



Sussex Botanical Recording Society

Newsletter

No. 79

<http://www.sussexflora.org.uk>

January 2015

Chairman's Message

Members getting together at the November Get-together enjoyed a really excellent talk by David Streeter on the Rothschild Reserves in Sussex, even if they were too modest to show off their own knowledge in the *Salicornia* challenge posed at the end. David is of course celebrated as a leading ecologist and botanist who has been a long-term member of the SBRS, but not everyone will be aware that he was in at the very beginning of the *Sussex Plant Atlas*.

On 26 November 1965 Frank Penfold of the Sussex Wildlife Trust chaired a meeting in a room of Kings College, University of London to form the Sussex Flora Committee. Twelve botanists had been invited to attend: Francis Rose who arranged the venue; David Philcox of Kew; Ted Wallace and Ron Boniface, fine vascular and cryptogamic field botanists based in Surrey; Oliver Buckle, the man always expected to write the Flora to succeed Wolley-Dod's; four other Sussex botanists – our own Mary Briggs, Cecil Prime, Ceres Esplan (also known as Alison Ross) and Ursula Smith; Joan and Peter Hall, keen workers on floras; and a young David Streeter whose enthusiasm had originally been ignited by Francis Rose. Only Cecil Prime (of *Arum* fame) was unable to attend but he did go on to play a significant part in the outcome of this first meeting 15 years later – the *Sussex Plant Atlas*.

I have been piecing together the story from various sources – including the talk given to the Society by Mary in 2010 – for incorporation in the historical section of the introduction to the new Flora. In the course of this research I have been reminded of many SBRS stalwarts no longer with us and, with this in mind, I would ask if any members are able to provide photographs of the following: Oliver Buckle, Frank Penfold, Peter and Joan Hall, Betty and George Bishop, Breda Burt. I am happy to accept on loan both prints and transparencies, and I would also welcome photographs of early field meetings and suggestions of other figures prominent in the 1970s and early 1980s whose portraits might be included if there is sufficient space.

It is pleasant to look back on the proceedings of our Society, to remember companions in the field and familiar faces at the indoor meetings. At the present time, of course, we remember Mary in particular, who gave shape and form to the SBRS, who always disseminated snippets of information to educate and enthuse, who set us intriguing challenges (not normally on *Salicornia*!) and congratulated us on our finds. We have also lost other dear members over the past year and these are recalled elsewhere in this issue. As botanists, however, we always have the incentive to look forward – to the coming seasons and a multitude of species old and new to us, to days in the field in congenial company, to the indoor events at which we catch up with each other – and the Society will go forward, I am confident, building on the expertise and traditions established by Mary and the others who sat down together that day in November 1965.

Nick Sturt

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Secretary's Note

A very big thank you to all of our members who kindly made cakes for the 2014 Autumn Get-together. These were delicious and we made £110 from the sale of tea, coffee and cakes. This was a record amount and of course goes to boost the Flora Fund.

Dates for your Diary:

Saturday 7th March 2015

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 2.00 p.m. at Staplefield Village Hall. After the AGM, there will be details of this year's field meetings, a progress report on the New Flora and details of interesting records received. Please bring your digital photographs of Sussex plants to show to the meeting, which will finish with tea and biscuits and possibly cakes! The hall will be available from 1.30 p.m. if you wish to bring any books or plants for sale.

Saturday 7th November 2015

The Autumn Get-together will be held at Staplefield Village Hall. The doors will be open from 10.00 a.m. and the meeting will start promptly at 10.30 a.m. Please remember to bring a packed lunch; tea, coffee and cakes will be available. Members are invited to bring books and plants for sale, any items of interest or specimens for display, and digital photographs or slides to show in the afternoon. Offers of homemade cakes are always welcome (see above) and prove very popular.

Don't forget to let me know if you are willing to receive the newsletter electronically as this saves the Society money which will be used for publication costs of the new Flora.

Rita Hemsley

Treasurer's Note

Welcome to 2015. Following preparation of the Society's Accounts for 2014 I shall update you, in the May 2015 Newsletter, as to the state of the Flora Fund. Further donations to the Flora Fund are always welcome - please send any donation to me.

It is likely that subscriptions for 2015 will remain as for 2014 i.e. £8 for an individual and £11 for two people at the same address and receiving one copy of the mailings as they arise. Subscriptions may be sent to me at my home address, paid at the AGM in March or at the Autumn Get-together in November. If anyone has not paid their subscription for 2014 - please now so do if you wish to remain a member.

Trevor Lording

Mary Briggs (1923-2014)

by Frances Abraham

Although Mary had been in failing health for several months, it was a shock to hear that she had died on July 25th. A good number of SBRS members went to her funeral at the RC Church in Storrington. Mary's daughter Jenny gave an address about her mother, and the following account of her life owes much to Jenny's words.

