

Sussex Botanical Recording Society

Newsletter

No. 57

January 2004

President's Message

Welcome to 2004! During the years that we have been recording intensively across Sussex (from 1966 for the *Sussex Plant Atlas*), we have seen some very different growing seasons: floods or drought, early or late, extra cold or hot – and the weather in each case often makes a considerable difference to growth patterns, flowering times and abundance from year to year. One species in which the number of open flowering spikes is dramatically affected by the weather throughout the summer is *Leersia oryzoides* (Cut-grass). This is now very rare in Britain, with almost all of its surviving localities in West Sussex. SBRS members have monitored this grass at Amberley Wild Brooks for nearly 30 years and found that flower spikes open only when hot sunny weeks in late summer follow a damp mild spring. In other years most spikes remain as a bulge enclosed in the sheath below the top leaf, but 2003 was a record year with the most flowering spikes seen open since the early 1980s. The drought year of 1976, although hot, was too dry; I have a photo dated 1978 and in most years there may be a few spikes open – but in 2003 the flowering was exceptional, and a remarkable sight. What lies in store for 2004 – a new season with no doubt different challenges and discoveries?

When new members join they receive a note on the aims of the Society and the meetings. The field meetings are working meetings for recording and plant study, but not organised primarily as countryside walks. We would like to encourage all those who attend the field meetings to participate in keeping records and improving their identification skills. The meetings are an excellent forum for us all to share the botanical knowledge of those who are more experienced recorders. Hoping that we will all continue to find – or learn – exciting plants and records in 2004.

Mary Briggs

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Secretary's Notes

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 13th March 2004

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 biscuits (unless anyone would like to bring some cakes). The hall will be available from 1.30 p.m.

Saturday, 20th November 2004

The Autumn Get-together will be at Staplefield Village Hall at 10.00 a.m.

Rita Hemsley

Enclosed in this mailing is a revised Key to the Hawkweeds of South-East England. I hope members will make use of it and take a closer look at this interesting critical group, which with a little practice is not as critical as first appears.

Also enclosed is a summary of corrections for the *Sussex Rare Plant Register*

In This Issue

President's Message	1
Secretary's Notes	1
Recording notes for SBRS members	2
Obituaries	2
Elms	2
Field Meeting Reports - West Sussex	3
Field Meeting Reports - East Sussex	6
E.S. Marshall in West Sussex	7
Poison Corner	8
Early Catkins	8
Special Offer: BSBI News	9
Contact Names	9
Field Meetings Programme 2004	10

Recording notes for SBRS members

Together with this newsletter you will have received a copy of a set of notes on botanical recording in Sussex which we have just produced. We wrote these notes because we realised that there was no single, written description of what we want from our recorders. The original purpose was as an introduction to new members but we believe there is important information in the notes which will be useful for all SBRS members. We therefore decided to send a copy to everyone.

We would ask all of you who are active recorders to read these notes carefully as there is information in them which should increase the value of the records you send in and reduce the number of records which the County Recorders have to reject or put on hold. If you have any queries please contact Alan Knapp or Paul Harmes.

SBRS committee

Obituaries:

Mrs Rosetta Harmes

By Rita Hemsley

Those of you who were at our annual get-together will have heard the sad news that Rosetta Harmes died this summer after a short illness. Until recently Rosetta regularly attended our field meetings and was the only person to find Yellow Bartsia in Sussex. She also helped the Society in her quiet and efficient way behind the scenes in the kitchen, ensuring the provision of your refreshments went perfectly and the potatoes and soup were always ready on time. She lovingly produced the endless variety of cakes that were always available and so greatly appreciated by members at get-togethers and AGMs.

Guiding and particularly 'her' Brownies, was one of the great loves of her life and she was a County Trainer and Adviser and District Commissioner for North Hove. She was an enthusiastic leader, working tirelessly to help Guides and Brownies develop their personal skills to the full.

We shall greatly miss her cheerful companionship and the help she gave to the Society.

.....
Mrs Kathleen Amooore

By Rod Stern

Kathleen Amooore died on February 13th at the age

of 98. She had been an active botanist for many years and a member of the Sussex Flora Society.

