is very easy to separate from *Lemna minor* on closer examination as the whole of the underside of the fronds is a deep, dark purple and it has several roots whereas *Lemna minor* has a green underside to the frond and only a single root. If you find any please let one of the recorders know immediately as it might be the first UK record of this plant occurring in the wild.

Staplefield Conservation Group

Assistance Required

Staplefield village (well known to all members who attend our indoor meetings) has an active conservation group and one of their activities is making a detailed record of the plants growing on the common in order to guide their conservation measures and also to note any changes which result from their work. They are very enthusiastic and would greatly welcome help from anyone with botanical expertise. The meetings take place 3 times per year and last from 10:00 a.m. to about 12:00 noon. The meeting place is the crossroads on the B2114, directly West of the church (TQ277281). The dates for 2002 are: **April 20th, June 29th and August 17th.**

If you would like further information please contact Alan Knapp.

Road Verge Recording (1)

By Rod Stern

The notes on Road Verge Recording in the last Newsletter must be read in the context of a much greater awareness of Health and Safety and responsibility for accidents than there was in previous years. Also of course, there has been a large increase in the amount of road traffic.

We hope that recording on road verges will not cease completely, and members may feel confident that they can look at, say, wide grassy areas adjoining public roads without the need for the special requirements listed in the last Newsletter. However, we have to stress that unless the recording is being done at the request of the Highways Authority in accordance with detailed provisions laid down, members do it at their own risk; neither the SBRS, which has no insurance, nor the County Council or Highways Agency can be held to be responsible for any accident.

Leaders of meetings also have to be clear about this aspect. If a meeting includes walking along a public road, the leader must remind members attending that they are responsible for their own safety.

Road Verge Recording (2)

We have now received the final version of the West Sussex County Council document outlining the risks involved in road verge recording and specifying the precautions which should be taken, which are more detailed than those given in the May 2001 Newsletter. If you are planning to record verges for WSCC please obtain a copy either from WSCC or from Frances Abraham.

LILY BREDA BURT 1918 – 2001

by Mary Briggs

With great sadness we report the death of Breda Burt (on the day following our Autumn meeting). Those who were SBRS members in the 1960's, '70's and '80's will have many memories of Breda, who was the BSBI and SBRS Recorder for East Sussex VC14, from 1984 to 1993. Living near Rye, Breda was the mastermind of botanical information on the far south-east of Sussex. For most of her life, the old farmhouse at Playden, Boonsfield Farm, was her home; she was joined there when they married by her husband Ernie, a sheep farmer, who by a strange coincidence had lived in – and been born in – that farmhouse years before! Breda was acquainted with every plant in the hedgerows of the farm fields within daily walking distance, and botanising went alongside the sheep farming.

There were many botanical friends from a number of societies: BSBI, Wild Flower Society, SBRS, Rye Natural History Society, Kent Field Club, the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the Friends of Rye Harbour etc. Both Ernie and Breda were involved with the early planning and running of the Rye Harbour National Nature Reserve. Many days too were spent on expeditions with friends, recording plants, checking on records, and building up her considerable knowledge of the local Sussex plants. This was willingly shared, and SBRS members were among those who enjoyed numbers of field meetings led by Breda, with Ernie also on duty as adviser, guide and photographer. Together, using Ernie's good slides, they gave many lectures on local wild flowers and natural history.

Always cheerful, and with a lovely sense of humour, Breda was an industrious but modest Recorder, diffident about her knowledge (more so than she had need to be), but always willing to check, and look for or help others to find required records. At home surrounded by her botanical books, these were kept on a trolley with her card index, current specimens, and her assorted notes; on wheels they could be moved from room to room for easy access. The notes would be jottings, many on old envelopes or the insides of cut up cereal packets etc. – at times causing frantic searches and SOS phone calls! David Lang, in his *Orchids of Sussex* (2001), tells of the 'botanical tray' on which a Flora and notes could be worked on at the laid table until Ernie came in – the tray was then lifted off and lunch was served. I also had the pleasure of taking Breda and Ernie on many botanical holidays abroad. They were splendid travelling companions, interested in everything, but Breda particularly in the plants, and Ernie in the farming and farm machinery. I cannot recall Breda saying an unkind word about any of the many botanists and flower-lovers who constantly contacted her with their requests.