Mary was born in India. Her father was an electrical engineer in Cawnpore until his death when she was aged only seven. Back in England, Mary with her mother and sister Joan lived in Hove. In due course she studied Pharmacy at Brighton Technical College, and with her college friends cycled all over Sussex, keeping lists of the plants and birds she saw. She was a voluntary fire warden during the war, and also worked on farms in East Anglia and at Alfriston, helping with hay-making and apple-picking. Her interest in natural history led to a working holiday on Skokholm in 1946 as a member of Ronald Lockley's sea bird research team, and to many visits to the Field Studies Council at Flatford Mill, where she helped with everything from bird surveys to cooking.

Before long she was working in the pharmacy at University College Hospital in London (where she briefly overlapped with Agatha Christie) and met her future husband Alan. Married in 1952, they had two children, Jenny and Roger, who remember a happy childhood with many botanising trips from their home at White Cottage, Slinfold. Mary then worked as a part-time pharmacist at Horsham Hospital.

In 1965 Mary became Meetings Secretary of the BSBI, until in 1973 she was appointed Honorary General Secretary. This involved an enormous amount of letter writing. Her letters were always hand-written and always carefully considered, with many answers to obscure queries taking hours of research involving calls to colleagues and investigations in her wonderful collection of botanical books. She was President of the BSBI from 1998 to 2000, the only woman so far to have held this prestigious post.

An important strand in Mary's life was her leadership of botanical tours, mainly for Cox and Kings. In 32 years she led 166 trips to 29 countries. She was a splendid leader, always considerate of her sometimes awkward flock. At the same time she was pursuing other botanical interests, such as helping to identify specimens in the Natural History Museum. In 1981 she received an MBE in recognition of her work

towards the Wildlife and Countryside Act. And she wrote several books, including *Sussex Wild Flowers* (2004).

Following the loss of Alan in 1987, Mary moved to a flat in Pulborough with a glorious view to the Downs. She stayed there until a few months before her death, supported by her family, and coping with the gradual loss of her sight as glaucoma worsened. We send our warmest sympathies to her family.

For botanists in Sussex Mary leaves a great gap, taking with her a vast store of knowledge of species and sites and of past generations of botanical recorders. It is hard to summarise our debt to her. In 1966 she was a founder member of the Sussex Flora Committee of the Sussex Trust for Nature Conservation (now the Sussex Wildlife Trust) and its successor, the Sussex Flora Society, and contributed greatly to their production of the *Sussex Plant Atlas* (1980). In 1978 the Society was re-constituted as the SBRS, of which she became President in 1984 – a thirty year reign. She was Botanical Recorder for VC13 for many years. She led a band of helpers in monitoring ditch plants on Amberley Wild Brooks for the Nature Conservancy Council in the 1980s and 1990s: the data is invaluable as that important site changes. She edited the *Sussex Plant Atlas Supplement* (1990), and the *The Sussex Rare Plant Register* (2001). More recently, she was a member of the Sussex Flora Working Group and was contributing her knowledge and ideas only days before she died.

Many of us owe Mary a personal debt as she sent us off on botanical errands which turned into long-term interests in particular sites and species. Always kindly, a warm friend and a clear-sighted and wise counsellor, she had a sure touch when dealing with difficult human situations, and her sense of humour oiled many a creaky wheel. We miss her.

Sadly, we have just heard that the Rev. David Curry died in December – there will be an obituary in the May Newsletter. We also lost other long-standing members of the Society last year:

Olwen Hollings (1930-2014)

by Nick Sturt

We send our sincere condolences to Michael on the loss of Olwen, with whom for more than forty years he shared so many happy adventures in the natural world. Armed with a Cambridge PhD Olwen pursued a highly successful career in

botanical/horticultural research, after which she and Michael were able to devote themselves more completely to their passion for travel. In this Olwen was aided by a gift for languages – she could speak Russian, Dutch, French, Spanish and Italian, not to mention passable Japanese. They made good friends wherever they went and were always being asked back to visit. As many members will know, Olwen and Michael took photographs of the wildlife they came across, but the urgency of the different occasions on which they were charged by an elephant, a rhino and a buffalo may not have allowed the effective deployment of a camera. On less dramatic excursions with the SBRS Olwen was never less than excellent and informative company and always comprehensively equipped for the expedition. At home Olwen loved to grow wild flowers and her own fruit and vegetables. She was an accomplished cook, and those who had the privilege of sampling her cuisine say that it was frequently as adventurous as the lady herself! Her appeal was completed by a fine sense of humour – she was amused at indoor meetings by Michael's battles for mastery over the projector remote control. And Michael was devoted to his partner, whom he would describe as 'the smallest botanist in the UK'.

Wilberforce Jones (1929-2014)

by Trevor Lording

Alfred William Jones, known to us as "Wilberforce" was born in Chiswick. The name Wilberforce came about in the 1950s due to the puckish humour of a friend's wife when her young son asked what the W on the signet ring engraved with Alfred's initials stood for, and she answered straight away "Wilberforce". The name stuck and continued to be used by many all his life.