She was secretary of the Steering Committee set up by the Sussex Flora Society at its last AGM in March 1979. (The only surviving members of that committee are Mary Briggs, Arthur Hoare and me). We met shortly after the Sussex Flora Society disbanded and became the Committee of the Sussex Botanical Recording Society when it had its inaugural meeting on 13th October 1979.

Kathleen was elected as Secretary/ Treasurer, a job she did with great success. With the growth of the SBRS, this became an increasingly demanding task and, in 1990, the job was split into two, with Louise Matcham becoming secretary and Kathleen continuing as treasurer. In 1992 she retired as treasurer and was elected as an Honorary Member in recognition of her great work for the Society. She was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable botanist, attending field meetings frequently until she could no longer manage it.

Kathleen was a scientist who had graduated at Cambridge University and worked in the Civil Service in various forms of geological research. She retired to Sussex in 1964, and became a member of the Seaford Natural History Society, and its secretary from 1973-1996. Three Black Poplar trees have been planted at the new Ouse Estuary Project in memory of her outstanding contribution to that Society.

In addition to her natural history interests, which were by no means confined to plants, Kathleen was an active member of the National Trust, and also of the W.I. where she gave tapestry lessons, being a keen needlewoman herself. She had a great love of opera and attended performances at Glyndebourne every year.

One of the local papers referred to her as a "stalwart" and the SBRS would certainly agree with that.

I am grateful to Dennis Vinall and to Mrs Anne Rose, President of the Seaford Natural History Society, for letting me have some details about Kathleen's work other than for SBRS.

Elms

by Peter Davys

A BBC TV programme called 'Countryfile' reignited my interest in these trees, which present themselves as a challenge in their identities.

On perusing a book entitled *Elm* by Dr Richens I was pleased to see that he confirmed my thoughts on the Small-leaved or Field Elm (*Ulmus minor*) and its distribution in Sussex. He maintains that there is an enclave of these trees by Pett and Pevensey Levels – and in the latter case this is what I have found. In Hailsham half the population of elms is made up of Field, the other half of English Elm (*Ulmus procera*). Semi-mature Field Elms are still to be found by Alfriston, Arlington, Polegate and in Langney etc., but this species does not appear north of Horam or west of Ripe in my experience. There are two or three clones involved in this species, and they need further investigation. One clone has its bark marked with vertical lines, like a willow. All clones flush in the spring about a month later than English Elm.

The Sussex Downs Conservation Board now manages the DED (Dutch Elm Disease) control zone and, to give an example of the number of elms involved, these 2001 census figures give one an indication – so it is not all doom and gloom:

Alciston	992	Friston	1100
Alfriston	4809	Seaford	1725
Berwick	1852	Selmeston	3338
Bishopstone	1455	Westdean	5063
East Dean	625		

I should imagine that about 80% of these trees are suckers from DED victims of 1975-1995, and add that I was a DED officer for East Sussex County Council for ten years 1987-1997.

West Sussex Field Meetings 2003

by Nick Sturt

Slinfold, 30th March

The anxious had put their clocks *two* hours back, mothers had declined invitations from dutiful offspring to Mothers' Day lunches, faithful florists had been taken out of winter mothballs, and lovingly burnished hand-lenses glinted in the Spring sunshine: for this was the first field meeting of the season and, not unlike Chaucer's pilgrims, the company set forth after the drought of March to pay their devotions to the *hooly blisful* Knapp. Some 20 assembled in Spring Lane by the Medlar grafted onto Hawthorn stock (+ *Crataegomespilus dardarii*) to be initiated into the BSBI Local Change Monitoring project.

We set off westwards down the disused railway line accumulating the commoner early species but looking also at all those planted ones which we had been glad to ignore in former days –

particularly conifers. Fortunately, we had the benefit of Rod's expertise in this field, even if he cheerfully declared all suspicious *Prunus* species beyond his remit. A long and delightful morning of sun, brimstones, bee-flies and most of the usual Spring woodland species, with good amounts of *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel) and *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks), and one *Primula x polyantha* (False Oxlip).

In the shorter afternoon session we wandered around Slinfold village, visiting in particular the *Euphorbia corallioides* which was first noticed c.1808 and is supposed to have originated from Dr Manningham's garden. For the benefit of those a little vague about this clergyman, a reminder of his dates (1684-1750) and his assessment by James Petiver as 'a very nice botanist'.