When Ernie became ill, their family organised a comfortable barn conversion on their grandson's farm near Pershore. Sadly, since Ernie's death, Breda became increasingly infirm, with Alzheimer's taking its toll; she died peacefully this autumn. Her family will bring her ashes to Sussex, as Ernie's were, to scatter on their Sussex Boonsfield Farm.

We have many happy memories. Breda will be sadly missed, but we were fortunate to have her in the Sussex Flora Society, then in the SBRS, for so many years.

We send our sympathy to her son, Michael, and her daughter-in-law, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

KATE COSWAY 1909-2001

We are very sorry to report the death of Kate Cosway in early December at the age of 92. Kate was an active recorder, especially in the Worthing area, and did much work for the *Sussex Plant Atlas*. The SBRS owes her a special debt because she audited our accounts for a number of years. A fuller obituary will appear in the May 2002 Newsletter.

Mistaken identity? - *Chenopodium ficifolium*

By Alan Knapp

Our records for *Chenopodium ficifolium* (Fig-leaved Goosefoot) indicate that it is a widespread and common species but this may not be a true picture. I suspect that the identity of the majority of these records was based on leaf shape. However this is not a very reliable character as *Chenopodium album* has very variable leaves and can easily be mistaken for *C. ficifolium*. In order to be sure you must look at rather fiddly characters associated with the markings on the testa (seed coat) as described for example in the keys in *New Flora of the British Isles* (C.A. Stace). This point was brought home to me last summer when I looked carefully at 3 plants (from different places) which had 3 lobed leaves and looked to me like good candidates for *C. ficifolium*. In all cases examination of the testa showed that they were in fact *C. album*. The message here is clear - unless you are very familiar with this group you should not rely on identifications based on the leaf shape.

I would be very grateful if anyone who finds a sample of what they believe to be *C. ficifolium* next summer could send me a sample which includes the inflorescence (must have some seeds present) and some leaves.

Potentially Scarce Plants - a follow up to the Sussex Scarce Plant Register

Alan Knapp, Mary Briggs, Paul Harnes & Arthur Hoare

Most of you will, by now, be aware that *The Sussex Rare Plant Register* was published earlier in the middle of 2001 and lists all species which occur in Sussex and are in one of the following categories: Red Data Book species, Nationally Scarce species or Scarce in Sussex. Our definition of Scarce in Sussex is that the species should occur in three or fewer locations in either East or West Sussex. Further analysis of our records since the publication of the *Register* has shown that there are a further group of 15 species which should probably have been

included in the *Rare Plant Register*. These species are listed below and we would like to gather more data on them. Could you let us have any records for these species in the vice counties indicated in the last 10 years. If you are certain that you have already passed the records on to one of the recorders there is no need to send details - just indicate a location so that we can check that we really do have your record. Please note that if only one vice county is mentioned below it is only records for that vice county that we want.

Species	Vice county for which records are wanted
<i>Carex curta</i>	East Sussex
<i>Carex disticha</i>	East Sussex
<i>Eleocharis multicaulis</i>	Both (except Ashdown Forest)
<i>Elymus caninus</i> var. <i>caninus</i>	
<i>Epilobium lanceolatum</i>	East Sussex
<i>Genista anglica</i>	West Sussex
<i>Honkenya peploides</i>	East Sussex
<i>Limonium vulgare</i>	East Sussex
<i>Lotus glaber</i>	Both (except Cuckmere & Southease)
<i>Nardus stricta</i>	West Sussex
<i>Poa angustifolia</i>	Both
<i>Potentilla anglica</i>	West Sussex
<i>Rosa tomentosa</i>	West Sussex
<i>Salix purpurea</i>	East Sussex
<i>Salix repens</i>	West Sussex

A further important point to note is that the absence of a species from the *Rare Plant Register* does not necessarily mean that it is thriving and is not threatened. In order to improve our knowledge of which species in the county really are threatened we would like to gather further information on species in the next category of scarcity - that is those species for which we have definite localised records for fewer than 7 localities in either East or West Sussex, as

these species could be declining and might end up featured in a future edition of the *Register*, or even become extinct. In some cases the species are probably not threatened but we need more data to be sure. The following table lists these species together with the vice county for which we require data together with some further comments in a few cases. If you have records in the last 10 years for these species please let the recorders know. Thanks again for your help.