Wilberforce's young life was struck by tragedy when at four years old he saw his father, who was acting as caretaker on a houseboat, fall into the Thames. He raised the alarm: "Daddy's in the water" he remembered saying, but sadly his father drowned.

In 1944 he won a scholarship to Marylebone Grammar School but the family's financial circumstances meant that he had to leave at 16. He joined a firm of accountants and studied for accountancy exams in the evenings. Wilberforce knew not from whence arose his interest in natural history but it blossomed when he was at work, and he spent lunch hours studying the wildlife of London bombsites, and weekends at places such as Wimbledon Common and Box Hill. In 1965 the accountancy firm relocated to Lewes and Wilberforce and his wife and family moved from Croydon to

Newhaven and Wilberforce found his natural home in the South Downs and the Weald of Sussex. Weekends were occupied by family treks across the hills, up the river valleys or through the woods. After retirement in 1990 Wilberforce was out in the field most days between 1st March and 1st October each year to the day he died - which was spent exploring the fields and meadows around Cuckfield.

Wilberforce was not a “square basher” but he kept field notebooks which he transcribed in evenings or in autumn and winter into handwritten notebooks, using initially a fountain pen and in the latter years roller-ball gel pens. After nearly seventy years of recording he left over six hundred large manuscript volumes of records, notes and completed local floras, all hand-bound, which have gone to the manuscript archive of the Botany Department of the British Museum Natural History in South Kensington.

Wilberforce’s wife and children survive him. I am grateful to Wilberforce’s son Richard for supplying me with and permitting me to disclose the information here written.

Chris Haes (1930-2014)

by Frances Abraham

Older members may remember Chris Haes, who published *The Natural History of Sussex* in 1976 – the first book to provide an overview of both the flora and fauna of Sussex. For many years Chris lived in Worthing, working in the Plant Health Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Following retirement, and the death of his wife Jane, he moved to Cornwall in 1978. Chris was an active botanical recorder in Sussex, and an all round naturalist. His primary interest was entomology, and he was the national Recorder for Orthoptera. He also published books on entomology and gardening.

Field Meeting reports 2014

VC13 West Sussex

by Nick Sturt unless noted otherwise

April 27th Midhurst (Leader: Nick Sturt)

With a poor weather forecast some re-thinking was required, but the first priority was for the party of ten to view the fine *Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia* (Black Poplar) standing by the main road near the Cowdray Ruins car park. Frances knowledgeably ‘explained’

the tree – which has the distinction of being the tallest specimen in the county, and was obligingly coming into leaf in this early season. During this, however, umbrellas were deployed followed by a retreat to the cars. To Minstead, notwithstanding, to investigate the heath, culminating in the sandy verges of the scattering of cottages that is Quaggs Corner: here a number of Spring annuals were on show, including *Myosotis discolor* (Changing Forget-me-not) and the desired *Cerastium semidecandrum* (Little Mouse-ear) on the missing list for the tetrad. Two planted flowering shrubs challenged the collective expertise of those assembled and so twigs were taken in the hope of their mystery being revealed after a spell in a vase. At one point there was a good view of a slow-worm and Steven regaled a riveted audience with details of its diet. In the afternoon Stedham Common was the focus and it was possible to observe the good management work done by the SWT in the form of *Polygala vulgaris* (Common Milkwort), *Trichophorum germanicum* (Deergrass) and *Eriophorum angustifolium* (Common Cottongrass). It was quite a clement session but had the captain declared the innings fifteen minutes sooner his team would not have been drenched by one of the forecast downpours.

May 31st Littlehampton (Leader: Mike Shaw. By Roy Wells)

Mike Shaw invited us to spend a day at the seaside and that is exactly what we did, hardly losing sight of the sea throughout the day. In his introduction Mike innocently told the thirteen members assembled at the west beach that the area is of great botanical interest, that the tetrad was already well recorded and that the day was intended more as an opportunity to enjoy the sights than a serious attempt to record more species. Well, a fine bunch of keen botanists could take that as a challenge, couldn’t they? Not find new species lurking somewhere, I should think so!

We set off along the Climping dunes, which are protected here from human disturbance, and what an amazing array of plants there were in an astonishingly small area. Even from behind the fences we were able to see and record many species. There is only space in this report to mention a few but a look at the tetrad list will allow anyone to see the wealth of interest in the area. There was *Phleum arenarium* (Sand Cat’s-tail) and *Carex arenaria* (Sand Sedge). *Lagurus ovatus* (Hare’s-tail), alien interloper that it is, covered the dunes in a fluffy blanket as if it were a native. Beneath this ran a true native, *Calystegia soldanella* (Sea Bindweed) bestowing here and there its first pink and white star-shaped flowers. There were *Crithmum maritimum* (Rock Samphire) and *Cakile maritima* (Sea Rocket)

and many, many more. We moved off the dunes to the shingle that runs beside the Arun. The sun shone, fishermen fished, children paddled, gulls swooped and soared and we got down on our hands and knees and hunted for *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Bird's-foot Clover), not seen here for many years. It was a shame we didn't find it, for this a place for Trifoliums (Trifolia?) if ever there was one: ten species recorded in the morning! *Amsinckia micrantha* (Common Fiddleneck) was our first completely new species of the day and *Papaver lecoqii* (Yellow-juiced Poppy) the second.

