

SUSSEX BOTANICAL RECORDING SOCIETY

Newsletter February 1994

Enclosed is the 1994 list of Field Meetings together with Paul Harmes' key for snowdrops and Alan Knapp's report on the West Sussex 1993 meetings. The report from Pat Donovan on the East Sussex 1993 meetings will be included in the May Newsletter.

Please note that the AGM will take place at **Staplefield Village Hall** at 1.30 p.m. on **Saturday 12th March 1994**. This earlier time is because we hope that after the official business of the AGM, Dr Francis Rose will be able to give his talk on under-recorded Sussex Plants (postponed from November due to illness).

If you have any nominations for the committee please let Louise Matcham have them before 5th March 1994.

The Autumn Get-Together will also be at **Staplefield Village Hall** at 10.30 a.m. on **12th November 1994**. Bring and Buy - plants, books etc. This year we will be able to make available soup and baked potatoes for lunch as well as coffee, and tea at the end of the afternoon.

Note from Tim Rich:

W.H. Coleman's flora of East Grinstead (1836). We hope to publish Coleman's flora, with a short biography of Coleman and a map of the area he covered, in time for the AGM. The flora is softback, A5 in size and contains 32 pages. It will cost £2.50 + 50p p&p, which includes a £1 donation to Plantlife. All profits from the sales will go to SBRS.

West Sussex Field Convener's 1993 Report

Once again 1993 field meetings produced some very interesting finds and (hopefully) a good deal of enjoyment amongst those who took part. The season started in March with Howard Matcham doing an excellent job of introducing us to the fascinating world of lichens in Bolney churchyard.

The woods around Broadbridge farm at Ashington proved to contain a number of ancient woodland indicators including some large colonies of early Purple Orchids (*Orchis Masculina*) and many Wild Service Trees (*Sorbus torminalis*). Some areas at the edge of these woods will be destroyed by the Ashington by-pass but fortunately large parts will remain intact.

Duncton Hill and Barlavington Down proved to have the usual woodland orchids on the way up and the splendid area of open downland at the top was the site of several specimens of *Orchis fuchsii* var *rhodochila* described in *Watsonia* in Feb 91. Later the meeting went to the site at Welches Common to see *Vaccinium oxycoccus*.

The search for Sheepshit (*Dasione montana*) in the sand pit near Coldwaltham proved to be more successful than we could have hoped, with many plants being found and great interest being shown by the owner, Mrs Bowerman, who made us most welcome. The interest continued in the afternoon with a visit to the sand pit at Coates to see the Red-tipped Cudweed (*Filago lutescens*) found there in 1992 by Frances Abrahams. Also present at the same site were Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*) and Small Cudweed (*Filago minima*). The finale to an already exciting day was provided by Tony Spiers who found a patch of Loose Silky Bent (*Apera spica-venti*) in a disused field nearby.

Our year in W.Sussex was completed with a tour of the haunts of Frederick Arnold in the expert hands of Nick Sturt. The morning which started on Thorney Island, produced 17 plants in or near the stations known to Arnold on the period 1881-1906. These included Slender Hare's-ear (*Bupleurum tenuissimum*), Golden Samphire (*Inula crithmoides*) and the two saltmarsh grasses, *Puccinellia distans* and *rupestris*. The morning ended with a visit to Arnold's cottage where we were warmly welcomed by the current occupants with delicious punch, sausages and caviar snacks (botanising can be such hard work)! The afternoon proved equally interesting with the discovery of large quantities of Wild Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*) on playing fields adjacent to a site discovered by Nick earlier this year.

On a final note, many thanks to the leaders of all our field meetings in 1993 and a request for volunteers to lead meetings and/or suggestions for places where we should hold future meetings.

Alan Knapp.

The occurrence of *Galanthus* species in Sussex

I have always felt that there was much more to the Snowdrops which occur in Sussex than just *G.nivalis*, or its double flowered form, *G.nivalis* "Flore Pleno".

Inspection of the record cards held by Mary and myself, and the churchyard records proved that no serious work had so far been undertaken.

My interest began last year whilst helping my friends, Ian and Paul Green with the compilation of records for their forthcoming Atlas Flora of Somerset. They decided to undertake a similar study of the Snowdrops in their county, and invited me to join them. A visit to the Mendip Council offices in Shepton Mallet, revealed the former residence of Janes Allen, a Victorian who was renowned for his collection of Snowdrops. Although the site had been "raided" many years ago, there was still quite a display to be seen.

I feel that most, if not all, SBRS members enjoy the early season splashes of white found in many churchyards and some shady banks, and I am willing to bet many of you make a special journey to see them each year! However, how many of you look beyond the wonderful sight before your eyes, and search out those that appear different.

To encourage you all to take a closer look in future, I have produced, what I hope is a simple key to the Snowdrops that I think you are most likely to encounter in Sussex.

Having embarked on this particular merry-go-round, I hope a few more people might come along for the ride.

It is fair to say that most Snowdrops, especially in churchyards, have been introduced, although the literature does conflict: CTW states "probably native in damp woods" whereas Stace says "usually if not always introduced".

Nevertheless, they do become established very quickly, so forming the familiar carpets we are used to seeing.

Undoubtedly *Galanthus nivalis* is the commonest taxon occurring, but care is needed as there are many different clones of *nivalis*. Some are small with almost upright narrow leaves, others can be large with broader leaves.

Hybrids are apparently fertile and tend to occur without both parents.

G.nivalis X *G.plicatus* is available from garden centres and nurseries and is often planted, becoming established relatively quickly. This taxon together with *G.elwesii* and *G.caucasicus* seem to appear with about the same regularity, and have much broader leaves than the *nivalis* group.

If you do start to look and problems arise, do not hesitate to contact me and I will endeavour to help, or go and look myself.

Furthermore, if you know of a site you think should be looked at and are too busy to do yourselves, again let me know.

I would like to establish which Snowdrops are growing in our churchyards first, and then progress to colonies which occur in other locations.

Lastly, don't forget to look and see if the Crocuses, Scillas or Irises are beginning to spread, a note on these species would also be very helpful.

Key to the Galanthus species
recorded in the British Isles.

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|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | - | Leaves folded around each other. (sk.1) | (2) |
| | - | Leaves not folded around each other. (sk.2) | (4) |
| 2 | - | Leaves bright glossy green (not glaucous) | <i>G. ikariae</i> |
| | - | Leaves glaucous | (3) |
| 3 | - | Flowers with green marking at apex of inner tepal. (sk.4) | <i>G. caucasicus</i> |
| | - | Flowers with green markings at apex and base of inner tepal (sometimes merging together) (sk.5 and 6) | <i>G. elwesii</i> |
| 4 | - | Leaves not revolute (folded back), flowers single or double. | <i>G. nivalis</i> |
| | - | Leaves only slightly revolute. | <i>G. nivalis</i> x <i>plicatus</i> |
| | - | Leaves distinctly revolute. (sk.3) | (5) |
| 5 | - | Inner tepals with green marking at the apex. (sk.4) | <i>G. plicatus</i> |
| | - | Inner tepals with green marking at apex and base (sometimes merging together). (sk.4 and 5) | <i>ssp plicatus</i> |
| | | | <i>G. plicatus</i> |
| | | | <i>ssp byzantinus</i> |