Species	VC	Comments	Species	VC	Comments
<i>Alisma lanceolatum</i>	E	Only records confirmed using fruit characters accepted	<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>	E	
<i>Anthriscus caucalis</i>	W		<i>Papaver dubium</i> ssp. <i>lecoqii</i>	E	
<i>Berula erecta</i>	E		<i>Petasites hybridus</i>	E	
<i>Butomus umbellatus</i>	W	Except Amberley Wild Brooks & Adur, Bines Green	<i>Poa compressa</i>	E	

<i>Callitriche hamulata</i>	W		<i>Polygonatum multiflorum</i>	Both	Only native records
<i>Campanula glomerata</i>	Both	Probably not threatened but need to be sure	<i>Potamogeton lucens</i>	W	Except Amberley Wild Brooks
<i>Cardamine amara</i>	W	Probably not threatened but need more data	<i>Potamogeton perfoliatus</i>	Both	
<i>Carex acuta</i>	E		<i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i>	Both	All of these 4 sp. must be identified by a referee or accompanied by specimen
<i>Carex muricata</i>	Both		<i>Ranunculus baudotii</i>	Both	
<i>Ceratocarpus claviculata</i>	Both		<i>Ranunculus circinatus</i>	Both	
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	E		<i>Ranunculus trichophyllus</i>	Both	
<i>Coeloglossum viride</i>	W		<i>Rosa pimpinellifolia</i>	E	Except Beachy Head
<i>Epilobium roseum</i>	W		<i>Sagina maritima</i>	E	
<i>Euphrasia anglica</i>	W		<i>Salicornia ramosissima</i>	E	Must accompanied by specimen or identified by a referee
<i>Geranium rotundifolium</i>	E		<i>Stellaria pallida</i>	E	
<i>Hippuris vulgaris</i>	E		<i>Tilia cordata</i>	Both	Probably not threatened but need localised records to be sure
<i>Lamium hybridum</i>	Both		<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>	E	Except Ashdown Forest
<i>Legousia hybrida</i>	Both		<i>Trifolium ornithopodioides</i>	E	
<i>Lepidium ruderae</i>	E		<i>Trifolium striatum</i>	E	
<i>Linum bienne</i>	Both		<i>Triglochin maritimum</i>	E	
<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>	E	Except Ashdown Forest	<i>Vicia lathyroides</i>	E	
<i>Ononis spinosa</i>	E		<i>Wahlenbergia hederacea</i>	Both	Except Ashdown Forest

FIELD MEETINGS 2001 – VC13

By Nick Sturt

Saturday 28 April Littlehampton

Thirteen members assembled in West Green car park Littlehampton on the first sunny day that most of them had seen for a long time. West Green itself was spread with swathes of *Trifolium suffocatum* (Suffocated Clover) as we made our way across to the path to the twin anchors in search of the *Poa infirma* that a Hampshire botanist had reported last season: the grass was not found here but even punier specimens gave themselves away by their swollen stem-bases as *Poa*

bulbosa. Nearby municipal flower beds yielded a good haul of *Veronica*s and *Lamium amplexicaule* (Henbit). Crossing the promenade the upper beach was sampled, the finds here including *Crambe maritima* (Sea Kale), *Glaux maritima* (Yellow Horned Poppy) and *Honkenya peploides* (Sea Sandwort). Clinging to the concrete pavement edge was one plant of *Crithmum maritimum* (Samphire), and the verges yielded quantities of flowering *Erophila verna* spp. *verna* (Common Whitlowgrass).