Itchenor, 10th May

Alas, the sun did not shine upon this second Local Change meeting, and there were some who implied that this reflected on the leader – who might not, perhaps, qualify as 'a very nice botanist'. Nevertheless 18 assembled to investigate SU80A, channelling themselves along the narrow harbour-side path and surging out across an unimproved meadow where *Moenchia erecta* (Upright Chickweed) and swathes of *Carex divisa* (Divided Sedge) were the highlights in the rabbit-grazed turf. Onward to the Spinney Lane estate where verges yielded a few spikes of *Orchis morio* (Green-winged Orchid). Then in seemingly no time it was lunch and shelter in the Harbour Master's Office – though fresh-air fiends such as Judy preferred the exhilaration of the great and drizzly outdoors.

Satisfied with the 150 or so species collected in the morning, the leader decreed a gentle stroll along the harbour path to Chalkdock Point, past *Lepidium heterophyllum* (Smith's Peppergrass), *Scandix pecten-veneris* (Shepherd's needle), and much of a local speciality, *Cochlearia anglica* (English Scurvygrass). On gravelly stretches of the path the clovers seemed not to have prospered from the dry Spring: only a small patch or two could be found of *Trifolium subterraneum* (Subterranean Clover) and *T. ornithopodioides* (Fenugreek); and there was no sign at all of the *Moenchia erecta* (Upright Chickweed) that Alan had discovered in 2002; but *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Birdsfoot) and *Aira caryophyllaea* (Silver Hair-grass) pleased. Three Wild Service Trees (*Sorbus torminalis*) at first seemed a curious outpost from their headquarters in the county, but Rod pointed out that they should be viewed rather as outliers of the population on the Isle of Wight.

Anne de Potier of the Harbour Conservancy deserves especial thanks for her arrangements. She also provided copies of previous cards for the area, one in the distinctive hand of George Forster, a botanist still much missed in the west of the county.

Steyning, 28th May

Someone was bound to use the word 'balmy' to describe the evening and it was as well that this was done early on in the meeting so that we could concentrate on the survey of land on the Downs above the Adur. Rita led us with an unobtrusive sense of purpose through field and wood as dusk began to fall gently on our efforts. There was a good array of plants including, in one field, an unusual quantity of *Carex spicata* (Spiked Sedge). The most remarkable discovery of the evening, however, was a group of five *Helleborus foetidus* (Stinking Hellebore) in a clearing in one of the woods. Such is the history of the relationship of this plant with Sussex Man that it is difficult to pronounce on the origin of any given specimen encountered in the wild and I fear that the inclination among most members of the party was to assume 'garden origin'. Circumstantial evidence to the contrary view comes from the owner herself, who had not introduced these plants in the 34 years of her occupancy, and also from an otherwise unspecified record for 'Steyning' in the mid 19th Century. I am, however, painfully aware of cynics out there who will suspect skulduggery since the author of that record, W. B. Hemsley, is surely some distant connection of Rita's.

Horncroft Farm, 31st May

Bruce had described the farm as a 'floral treasure': the 17 members who assembled on this unusually hot May day certainly had no quibble on this point and Alan was kept busy entering a total of nearly 200 species. We moved slowly down an overgrown track into deciduous woods where the tired leaves of the native Bluebell carpeted the ground, with here and there some other ancient woodland indicators. Emerging through some rough fields onto open heathy ground with Tony – sober despite the impression given by his rakishly reversed *Pure Smirnoff* cap – using his keen powers of observation to find *Carices* and spikes of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid) in bud.

Lunch taken, Bruce took us to see one of the very few sites for *Apium inundatum* (Lesser Marshwort) in Sussex: the unassuming umbelliferous plant lay recumbent on the muddy margins of a small pond. The majority of the

afternoon, however, was spent on hands and knees under blazing sun as we scoured a sandy field for such delights as *Trifolium subterraneum*, *T. striatum*, *T. arvense* (Subterranean, Soft and Hare's-foot Clovers), *Filago vulgaris* (Common Cudweed) and *Aira caryophyllea* (Silver Hair-grass). Of the notable species seen here the previous year by Bruce and Alan, only *Trifolium suffocatum* (Suffocated Clover) and *Scleranthus annuus* (Annual Knawel) could not be found, but Alan himself was undismayed as he gloated over ever tinier plants. As usual, Bruce was very informative on management issues, in this case the somewhat conflicting needs of arable weeds, which like ploughing and harrowing, and those of *Potentilla argentea* (Hoary Cinquefoil) which is present here in perhaps its best Sussex site. On our return to the cars we were able to thank Bruce for another excellent meeting and also to make the acquaintance again of Isabel who had so kindly spared Daddy for the day.