After lunch we moved east of the Arun to Littlehampton seafront amidst a swirling crowd of holidaymakers amongst which the group became somewhat amorphous, parting and rejoining as we explored these new habitats of lawns, flowerbeds, car parks and open spaces. New habitats produced more plants, many of them such old friends they appeared a little mundane, but there were gems here too. Nick Sturt discovered *Medicago polymorpha* (Toothed Medick), another new record for the tetrad. I noticed a smile on Nick's face: I wouldn't call it smug but I thought he felt it was appropriate for the Chairman to show he can cut the mustard. Whilst checking that *Crassula tillaea* (Mossy Stonecrop) was still in its appointed place (it was) *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Bird's-foot Clover) was found, increasing the day's count for *Trifolium* to eleven. The day was notable not just for the marvellous weather but also for the number of species recorded (229), and there were yet another three completely new records to boot! It was the silent challenge, you see.

June 22nd Black Down (Leader: Bruce Middleton)
Bruce's personal magnetism drew in 10 members to this remote outpost of West Sussex. They were quickly put to work surveying an area that had been cleared of the beastly *Rhododendron ponticum* to gather data to show how the native plants were reappearing. The search broadened beyond this first clearing to take in TQ32A and F in general and some excellent plants were ticked off, including *Ceratocarpus claviculata* (Climbing Corydalis), *Eriophorum angustifolium* (Common Cottongrass), *E. vaginatum* (Hare's-tail Cottongrass), *Juncus squarrosus* (Heath Rush) and *Vaccinium myrtillus* (Bilberry). There was a wander along the ancient track still bearing its pre-Anglo-Saxon name Pen-y-Bos, where *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath Grass) delighted, as did some welcome shade on this hot day for lunch. Eventually the party arrived at a reservoir ('Blackdown Waterworks') near which in Wolley-Dod's *Flora* is mentioned E. W. Swanton's find of *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen). Alas, the removal of trees had not yet led to the reappearance

of this rarity, but there were plenty of additions to the tetrad here to satisfy, for example *Leontodon saxatile* (Lesser Hawkbit) and some unexpected *Linum catharticum* (Purging Flax). Returning homeward, the stunning view across the Weald to the South Downs was appreciated, another benefit of the removal of invasive trees masterminded by Bruce.

July 12th Steyning (Leader: Bob Platt)

Bob's first problem was to get the party to the site. First there were the aficionados of aliens, like Mike, who came upon *Oxalis dillenii* (Sussex Yellow-sorrel) growing by the pavement with the two more usual members of the genus. And then there was Richard with his spectacular display of grapnelmanship which culminated in tossing both ends of the apparatus into a chalky pool with something like a look of triumph on his face. But at length the nine-strong team were surveying the north bank of the WW1 rifle range, where grazing is gradually restoring fine turf with the consequent increase of species such as *Asperula cynanchica* (Squinancywort) and *Scabiosa columbaria* (Small Scabious). After lunch Mike wandered off to look for the sizeable number of woodland species missing from the tetrad list while the rest worked on the south bank, recording slightly fewer species but again finding evidence that the grazing regime was winning. And so on to a third area of the Steyning Downland Scheme – a steady climb on a hot day which required Bob's powers of persuasion. The Combe had grown up since the last SBRS survey five years ago and is being managed as a patchwork of scrub and open turf. Progressing up the slope nearly 100 species were crossed off until, with a certain amount of relief, permission was given to sit and admire the view, as well as an extensive mat of *Succisa pratensis* (Devil's-bit Scabious) and some *Rumex acetosella* (Sheep's Sorrel) spotted by Helen.

August 13th Arundel Wildfowl & Wetland Trust (Leader: Frances Abraham)

Members just kept on arriving in the car park, and such was the camaraderie that the hybrid bindweed *Calystegia x lucana* was almost missed. Frances worked with the WWT's Paul and Sam to produce a most absorbing day for more than twenty members in the Arun Valley, among exotic ducks and geese and with exciting glimpses of water voles. There were good marginals in abundance, such as *Samolus valerandi* (Brookweed) and *Veronica anagallis-aquatica* (Blue Water-speedwell) but it was as well to be aware of the deliberate introductions of some other species, for example *Achillea ptarmica* (Sneezewort) and *Sanguisorba officinalis* (Great Burnet); the *bona fides* of two other notables was accepted, however – *Impatiens capensis* (Orange

Balsam) and *Thalictrum flavum* (Common Meadow-rue). Although submerged aquatics were less plentiful, having been dined upon by ducks, a grapple did yield *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Spiked Water-milfoil) and *Potamogeton berchtoldii* (Small Pondweed). So the sun shone and the party disported itself in luxuriant riparian vegetation. Frances had planned an afternoon wander in Arundel Park but there was simply too much to see where we were. At the end all were noisy in their appreciation of a superb day in the field which had also yielded much valuable data for the WWT.