By now individuals such as Rita were beginning to form the word 'lunch' and so the party turned back along the wall of the pitch and put course where

several special plants were growing at eye level, such as the two small Forget-me-nots *Myosotis ramosissima* and *M. discolor*, and *Carex arenaria* (Sand Sedge); here at last Tony was rewarded for his extreme patience by some *Poa infirma*. I regret to say that in the hungry scramble for a nook sheltered from the keen south-west wind Frances and Frank somehow were misled.

After lunch Alan boldly led on back through the town via *Sisymbrium orientale* and over the footbridge to the western side of the Arun. A good number of species were added on the way to the beginning of Climping Dunes, but there was just a suspicion of the morning laurels being quietly rested upon as pleasant conversations sprang up: probably it was the unfamiliar sun gently sapping ambition.

(This meeting was substituted for one planned at Graffham: many thanks to Alan for leading us in his inimitable style.)

Saturday 19 May Sullington Warren

On his second meeting of the season Alan's mission was to record the dry, sandy bowl of Sullington Warren and then to investigate the bog. The relative paucity of records on the morning's card belies the fascination of the proceedings as the party made a minute search of the grassland for the species which our leader had requested. Of these *Cerastium arvense* (Field Mouse-ear) and *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Fenugreek) were detected sparingly, but the elation over *Hypochaeris glabra* (Smooth Cat's-ear) was short-lived as the plant proved to be a deceptive (and probably very esoteric!) dandelion.

There was some indecision over a downy-fruited sedge which dotted one grassy area, the determination eventually being *Carex caryophyllea* (Spring Sedge) from the detail of the sheathing bract - although the alternative species, *C. pilulifera*, in fact tends to make much more of a mat-like clump. In this same region we came upon an association of plants more reminiscent of chalk than sand: *Linum catharticum* (Purging Flax), *Sanguisorba minor* (Salad Burnet) and *Helictotrichon pubescens* (Downy Oat-grass).

Despite the usual dissidents agitating for lunch, Alan insisted that the bog had to be visited. In view of the endless and copious rains of winter the site was surprisingly unquaggy, amounting to one small pool of brown water with cushions of *Sphagnum capillare* and a few spikes of *Eriophorum vaginatum* (Common Cotton-grass). It seems likely that deep sand extraction on adjacent land is the chief cause, with the corollary that this bog will soon vanish.

Lunchtime was the cue for a number of the 19 members to depart for other, probably less congenial commitments. In the afternoon nearby sandy road verges were combed and two of the notable desiderata found, namely *Moenchia erecta* (Upright Chickweed) and *Hypochaeris glabra*.

Sunday 10 June Henfield

On this occasion Alan was leading once again, and once again we were 19.

We spent the morning on Henfield Common, where those of that persuasion found plenty of sedges to please including *Carex ovalis* (Oval Sedge) so large in the wet conditions that it was - strangely - difficult to distinguish it from a stand of *C. disticha* (Brown Sedge). Two marsh plants rare in Sussex were *Hypericum elodes* (Marsh St. John's-wort) and *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel), both known here by Henfield's own William Borrer. Grasses were also receiving a lot of attention from Beryl, Paul and others, and the card testifies to the effort put in here in determining the more subtle species - and indeed in spotting the more insignificant ones such as *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath-grass) and *Nardus stricta* (Mat-grass). All the time the persistent song of the reed warblers in the managed *Phragmites* swamp.

We moved on into woodland edge (a good stand here of *Dryopteris carthusiana* (Narrow Buckler-fern) to see two whips of *Populus nigra* (Black Poplar) planted and a solitary, apparently not planted, *Prunus padus* (Bird Cherry), emerging onto the playing fields in the hope that the cricket pitch in particular might yield an overlooked speciality.... which it did: *Chamaemelum nobile* (Chamomile) in small but numerous swathes in the manicured turf. And so to lunch.