Harting Down, 30 June

We wandered out on the down above the village of South Harting sweltering below in the Summer heat and soon came to grips with those delightful species typical of the chalk turf, at first wandering through tall *Bromopsis erecta* grassland. On the edge of the Down, at the behest of our leader Dawn, we turned our backs on the breath-taking view and paused to complete a fixed quadrat – a worthwhile discipline, especially when Beryl is on hand to referee the grasses! On the eastern slope of Round Down very near the beaten track we came upon some bushes of *Rosa micrantha* (Small-flowered Sweet-briar) identified for the party of 15 by Arthur, who drew our attention to the fragrance of the glandular leaves and the upward folding of the somewhat leathery leaflets. Here we were on the edge of the well known population of Juniper but the *Polygala calcarea* (Chalk Milkwort), which was said to have occurred, remained undetected, despite a careful search and much talk of 'gentian-blue flowers' and 'basal rosettes'. So, with fingers now bleeding from the prickles of *Cirsium acaule* (Stemless Thistle) encountered in our rummagings, we turned our attention to *Cynoglossum officinale* (Hound's-tongue). One member demonstrated that when crushed this plant smells remarkably like peanut butter – much to the excitement of Peter, who guiltily confessed to being a hopeless addict.

A low but expansive ash tree provided the requisite shade for lunch and then we walked over Round Down on a vast expanse of turf dominated by *Leontodon hispidus* (Rough Hawkbit) and *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid) and

punctuated by scattered *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid). Then Dawn led the hardy survivors on a diagonal path down the escarpment beyond the reach of the blessed breeze, passing a little *Phyteuma orbiculare* (Round-headed Rampion) near the tree-line, and so into welcome shade. We were rewarded with a good collection of *Neottia nidus-avis* (Bird's-nest Orchid) in the deep beech-litter. All were duly appreciative of Dawn for a very enjoyable and well-organised meeting. Her services will be called upon again!

Prickly Nut Wood, 19th July

Rod was mysterious: the rendezvous in the shady lane, hushed instructions vouched to each driver, the tall, slim and almost naked Marcus.... We – that is 15 members, including the junior Isabel – then set about exploring the chestnut coppice, an activity which began so slowly (recalcitrant *Epilobia* and a still unidentified *Utricularia*) that there was one deplorable remark comparing the progress unfavourably with that of a lichenological meeting. The pace never increased much all day, but then that is the sign of a good meeting. Records came in to Frances steadily, with *Juncus* (Rushes) and *Carex* (Sedges) well represented, the latter including both *C. binervis* (Green-ribbed Sedge) and *C. laevigata* (Smooth-stalked Sedge). Along the damp rides we saw the hybrid Skullcap (*Scutellaria x hybrida*), flowering unusually profusely. Although *S. galericulata* (Common Skullcap) eluded us, we eventually came upon the other parent, *S. minor* (Lesser Skullcap). Growing in association with the latter were some robust plants of *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush), and, touchingly loyal to the absent Alan, we all searched for another known associate, *Anagallis minima* (Chaffweed)... without success.

At the end of the day our guide Marcus took us to the extraordinary house which Ben Law has hewn out of Prickly Nut Wood. Nestling in a clearing next to some windmill generators and solar panels, this was genuine eco-friendliness. We were also introduced to a 'yurt', an ethnic shelter beyond the experience of all but Michael and Olwen: the intrepid explorers, it transpired, had not only slept in one but had helped to erect one, having apparently been persuaded by the owner that this would be an extraordinarily lucky thing to do. Well, he would say that, wouldn't he...