VC14 East Sussex by Field Meeting leaders

May 17th Streat and Plumpton area (Leader: Jacqui Hutson)

On a hot Saturday, ten members set out on the Greensand Ridgeway between Plumpton and Streat to look for new and missing SPA species in TQ31M and N. *Tilia cordata* (Small-leaved Lime) was spotted in a hedgerow. A rushy field consisting of an infilled sandpit was species-rich but added only *Vicia faba* (Broad Bean) to our records. We lunched in Sedlow Wood, where *Ranunculus auricomus* (Wood Buttercup) was found, together with hundreds of flowering *Orchis mascula* (Early-purple Orchid). After lunch, we progressed northwards along Kent's Lane and were rewarded with *Sorbus torminalis* (Wild Service-tree) and *Crataegus x media* (hybrid Hawthorn) flowering in the hedgerow. Altogether, 26 taxa were added. Twelve were new records but only seven were native; the other fourteen were missing SPA or common species. Kent's Lane had recently been resurfaced and so it is now a hostile and barren environment for plants. However, 21 taxa were added in TQ31N, including ten native species, five established introductions, three casuals and three archaeophytes.

June 14th Wivelsfield (Leader: Peter Smith)

Ten members gathered near Wivelsfield, with the intention of enhancing records for TQ31P. Close as we were to the frontier between East and West Sussex, we were pleased that our chairman chose to grace us with his presence. As the woods nearby were largely impassable with mud, we focused predominantly on the meadow flora. No exceptionally unusual species were identified, but by lunchtime we found that by including species already noted on a preliminary reconnaissance there were 51 new records for the tetrad. Seeking a more challenging assignment after lunch, we moved to the already well-recorded downland tetrad of TQ31R. Here we were able to add just five new records,

including *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath-grass) and *Koeleria macrantha* (Crested Hair-grass). We were also able to luxuriate in a spectacular showing of *Helianthemum nummularium* (Rock-rose), *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid), *Gymnadenia conopsea* (Fragrant Orchid), *Neottia ovata* (Twayblade), *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid) and *Herminium monorchis* (Musk Orchid).

July 6th Hindleap Warren (Leader: Kathryn Knapp)

Six of us enjoyed a visit to Hindleap Warren, where we parked at the Activity Centre and set off on a tour of the grounds. Fairly soon, we encountered the "activities". Was this what we had come for? When we eventually managed to persuade members that giant climbing frames, zip wires and swinging through the trees were not for them, we were able to get on with the botanising. Highlight of the day was finding *Dryopteris aemula* (Hay-scented Buckler-fern), last recorded here 20 years ago. Although not a new record, we were pleased to see that *Wahlenbergia hederacea* (Ivy-leaved Bellflower) was thriving. Other finds included *Liriodendron tulipifera* (Tulip Tree), *Thuja plicata* (Western Red-cedar), *Larix x marschlinsii* (Hybrid Larch) and *Cryptomeria japonica* (Japanese Red-cedar). We also found five SPA missing species, including *Centaureum erythraea* (Common Centaury) and quantities of *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern), and common missing species such as *Anagallis arvensis* (Scarlet Pimpernel) and *Euphorbia peplus* (Petty Spurge). Twenty four species were added, bringing the numbers for the tetrad to 302.

July 20th Balcombe Lake

An elite group of four members met at Balcombe Railway station, where we added a few missing SPA species. We relocated to Balcombe Lake, our path taking us near the edge of the Lake and to some wet woodland. Later, we checked out the sandstone rocks at Balcombe Mill but were unable to find the missing ferns. The objective of the meeting had been to refind missing marginal aquatic species. However, the margins of the lake and Ardingly Reservoir are now well wooded and open areas are now small. *Sparganium erectum* (Branched Bur-reed) and *Eleocharis palustris* (Common Spike-rush) were recorded. The attendance of the West Sussex County Recorder was a bonus. He named three *Rubus* species and noticed the hybrid Bindweed *Calystegia x lucana* by a roadside. Also seen were *Medicago sativa* (Lucerne) near the lake and *Dryopteris borreeri* (Borrer's Male-fern) in woodland. In all, 33 records

were added to the tetrad list, including seven SPA missing species, bringing the total to 384 species.

August 10th Royal Military Canal (Leaders: Jacqueline Rose, Judy Clark & Ellen Campbell)

The end of Hurricane Bertha and a “yellow warning” of heavy rain and high winds caused the cancellation of this meeting. It should have been the cross-border meeting with Geoffrey Kitchener and the Kent Botanical Recording Group. However, all was not lost as the weather had improved by the following Tuesday. The “Hastings three” (JR, JC and EC) and two other members met up to tackle TQ92H and M. The most interesting area was a patch of waste ground near Iden Lock, where *Malva neglecta* (Dwarf Mallow) grew in profusion. Twenty five species were added to TQ92H, including *Verbena officinalis* (Vervain), *Polygonum arenastrum* (Equal-leaved Knotgrass) and *Rorippa sylvestris* (Creeping Yellow-cress). Further east, TQ92M consists mainly of arable fields which have been treated thoroughly with herbicides. However, the canal and a ditch produced *Nuphar lutea* (Yellow Water-lily), *Persicaria amphibia* (Amphibious Bistort) and *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit). Thirteen records were added.