So Herculean had been the labours of the morning that Alan decreed a relaxing afternoon taking in Borrer's Bank where a few survivors from the Great Man's Barrow Hill ground survive, for example *Trachystemon orientale* (Abraham-Isaac-Jacob), *Fumaria capreolata* (White Ramping-fumitory), *Allium roseum* (Rosy Garlic), and *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum* (Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem). Some sandy fields yielded a selection of arable weeds including some *Fagopyrum esculentum* (Buckwheat) and in the town itself there were exotics such as four different species of *Oxalis* within an area barely 4m² and the beautiful *Linaria maroccana* (Annual Toadflax). We dispersed somewhat dazzled by the assembly of plants which we had studied.

Iping Common Sunday 12 August

With Bruce in charge we started on Stedham Common with the purpose of investigating the effect that the grazing regime was having on the flora. But before we could get started Frances remembered once finding *Anagallis minima* (Chaffweed) by the track near the entrance from the road and this precipitated a hands-and-knees survey which extended over the rabbit-grazed area which had been used to store wind-blown timber after the 1987 gale. Much to Alan's pleasure (for it is a plant peculiarly dear to him) Chaffweed standing all of two centimetres tall was discovered growing with its customary partner *Radiola linoides* (Allseed). Larger-scale botany followed as we covered about 75% of the common,

homing in on the damper areas to the south-east where both of the Sussex sundews were found (*Drosera rotundifolia*, *D. intermedia*) in association with several species of Sphagnum identified for the party of 17 by Rod. At one point Rod was heard muttering 'Forcipated Pincerwort!' something which at first we were inclined to interpret an obscure oath - perhaps expressing his surprise at realising that for once Alan was not leading a West Sussex meeting. He assured us that the words were in fact the new English coining for *Calopegeia fissa*, which we had overlooked.

In the afternoon Bruce showed us, as promised, the specialities of Iping Common. As we walked north on the line of the old Roman road we came into damper territory where the yellow-green spikes of *Trichophorum cespitosum* (Deergrass) were conspicuous. A pond close by the A272 yielded the Sussex rarity *Apium inundatum* (Procumbent Marshwort) and a stand of *Carex vesicaria* (Bladder Sedge). Then to the only population of *Agrostis setacea* (Bristle Bent) in the county, which Bruce is carefully managing. A further pond produced *Eleogiton fluitans* (Floating Club-rush) and a final one, before returning to the cars, a sedge which had been thought also to be *Carex vesicaria* until more discriminating eyes noticed the narrow grey-green inrolled leaves signalling *C. rostrata* (Bottle Sedge).

Bruce led an excellent tour of the two commons and his explanation of the various management strategies was not only enlightening but also encouraging since these precious habitats of vc13 are clearly in good hands. We were further reminded that these heaths are ecosystems rather than just collections of locally rare plants by sightings of Silver-studded Blues and a Dartford Warbler.

East Head Saturday 1 September

East Head is home to more than 20 species of vascular plant in the *Sussex Rare Plant Register*. In his superb introduction the National Trust warden, Daniel Delaney described the pressures, both natural and human, to which this precious and fragile spit is subject, and how the present and future challenges are to be met. The party of (guess!) nineteen saw for themselves the recent erosion of the western edge of the dunes and the numbers of visitors who in their various ways enjoy the location. The immediate task, however, was to record the flora.

There was a promising start with Alan keying out *Oenothera cambrica*, an Evening Primrose largely overlooked since its discovery on the Head in the late 1970s. Then into the dune-slacks to be confronted with *Hypochaeris glabra* (Smooth Cat's-ear) in quantity, its rather feeble flowers open in the bright sunshine. A number of years ago when there was a BSBI meeting here, Francis Rose had remarked on the development of the dune-slacks and prophesied the appearance of *Epipactis palustris* (Marsh Helleborine): the orchid has yet to arrive but much else has, for example two

substantial stands of *Calamagrostis epigeios* (Wood Small-reed), *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed) and various sedges, notably *Carex divisa* (Divided Sedge) and *C. extensa* (Long-bracted Sedge); smaller finds were *Centaureum pulchellum* (Lesser Centaury) all of 2cm tall and fruiting *Trifolium fragiferum* (Strawberry Clover). In the dunes themselves there was, in places, an abundance of *Euphorbia paralias* (Sea Spurge) and *Calystegia soldanella* (Sea Bindweed).