Forest Mere, 23rd August

Frances was pessimistic about the day: the long dry spell had shrivelled and blasted anything green, the area was not outstandingly interesting, a couple of specialities would probably not be

found. Her ten companions had much more confidence in her as they walked to the smallish portion of SU83A that is in vc13. When the GPS pronounced us on-side we fanned out over a sandy field reclaimed from the heath and, although you might say there was 'not much to write home about', *Juncus squarrosus* (Heath Rush) and *Filago minima* (Small Cudweed) were notable and there was another goodly sample of *Epilobia* (Willowherbs).

From our luncheon in woodland out onto the damp edge of a grassy field, where the emphatically white flowers of a Bedstraw proclaimed themselves to be those of *Galium uliginosum* (Fen Bedstraw). Other damp-loving associates such as *Carex nigra* (Common Sedge) came to light, and then progress into drier regions yielded new species, with some unexpected *Malva neglecta* (Dwarf Mallow) within sight of the Forest Mere Health Spa: it would be necessary to return earlier in the season to do the clovers etc. Frances edged us nervously towards the lake – she felt sure we would not find the *specialité de la maison*. Waterside species were added to the card – notably *Hypericum elodes* (Marsh St John's-wort) – and then, as the bemused and be-robed reclining clients of Forest Mere looked on, we swooped down upon a rash of tiny leaves adhering to the otherwise bare mud of the lakeside; handlenses clutched by doubled-up botanists focused on the six-stamened little beauty and there were polite whoops of joy: *Elatine hexandra* (Six-stamened Waterwort)!

Two morals are to be drawn from the meeting: firstly, with Frances in charge a memorable day in the field is guaranteed (*Ed's note: take with pinch of salt*); secondly, a wise man should never disagree with Arthur over the determination of an alien shrub – the author deserves to be chastised with bundles of stems cut from the *Clethra latifolia* planted by Folly Pond.

East Sussex Field Meetings 2003

by Pat Donovan & Alan Knapp

Barcombe, June 15th (PD)

On a warm June day, 24 members and friends met to explore the grounds of Berewood House. Derek Wise's garden includes the trackbed of the old Bluebell Railway (closed 1958), now a habitat for numerous *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) and *Listera ovata* (Twayblade). There is an old tennis court of neutral grassland, which had been left uncut deliberately (to the dismay of the gardener) in the hope of finding *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (Adder's-tongue) which David Lang

had seen there previously, but there was no trace of it. The ground on the north-east of the garden drops away steeply to an interesting boggy area, where the best find of the day was *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge) – at least three large plants.

After lunch in the shade in the garden, members had an opportunity to look at some of Derek's rare books before moving on to Knowlands Wood just north of the village. I led the party round this typical Wealden wood, much of it Hornbeam coppice, but also *Tilia cordata* (Small-leaved Lime). There were damp rides where plants included *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush), *Anagallis minima* (Chaffweed) and *Scutellaria minor* (Lesser Skullcap). The seven sedges included *Carex pseudocyperus* (Cyperus Sedge) and *C. spicata* (Spiked Sedge).

Ashdown Forest, July 13th (PD)

As the temperature was a degree below 80, it was decided to seek the shade of Five Hundred Acre Wood rather than the open bracken-covered south-facing slopes. Since our 1987 visit, which was just four months before the Great Storm, the wood has changed dramatically, with many fine trees lost and new rides created. Most of the plants were recorded in these rides, and included *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern), *Lythrum portula* (Water Purslane), *Carex viridulua* ssp. *oedocarpa* (Yellow Sedge) and one fine spike of *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine). David Lang made an unsuccessful search for *Epipactis purpurata* (Purple Helleborine) along the road verges where it had been recorded previously, but in the wood he spotted one minute seedling. Lesser mortals had to take his word for it....

Robertsbridge, July 26th (PD)

A select band of six met to record the area north of the village. Since the disastrous floods in 2000 much flood defence work is still taking place, with consequential disturbance of the soil, and beside the mill several arable weeds were found, including *Thlaspi arvense* (Field Penny-cress), *Chenopodium ficifolium* (Fig-leaved Goosefoot) and *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax). The banks upstream from the mill were at their lush best with colourful clumps of *Lythrum salicaria* (Purple Loosestrife), *Impatiens capensis* (Orange Balsam), *Scutellaria galericulata* (Skullcap) and *Myosoton aquaticum* (Water Chickweed). In the water there was *Lemna minuta* (Least Duckweed) – and a dead sheep.