August 30th Seven Sisters Country Park (Leader: Helen Proctor)

Nine members assembled in the car park at Exceat on a dry, mild but overcast morning. Our route took us through parts of four tetrads, three of which had already been well-recorded. However, the objective was to refind missing scarce species. At the oxbows, grapnels hauled out vast quantities of a filamentous alga which contained smaller amounts of *Ruppia cirrhosa* (Spiral Tasselweed), including one plant with fruits on a coiled peduncle. *Ruppia maritima* (Beaked Tasselweed) could not be found.

Near the river mouth, *Frankenia laevis* (Sea-heath) was a new record for TV59D. In the saltmarsh nearby *Spartina x townsendii* (Townsend's Cord-grass) was a new VC14 record. One plant of *Atriplex laciniata* (Frosted Orache) was found, confirming its continued existence in one of only two localities in VC14. The prostrate variety of *Solanum dulcamara* var. *marinum* (Bittersweet) growing on shingle was also a new record. On top of the first Sister, *Centaureum erythraea* var. *capitatum* (Common Centaury) was examined. Further on, a brief search rewarded us with the sighting of about 50-60 flowering plants of *Teucrium chamaedrys* (Wall Germander). Here, the wind had increased to an estimated gale force 8, challenging our athletic skills. A frog-like jump caught a species list, and a rugby tackle brought back Mike's flying clipboard which was on its way to France. *Arenaria leptoclados*

(Slender Sandwort) was the second refind for TV59I. The hilltop above Foxholes had a colourful display of *Campanula glomerata* (Clustered Bellflower). On the hillside, two stems of *Spiranthes spiralis* (Autumn Lady's-tresses) were a refind for TV59J. In all, nine records from three tetrads were added, exceeding our expectations. A rewarding and interesting day was had by all.

September 6th Eastbourne Seafront (Leader: Matthew Berry)

Seven people from East and West Sussex were shown some of the botanical highlights of Eastbourne seafront. Near the rendezvous in Helen Gardens, we saw *Coronilla valentina* ssp. *glauca* (Shrubby Scorpion-vetch) self-sown by a bowling green, and bird-sown *Cotoneaster mairei* (Maire's Cotoneaster) on a strip of chalk grassland that separates the rear of Bede's School from the cliff edge. By benches to the west of the Wish Tower (our lunch stop), we saw *Asteriscus maritimus* (Gold Coins) self-sown on some steps. We also saw non-flowering plants of this species on shingle later in the day. The dark pink flowers of *Oxalis latifolia* (Garden Pink-sorrel) were somewhat past their best in flowerbeds almost level with the pier entrance. Next stop was the public garden connected to The Pavilion restaurant, the eastern limit of our walk, where the alien highlight was abundant *Amaranthus blitum* (Guernsey Pigweed), and where *Poa compressa* (Flattened Meadow-grass) was the day's most interesting native species. The return route along the promenade proper took in some of the garden plants that make a precarious living on the well-trodden shingle, including two chamomiles, *Anthemis tinctoria* (Yellow Chamomile) and *A. punctata* ssp. *cupaniana* (Sicilian Chamomile), both widely planted in the flowerbeds nearby. Sadly, the single plant of *Oenothera speciosa* (Mexican Primrose) recorded earlier in the summer had disappeared by the time of this meeting, possibly dug up for the garden. As well as seeing a good balance of native and non-native plants we added a total of nine new species to the three tetrads (TV69D, E and J) we passed through during the day.

The Field Meeting Convenors would like to thank all those who led meetings and who wrote reports on them.

Helen Proctor and Nick Sturt

Freshwater algae from temporary pools in arable fields near Chichester

by Howard Matcham

Heavy rainfall led to an unprecedented high water table in the Chichester area of West Sussex during autumn 2013 and spring 2014, so that depressions in arable fields filled with water that remained in many instances for eight months, and still contained water when crops were due to be harvested. One field immediately south of my house at Strettington had several such areas, which from April onwards were filled with macroscopic and microscopic algal species.