Well-known enthusiasts advised on lunch and then, suitably fortified, we embarked upon the saltmarsh and, led manfully by Alan, rose to the challenge of glassworts - identifying with the aid of Stace's unconcise volume *Salicornia fragilis*, *S. dolichostachya*, *S. ramosissima* and the single-flowered *S. pusilla*.

At the end of the spit, while sailors tended smouldering barbecues, the dunes yielded both *Conyza canadensis* (Canadian Fleabane) and its cousin *C. sumatrensis*, and also a little *Leymus arenarius* (Lyme Grass). Near the southwest corner, facing Hayling Island, a new shingle shelf had been built up by the sea and other rare plants presented themselves - *Salsola kali* (Prickly Saltwort), *Cakile maritima* (Sea Rocket) and a very little *Atriplex laciniata* (Frosted Orache). But the prize was *Polygonum maritimum* (Sea Knotgrass), the seeds of which must surely have been carried across the channel from Hayling. Some twenty plants were seen, most young ones but a few which could well have arrived last year (or even before) - one very woody one surrounded by seedlings. The leaves of this species are distinctively inrolled and it was instructive to compare some nearby specimens of *P. oxyspermum* (Ray's Knotgrass) which also has darker, sharper nuts which protrude further from the corolla.

We wandered back along the shore past sunbathers and sand-castles to an oasis in the form of Judy's beach hut where the owner generously plied us with squash and biscuits - a Summer image to cherish in these Winter days!

FIELD MEETINGS 2001 -VC14

by Pat Donovan

Robertsbridge Saturday 5 May

As a result of the foot and mouth crisis the meeting arranged at Bellhurst Farm was postponed and instead a visit was made to Robertsbridge Pocket Park, a small area east of the village, bounded by the railway to the west and the old A21 to the east.

Habitats included scrub, rough pasture and damp woodland with *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel), *Allium ursinum* (Ramsons) and *Ranunculus ficaria* ssp. *bulbifera* (Celandine) common. Judging by the debris still in the trees, water levels must have reached

nearly two metres following the serious flooding in October 2000.

In the afternoon, following a brief visit to Selhurst churchyard to see *Selaginella kraussiana*, a club moss established there for many years, members walked up Rocks Hill, a shady lane with *Cardamine bulbifera* (Coralroot), *Viola reichenbachiana* (Early Dog Violet), *Polystichum aculeatum* (Hard Shield Fern), *Melampyrum pratense* (Common Cow-wheat) and many other plants of a typical late spring Sussex lane.

Wootton Manor Saturday 16 June

It was possible to hold the meeting at Wootton Manor as there was no stock on the farm and the fields were mainly set-aside. The gardens were visited first, including the vegetable garden, for arable weeds. In the damp woods bordering Abbott's Wood, *Rosa stylosa* (Short-styled Field-rose) was confirmed by Alan Knapp, and there were many spikes of *Listera ovata* (Twayblade). A marshy area that looked promising on the map proved disappointing, being full of shoulder-high *Oenanthe crocata* (Hemlock Water-dropwort).

In one field there was one mean specimen of *Euphorbia platyphyllos* (Broad-leaved Spurge), but in the next there were countless tall plants, their lime-green flowers showing above the lemon yellow ones of the rape, which was the main crop. As Alan Knapp put it: 'It was the highlight of the day'.

Wellhurst Wood Saturday 30 June

Adjoining Staplecross village, Wellhurst Wood is a mixed woodland with damp rides, marshy areas and acid heath. *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern) was common for many yards along one particular ride, as was *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort), *Carex laevigata* (Smooth-stalked Sedge) and *C. binervis* (Green-ribbed Sedge). In the boggy area by the stream grew *Viola palustris* (Marsh Violet), *Carex pseudocyperus* (Cyperus Sedge) and

many tall spikes of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted Orchid).

Hankham Saturday 21 July

Thanks to a chance encounter last summer between Paul Maurice and Martin Hole of Montague Farm, members were invited to carry out a survey of the ditches on Hankham and Horse Eye Levels following the deliberate raising of water levels there in 1999 and 2001 respectively. Hankham had the richer flora of the two with nearly 70 mainly aquatic species recorded, including *Ceratophyllum submersum* (Soft Hornwort), *Alisma lanceolatum* (Narrow-leaved Water-plantain) and *Ranunculus circinatus* (Fan-leaved Water-crowfoot).