Part of the area had come under new ownership, with plans for change of use (to a theme park); fortunately these were turned down. However, a new lake had been excavated, and now has large clumps of *Nuphar lutea* (Yellow Water-lily) and *Nymphaea alba* (White Water-lily) on it, with accompanying swans.

Ditches nr. Winchelsea, August 16th (AGK)

A group, consisting mainly of members from the far east of the county, gathered in Winchelsea and moved north to Station Road. A few minutes spent delving into a ditch by our parking place produced *Spirodela polyrhiza* (Greater Duckweed) and *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit) – a species which, despite being rather scarce nationally, is abundant in this area. We soon moved on to the River Brede. Here, despite making a promising start by finding a fine colony of *Potamogeton lucens* (Shining Pondweed) and some flowering plants of *Sagittaria sagittifolia* (Arrowhead), the river proved disappointingly uniform with few new species becoming apparent as we progressed along it. Most often our grapnels returned only a mass of *Elodea nuttallii* (Nuttall's Waterweed). On our return, ditches near the road proved more interesting with one ditch producing a few plants of the nationally scarce species, *Potamogeton trichoides* (Hair-like Pondweed), among a mass of *Potamogeton pectinatus* (Fennel Pondweed) and another a good colony of *Potamogeton natans* (Broad-leaved Pondweed) in flower.

In the afternoon we returned to Winchelsea and took a circular route to the south along the Royal Military Canal. Here our access to the water was impeded for much of the time by dense stands of *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed). Once again *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* was common, and in one place we found a good stand of the hybrid *Typha x glauca*. An eagle-eyed member spotted a single plant of *Butomus umbellatus* (Flowering-rush) amongst the dense waterside vegetation, and an almost dried up ditch yielded a few plants of *Ranunculus sceleratus* (Celery-leaved Buttercup).

The main purpose of the meeting was to check the status of aquatics in this area because, although the *Sussex Plant Atlas* indicates the presence of a number of interesting species, we have had few recent records of interest. Unfortunately, this meeting indicated that the reason may be a real decline in the diversity of aquatic species rather than under-recording, as we had hoped (although the optimists among us may hope that the very dry summer could mean that this year was atypical).

E. S. Marshall in West Sussex

by Nick Sturt

The initials ESM will probably strike a familiar chord with anyone who has browsed through the county floras of Arnold and Wolley-Dod. In the list of contributors to the second (posthumous) edition of Arnold's *Flora* the author acknowledges information given in correspondence and notes on West Sussex plants published in the *Journal of Botany* for 1901. Thirty years later Wolley-Dod is duly appreciative of the data ESM and another distinguished contemporary collected during this short period in his introduction to the *Flora of Sussex* (p. xlvi), commenting, 'As critical botanists he and Salmon have added greatly to our knowledge of the stations of our more difficult species and varieties, which rarely appear in the lists drawn up by less experienced collectors'. But who was ESM?

Edward Shearburn Marshall (1858-1918) was one of that large brotherhood of Victorian clerical botanists. Having been educated at Marlborough College (where he developed an active interest in natural history) and Oxford (where the focus of his attention shifted from ornithology to botany), Marshall entered the Church. Beyond his calling his chief interest was in the recording of vascular plants and the first fruit of this resulted from his collaboration with Hanbury to produce the *Kent Flora* (1899). While he was working on this he was vicar of Milford in Surrey. The Sussex years followed (1900-1901) as something of a backwater in his career as he performed the humbler duties of Curate in the parish of East Lavington. It was the fieldwork undertaken during this period that resulted in the article in the *Journal of Botany* to which Arnold makes reference. He would go on to make significant contributions to the study of the flora of Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire.