Since finding *Sphaeroplea soleirolii* new to England in April 2010 at Boxgrove (Adastra 2010) I have taken a serious interest in studying algae, encouraged by the eminent phycologists Chris Carter (Northampton) and David John (BM). Asked by Chris if I could send more material of *S. soleirolii* for digital imaging, I returned to the site and collected macroscopic algae in the hope of relocating *Sphaeroplea*. I was not successful, but one fertile filamentous species in the genus *Oedogonium* proved puzzling. Chris sent it to David John who identified it as *Oedogonium pachydermum*, new to Britain! This is also believed to be the first record from Europe, which is simply astonishing. It is currently known from the Great Lakes and has a disjunct distribution in Nepal. It is perhaps understandable that a unicellular species could lurk undiscovered in Europe, but most unlikely that a filamentous species could do so, and *O. pachydermum* would appear to be of a genuinely and exceptionally rare world occurrence. Just a few weeks previously I had found the unicellular desmid *Cosmarium laeve* var. *distentum* in a disused cattle trough, new to the British Isles and probably also to Europe. European phycologists are unsure, but David Williamson, the British authority on the desmid flora, believes that it is and has a publication in press.

Returning to the arable field in front of my house, I made several collections during April with amazing results. From the same temporary pool I collected the filamentous species *Spirogyra singularis*, the first authenticated record for the British Isles, and *Oedogonium suecicum*, which has not been seen in England since reported from Devon in 1933, and with a record from North Wales in 1954. A large membrane-like species turned out to be *Monostroma bullosum*, which is not common in the British Isles and has been found most frequently in the Tweed catchment area (River Teviot). It was not considered to be present in southern England, but Ian Tittley at the Natural History Museum searched the herbarium

for possible past specimens from Sussex and showed me a folder containing a large collection from the Lewes area dated 1846! As far as we are aware, this is the only previous gathering of this species from Sussex.

I visit my mentor and great friend Rod Stern every week in the nursing home at Fishbourne where he resides, and during the summer took the opportunity to look at temporary pools in arable fields in the area. Here I found the filamentous species *Oedogonium vaucherii*, not previously known from southern England, and with only three British records: Hertfordshire 1845, Cambridgeshire 1899 and Yorkshire 1900. It is widespread in Europe, but exceptionally rare in Britain.

The unicellular desmid *Cosmarium subcrenatum* is described as an Arctic/alpine and is found in the upland areas of Britain, where it is widespread in Scotland and the Scottish Islands in the littoral of nutrient-rich lakes and ponds. My collection from a cattle-poached depression in a meadow at Fishbourne is the first authenticated record from southern Britain. Described as a 'chance plankter', could it have arrived via a lift from a migrating Brent goose? I like to think so!

I would like to thank Chris Carter and David John for identifying or confirming the above records.

[see the website <http://www.algaebase.org> for superb images of all species mentioned in this article]

Stonewort news

by Frances Abraham

Stoneworts, also known as Charophytes, have the distinction of being the only organisms which are not vascular plants to be covered by the BSBI, and they will be included in the new Sussex Flora. They are aquatic green algae, members of Kingdom *Viridiplantae*. Sussex recording of this often overlooked group has waxed and waned over the years, but in the last few years has been doing rather well. Several SBRS members and others have been submitting records and specimens. All records are of interest, even of the most widespread species.

In 2014 there were a number of interesting finds. There were several records of *Nitella mucronata* (Pointed Stonewort). Although the species is not infrequent in the UK, the authority Nick Stewart has in recent years only seen the native form in Sussex. Elsewhere an introduced variety appears to have taken over.

The first UK record of *Tolypella prolifera* (Great Tassel Stonewort) was from Henfield, where Borrer found it in a ditch near Brookside Farm in 1827. He also recorded it near Rye Farm in 1840, but it was searched for subsequently without success, and recently has been known only from a few sites in the Arun Valley, Somerset and Cambridgeshire. However it was found in two Henfield ditches in

2014. Brookfield Farm was moved at some point, and these ditches are midway between its old site and Rye Farm.

Please look out for stoneworts. I am happy to help with identification. Spread them out on kitchen paper and press lightly before sending them in more paper, as if kept wet they may melt into smelly green soup.

Recording Update Spring 2015

At the end of December, Mike and Paul froze the Master Database of records for January 2000 to December 2014. This dataset will be the information source for the preparation of the species accounts for the *New Flora* of Sussex. It will also be the datum for the analysis of the current status of plants in the County, against the data collected from 1966 to 1979 for the *Sussex Plant Atlas*. We would like to express the thanks of the New Flora Working Group (NFWG) to all members who contributed to the fieldwork, both hectad adopters and others, who all helped us to achieve the magnificent 11,000 additional records collected in 2014. We would also like to thank those members and non-members who undertook desktop projects during the year. These included extracting herbarium records, digitising both volumes of Arnold's *Flora of Sussex* and of the *Flora of Ashdown Forest*, collating of private notes and private, un-published floras, and the extraction of annotated notes from floras. This work has expanded the ever-growing data set of old (pre-2000) records. This is all very valuable and essential work and very much appreciated.

The 2015 recording season will be a lot more leisurely, if you want it to be! Go where you want, record what you want but, most of all, enjoy it.