At lunch members were invited to picnic on the farm lawn, kindly offered refreshments, and were shown round the gardens, before driving to Horse Eye Level. Although less species were found here, no fewer than six Potamogetons were recorded, including *P. trichoides* (Hair-like Pondweed) and *P. acutifolius* (Sharp-leaved Pondweed), and Frances Abraham found a rare charophyte, *Tolypella glomerata* (Clustered Stonewort), probably only the second Sussex record since 1886.

Are Violets still abundant at Halknaker?

Pat Donovan found a charming memoir in the West Sussex Observer by a lady born in the Chichester area in 1905, She writes:

'One day I went by donkey and cart to Halknaker with an old man my grannie knew to gather white and blue violets that grew in abundance there. When I got home they were gathered up in bunches, put in water and then made into a cross for the lectern in church on Easter Day, and there were enough to do the top of the font'.

FIELD MEETINGS 2002

- Saturday 4 May**
Rachel Nicholson
Bellhurst Wood, Hurst Green. Ancient woodland with ghyll, waterfall, *Cardamine bulbifera*. Meet Bellhurst Farm TQ721279. Turn off A21 approx. 1 mile N of Hurst Green onto B2099. After 200yds turn left down track to Bellhurst.
- Saturday 11 May**
Frances Abraham
Parham Park. Spring annuals. Turn off A283 W of Storrington at main entrance & meet in car park nr Parham House TQ062143.
- Saturday 1 June**
Lyn Haines (owner)
Barklye Farm. 100 acre unimproved farm. Meet at farm at TQ619233. Turn off A265 into Swife Lane at TQ619228 between Broad Oak & Burwash Common. Shortly turn left to farm.
- Sunday 30 June**
Paul Harnes
Ditchling Common. Survey heath & pond. *Carex hostiana?* Meet in car park TQ337180 (E of crossroads of B2112 & B2113).
- Sunday 7 July**
Helen Proctor
Litlington. Chalky slopes. Meet car park High & Over TQ509011.
- Saturday 20 July**
Ann Griffiths
Levin Down. Chalk downland. Turn E off A286 in Singleton village, park in Charlton Road nr primary school SU879131.
- Saturday 27 July**
Patrick Roper
Brede High Wood & Streetfield Wood nr Sedlescombe. Heath areas. Park in layby on S side of B2089 at TQ790208, 3/4 mile E of Cripps Corner.
- Saturday 10 August**
Beryl Clough/Alan Knapp
Adur Valley. *Potamogeton* spp. & other aquatics. Meet in layby W side of A283 between Shoreham & Upper Beeding N of disused cement works at TQ197095. We will move on after lunch.
- Sunday 18 August**
Bruce Middleton
Hurston Warren. Heath & bog with *Vaccinium oxycoccos*. Meet in Horsham DC Monkmead Woods car park at TQ078169.
- Saturday 31 August**
Alan Knapp
Chichester Harbour. Saltmarshes, with *Atriplex longipes* in mind. Meet Fishbourne Church SU842045 off the A259 W of Apuldram Lane, having left the A27 Chichester by-pass at a large roundabout. We shall move on later.
- Saturday 14 Sept.**
Alan Knapp
AFTERNOON MEETING, STARTING 2.00pm. Jack and Jill. Half day meeting looking for arable weeds on the chalk. Meet in car park by windmills off A273, TQ303133.
- Saturday 28 Sept.**
Peter Russell
Crawley Down. Fungus foray. In Crawley Down turn N into Cuttinglye Lane at TQ345379, by war memorial. Bear left to end of metalled road, continue down track a short distance & park at TQ345385.

ALL MEETINGS START AT 10.45 UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE.

Those attending SBRS field meetings do so at their own risk.

For further information contact Pat Donovan (East Sussex) or Nick Sturt (W.Sussex).