Before proceeding it will be as well to correct a rare slip made by Wolley-Dod. The Lt-Colonel would have ESM's curacy in *West* Lavington, a small settlement just to the south-east of Midhurst. Some years ago I visited the church (passing up an incline from the lane where a fine patch of *Umbilicus rupestris* is to be enjoyed) in the hope of finding some reference to ESM's stay.... to no avail. Consulting the relevant years of Crockford's *Clerical Directory* revealed that our subject was curate at *East* Lavington: this church is several miles distant, wedged below the north escarpment of the Downs hard up against Lavington House, now the home of Seaford

College. So it was from a centre just outside Duncton that Marshall explored West Sussex. There remains, however, the question of why Marshall was at East Lavington in the capacity of curate at all, for he had been vicar of Milford, Surrey for the previous ten years and after the Sussex sojourn was appointed vicar of Keevil in Wiltshire. I have not been able to discover the facts, but I suspect that the move may have been connected with the susceptibility to depression that troubled him intermittently throughout his adult life. Although very often it was the curate who did the donkey work for an absentee vicar, in a very small parish such as East Lavington the duties cannot have been onerous – scarcely more than satisfying the spiritual needs of the family of the big house and their estate workers, so leaving Marshall ample time, arguably, to recuperate with some restorative botanising.

One of the most notable Sussex finds of the Reverend Marshall was *Chenopodium glaucum* in 'Calloways Farmyard, Graffham'; although the record did not emerge until 1905 it surely belongs to the time of his curacy. This is the first county record for the species but Salmon was hard on the heels of his fellow botanist spotting the plant 'Near buildings of Cranmore Farm, Heyshott Green'. The Oak-leaved Goosefoot was found very near to Calloways Farm as recently as the 1990s, but it is one of those annuals of farmyards and waste places which come and go, sometimes giving the impression of being possessed of a fiendish elusiveness – as when Sussex seed was being sought in vain two years ago for the Millennium Seedbank.

Marshall and Salmon together added considerably to the knowledge of the vascular plants of West Sussex. Writing his Introduction to the *Flora* in 1937, Wolley-Dod remarked '... in modern times the Division [ie Western Rother] has probably been better worked than any in the county', and he goes on to mention these two men in addition to the inevitable Arnold, the redoubtable Guernonprez, and the less well known trio of J E Little, Prebendary Burdon and Rev H E Fox. When Wolley-Dod refers to Marshall's work on the critical species he doubtless has in mind particularly his efforts in the formidable (and to many rebarbative!) field of batology: a glance through the relevant pages of the *Flora of Sussex* reveals the large number of entries for varieties of *Rubus* attributed to ESM, specimens which for the most part he discovered on the commons of West Sussex.

Turning to less arcane plants, many of ESM's stations in the 1937 *Flora* are still extant, for example: *Papaver argemone*, East Lavant; *Cardamine amara* between Lurgashall and Selham; *Cakile maritima*, Thorney; *Geranium pusillum*, Graffham; *Trifolium ornithodioides*, West Wittering; *Drosera intermedia*, Midhurst Common. Others have vanished tantalisingly, such as *Filago pyramidata* near Bosham, *Pulicaria vulgaris* 'Dried up pond on Lodsworth Common', and *Pyrola minor* 'Fir Wood near Graffham'.

It would be remarkable if a botanist of even Marshall's ability never made mistakes: the matchless Borrer himself was known to have had second thoughts! We have recently learned of one of Marshall's errors through the labours of Tim Rich when he was researching historical records of the rarer Cudweeds for *Plantlife*. Among the stations in Division I cited by Wolley-Dod for *Filago apiculata* (now *F. lutescens*, Red-tipped Cudweed) are a group of Marshall's: 'Selham, locally abundant; sandy fields near Graffham; Norwood Farm and near Lower Barn, Lavington, with the finder's comment 'mostly the scarce form with straw-coloured phyllaries, only two or three specimens of the usual red-tipped plants were found'. Alas, Marshall's specimens did not pass muster with Tim when he was reviewing herbarium material: he determined them as *F. vulgaris*. I cannot condemn ESM, for *F. lutescens* is a subtle herb....

A black and white photograph of the portrait of ESM in the possession of the British Museum (Natural History) is reproduced in D. E. Allen's *The Botanists*: the rather sombre eyes set in a long face seem to reflect what is known of Marshall's nature. In Allen's excellent history there are also allusions to Marshall's reservations about the direction in which G. C. Druce was taking the Botanical Exchange Club, and his conduct in the affair clearly characterises him as a man of principle. But let us leave ESM with the memoir of a friend from Wiltshire days, Dr Walter Watson: 'He was a keen and active botanist in the field and allowed no obstacle to daunt him if he wished to obtain a plant. A stream was waded or a long walk was undertaken in a light-hearted manner. Sometimes the pace was rather too great and I remember a jaunt on Exmoor when Mrs Marshall and my wife were uncomfortably tired out.' The somewhat obsessive nature of the male of the species continues, I fear, to tax his partner and helpmeet....