However, we will still have the 'Re-finds List'. This consists of taxa requiring confirmation of their identity or continued presence. Mike will be sending it out early in the New Year. We will be recording specific habitats or species where we think the data is inadequate. We will be in touch as the season progresses if there is anything we need help with. These are the only 2015 records which will contribute to the Flora, unless there are any new or outstanding finds during the year.

One major change for the new recording season is that we will be splitting the two Vice Counties back to West Sussex (VC13) and East Sussex (VC14).

This means a return to the pre-New Flora process in submitting records. West Sussex records should be sent, by the normal electronic means if possible, to Mike, and East Sussex records to Paul. If either Recorder is unavailable, please contact the other in the case of new and exciting finds, or any other matter if you have queries. If neither of us is available, please contact Matthew Berry, who will assist. If you have any questions, do please contact either of us, and we will clarify any points you may have.

We will be looking to update the website in early January but, because of the changes to the database and recording priorities, it is unlikely that there will be any further updates in the current format. Once again, please do some random checking of records you have sent to Paul during the year. If there appear to be omissions, do please contact him as soon as possible in order that the situation can be clarified or rectified. If you still have any outstanding electronic or paper records, please ensure that they are sent to Paul or Arthur ASAP.

Thanks to all those of you who acted as Hectad adopters during the last four years. Many of you have already sent in your 2014 update reports. However, if you have yet to do so, please send them promptly to ensure that these invaluable documents are used in the preparation of the species accounts.

Paul Harmes, Mike Shaw & Matthew Berry

Field Meetings 2015

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| Tuesday 28 April Dawn Nelson | The western Rother Valley: some choice sites. Recording in SU82B, C, H &/or G depending on numbers. Meet in layby N side of A272 just E of Rogate at SU817238. |
| Saturday 9 May Peter Jones | Binsted Woods: ancient woodland on the coastal plain. May be muddy - wellingtons advised. Meet in Binsted Lane by Binsted Church at SU983060. |
| Sunday 17 May Helen Proctor Geoffrey Kitchener | Friezland Wood, Tunbridge Wells. Joint with Kent Botanical Recording Group. Meet at end of Summervale Road, Tunbridge Wells at TQ56883832. |
| Saturday 30 May Jacqueline Rose Judy Clark Ellen Campbell | Hastings: various habitats including Alexandra Park. Meet in Harmers Park layby, an unmarked turning off Lower Park Road, at TQ80851045. If you want a lift from the station tel. 01424-441635 Friday evening. |
| Sunday 7 June Jacqueline Hutson | Hadlow Down: Little England Farm. From Hadlow Down direction, on the A272, turn right after Tinkers Lane onto a track at TQ544242. Park in layby halfway down the track. |
| Sunday 21 June John Patmore | Brighton: Waterhall Conservation Area. Meet at Waterhall Golf Club, off the Devil's Dyke Road. Park at furthest (southern) end of car park at TQ283088. |
| Sunday 28 June Frances Abraham Nick Sturt | Henfield. A wander around the town and common looking for relics of the 19th century botanist William Borrer. Meet Village Hall car park at TQ216160 behind Budgens, access from High Street (A281) via Coopers Way. |
| Saturday 4 July Peter Smith | Lewes: Offham and Hamsey Marshes. Meet at north end of Landport Road at TQ406112. |
| Friday 10-Sunday 12 July Rob Randall | BSBI BRAMBLE WEEKEND Rob has helped us with <i>Rubus</i> for the Flora. Friday is an introductory evening session in the Haywards Heath area. Details will be in the BSBI Year Book. Email rob.randall@brlsi.org if you plan to attend any sessions. |
| Saturday 18 July Elisabeth Sturt | Levin Down: chalk grassland and chalk heath. Park on S edge of Charlton off Knights Hill near power lines and sawmill, at SU886128. |
| Wednesday 22 July Philip Glyn Helen Proctor | Ashurst Wood: Cherry Garden Farm and Berry Wood. From the south, turn right off the A22 on to Wall Hill Road, then right at the post office, left into Ivy Dene Lane. Take the 2nd left turning, just before sign for industrial estate, TQ414370. Meet near the house. |
| Wednesday 29 July Mike Shaw | Greensand heaths. Meet in hidden car park for Lavington Common on N side of road opposite bridleway at SU949187. |
| Saturday 1 August Roy Wells Ruth Eastwood | Forest Row, to search for missing species in TQ43G and H. Meet in the car park, near the recreation ground at TQ428342. |
| Sunday 9 August Nick Sturt | Rewell Wood. Recording part of the large woodland complex N of the A27. Meet Baycombe Lane, west turning on corner off A29 N of Slindon, at SU971085. |
| Wednesday 26 Aug. Jane Birch | Pevensy Levels. Meet at Chilley Farm car park, BN27 1SE at TQ638 061. Later, we will move on to Middle Bridge. |
| Saturday 5 Sept. Ruth Eastwood Helen Proctor | Ashdown Forest Gentian Hunt. Meet at car park at TQ438297, on the west side of the A22. |

All meetings start at 10.45 am unless indicated otherwise
Those attending SBRS field meetings do so at their own risk