Poison Corner (Ed's note)

A small warning about *Euphorbia* – this summer I picked a bit of *Euphorbia peplus*, abandoned it, and shortly afterwards fiddled with my contact lenses. There can only have been the minutest trace of *Euphorbia* juice on my hands, but the result was an extremely painful eye for several days – so beware. The books say that *Euphorbia* is caustic and they are right...

Hyoscyamus niger (Henbane) is well-known to be extremely toxic – it was the poison used by Dr Crippen to bump off his wife. It is also extremely rare in West Sussex, so we were delighted when Murray Marr reported that his sister, Hermione Huxley, had found a large population at East Marden. There is indeed a huge colony amounting to probably thousands of plants, mainly growing amongst a crop of kale... A call to the farmer by Frank Penfold elicited the interesting information that he had been trying to get rid of it for 25 years without success, but that he still puts his cattle in to feed on the kale, since they do not touch the *Hyoscyamus*.

Early Catkins

by Helen Proctor

I saw 11 hazel catkins, fully out on December 12th 2003. Is this a record for earliness? The hazel was growing in a sheltered position by a path. On a south facing slope at Arlington Reservoir.

SPECIAL OFFER: BSBI NEWS

Ann Griffiths has copies of BSBI News from March 1975 to March 2003, which she is offering free to anyone who would like them. They are packed with fascinating information about many aspects of the botany of the British Isles and are highly recommended. If you are interested, call Ann during the day on 01243 756852.

FIELD MEETINGS 2004

Saturday 8 May Arthur Hoare	Rusper. Joint meeting with Surrey Flora Committee. Meet at Rusper car park adjacent to church, TQ206374. Early Spring flowers including <i>Cardamine bulbifera</i> . Afternoon in Edolphs Copse (TQ235422) searching for further species.
Sunday 16 May Alan Knapp and Nick Sturt	Warningcamp. Early season survey of chalky slopes near Monarch's Way. Park E side of road N of Blakehurst Farm, just S of sharp turn back towards Warningcamp, TQ046073.
Saturday 29 May Frances Abraham	Shottermill. <i>BSBI Local Change Monitoring.</i> Wet woodland & other habitats. Meet in small car park at N end of New Rd. at SU885324. Parking very limited so be prepared to hunt for a space in streets nearby.
Saturday 5 June Paul Harmes	Bopeep. <i>BSBI Local Change Monitoring.</i> Turn S off A27 at TQ508065 to car park at Bopeep TQ494050.
Saturday 19 June Richard Bickers	Michelham Priory. Meet in main car park (free), TQ557094 We may move on in the afternoon.
Sunday 4 July Alan Knapp	Cissbury. <i>BSBI Local Change Monitoring.</i> Meet in car-park at E end of Storrington Rise, TQ129077.
Sunday 11 July Tony Spiers	Camber. Exploring the dunes. Turn off Camber road at TQ942197 down track signed 'No Vehicles' to Harbour Master's car park at TQ944191.
Saturday 7 August Pam Marchant	Filsham Reed Bed LNR. Turn off A259 opposite The Bulverhythe PH at TQ776087 along track marked as footpath to recreation ground, car park after 100 yds or so. Footwear appropriate to reed bed advised!
Sunday 14 August Nick Sturt	Thornham and Prinsted. Chichester Harbour. Turn S off A259 into Thorney Road, meet at junction with Thornham Lane, SU757049. We shall move on from here in fewer cars to Thornham Marina.
Sat. 21 August Paul Harmes	Rye Harbour. Joint with BSBI. Vegetated shingle & other habitats. Meet in Reserve car park at TQ941189.
Sat. 18 September/ Sun. 19 September Alan Knapp	Extra meeting(s). <i>BSBI Local Change Monitoring.</i> Alan will arrange a meeting or meetings to record in any tetrads which have not been covered adequately.

ALL MEETINGS START AT 10.45

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