



# Sussex Botanical Recording Society

## Newsletter

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### President's Message 2018

This time last year I claimed your indulgence on the grounds that it being my first President's message it would inevitably bear the hallmarks of the novice. This year I am only too aware that I have no such fall back. However, for the Flora Working Group there is no question as to what has dominated their landscape over the past twelve months. As you will have seen from the flyer, February is all set to see the culmination of what the society has achieved since the group of twelve botanists met in Francis Rose's room at King's College London on 26 November 1965. Nick has written a full report of progress with this exciting milestone elsewhere in the Newsletter.

For me, reading through the species accounts and in particular looking at the distribution maps has raised afresh all kinds of questions that I have continually found both intriguing and challenging. The answers to some of the questions become clearer by examining the wider British and European distributions, which are often very revealing. Why is *Ulex minor* restricted only to that area of south-east England as far west as Dorset? How do you explain the strange disjunct distribution of *Cardamine bulbifera* on the damp woodland clays of the Central Weald and the dry chalk of the Chilterns? Why is *Campanula trachelium* so uncommon on the chalk of East Sussex compared to its abundance in the west, whilst *Polygala calcarea* displays the opposite pattern? Equally, why is *Phyteuma orbiculare* so characteristic of the South Downs but almost absent on the North Downs whilst *Aceras* (okay, yes, I know) is the mirror image?

With the publication of the *Flora* imminent, last year I raised the question of 'What next'? One of the things that I suggested that we should consider was the next generation of botanists. In November I took myself to London for the Annual Exhibition Meeting of the BSBI, something that I hadn't done for quite some years. I was particularly interested to hear Mark Duffell's paper on the work of the society's Training and Education Committee, something that I think we could usefully learn more about. Certainly, raising

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### Secretarial Notes

#### Saturday 3rd March 2018

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 2.00 p.m. at Staplefield Village Hall. After the AGM, there will be information on this year's field meetings, and details of interesting records received in 2017. Please bring your digital photographs of Sussex plants to show to the meeting, which will finish with tea and cake. The hall will be available from 1.30 p.m. if you wish to bring any books or plants for sale.

#### Saturday 27th October 2018

The Autumn Get-together will be held at Staplefield Village Hall. The doors will be open from 10.00 a.m. The meeting will start promptly at 10.30 and will include a talk. 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 to show in the afternoon. Offers of homemade cakes are always welcome: they are greatly enjoyed.

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## Treasurer's Note

Welcome to 2018. Following preparation of the Society's Accounts for 2017 I shall update you more fully, in the May 2018 Newsletter, as to the state of the Flora Fund; hopefully as planned it will be severely depleted by then as the Flora in its full glory should be published and available for sale!

It is likely that subscriptions for 2018 will remain as for 2017 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 October. If anyone has not paid their subscription for 2017 - please now so do if you wish to remain a member. If you are uncertain of your subscription status please contact me and I shall let you know.

**Trevor Lording**

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the profile of plants is something that needs to be high on our agenda and enthusing young members is one of the most effective and rewarding ways of achieving that. For instance, when did you last hear a plant, any plant, mentioned on the BBC's Autumn Watch or Spring Watch?

Following the success of Helen Proctor's churchyard survey should we not also be thinking about other similar subjects to target? One that comes to my mind is village greens. Regular grazing of villagers' animals produced a distinctive flora that is now very rare. Some fine examples survive, for example in the New Forest. We know that remnants also survive in Sussex, if only as Chamomile on the cricket square!

I was very disappointed to have to miss Mike Hutching's talk at the Autumn Get-together on his work on the population of *Ophrys sphegodes* on Castle Hill. It is the classic example of a long-term study adapting the techniques of animal ecology to the study of a plant population. One of the things that it does underline is the importance of long-term studies. Perhaps, initiating some long-term recording might be something else that we could consider. Changes that are taking place on the coast, for instance, are something that certainly needs to be monitored. The area of arable that the Environment Agency converted into inter-tidal habitat at Rye Harbour in 2012 and is now developing into saltmarsh comes to mind. One characteristic of long-term recording is that one never knows at the outset how valuable to the future the outcomes might be. Newly elected to the BSBI council at the recent

AGM was Alastair Fitter, formerly Professor of Ecology at the University of York. Alastair's father was the distinguished naturalist and conservationist, Richard Fitter. More than fifty years ago, out of personal interest, Richard began to record each spring first flowering dates, long before anyone was talking about climate change. In 2002 father and son co-authored a now classic paper in *Science* on changes in flowering times over more than half a century as a presumed consequence of global warming.

This time last year I presumed to recommend a seasonal botanical read and finding myself similarly tempted venture to suggest that you might try Jonathan Silvertown's *An Orchard Invisible: a natural history of seeds*. Everything from mistletoe to beer. Happy New Year!

**David Streeter**

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## The SBRS Committee: an Appeal from the Chairman

As is the custom, a week in advance of the Autumn Get-together the Committee met in the upstairs room at Staplefield. Over coffee and biscuits we covered a wide-ranging agenda and once again I came away greatly impressed by the mix of individuals who contribute their ideas and their services to the Society. I am very optimistic about the future! We do, however, require a little more help. Firstly, at present we have no Secretary to attend to those details vital to the smooth-running of the organisation, such as communication within the Committee and with other bodies, and the organisation of the indoor meetings. It would also be desirable to acquire a West Sussex Field Meetings Convener to relieve the Chairman of his part-time job. Over a number of years I have discovered how rewarding it is to be part of the team which guides the Society and I would recommend it! However, to give practical assistance in the running of the SBRS it is not essential that a person stand for election to the Committee if for any reason it is his or her preference not so to do. For example, a volunteer to take on the technical role of setting up projection in the Hall or to organise the refreshments (which are so much appreciated by the membership) need not be a Committee member. If you feel you could come forward to fill, or share with another, these positions I would be very happy to discuss the possibilities with you with a view to ensuring that the Society continues to function efficiently. I am sure that I do not have to add in these enlightened times that neither teas nor technology is a gender-specific area!

**Nick Sturt**

## **The R in SBRS**

**by Nick Sturt**

The editor has suggested that I say a few words about Recording, the R-word in our Society. Firstly because, she points out, with the Flora about to be published some members might be tempted to assume that the work has all been done. But this is no time to lay aside the recording card and hand-lens, for the small-f flora of our county, native and exotic, does not stand still: change is natural and ongoing, and it is the business of this Society to monitor it. When the *Sussex Plant Atlas* was published in 1980 there was a feeling among some of the team that the Sussex Flora Society had fulfilled its function; while others looked forward to further field work in the company of fellow enthusiasts and reformed the SFS as the SBRS. And it was Mary Briggs who pointed out that as soon as the *Sussex Plant Atlas* was published there would be people queueing up to report what had been missed. So whatever laurels the SBRS may win from the new *Flora of Sussex*, resting on them is not the appropriate next step.

The second reason put forward by Frances for writing this note was our current lack of BSBI vice county recorders. The situation is unfortunate but it will not prevent the Society from performing its function. Paul was kind enough to postpone (again) his retirement as East Sussex Recorder until the end of the past year and has promised to process the 2017 records accrued. In West Sussex the other retiree, Mike, has also generously processed the SBRS field meetings cards. We shall continue to record as usual in 2018, and I hope to explain at the AGM in March exactly how records will be sent in, checked, stored and shared: the R will not suddenly drop out of SBRS. Meanwhile, of course, if there are any persons who would like to find out more about the job of BSBI vice county Recorder I am able to facilitate this if you contact me, and I know that Paul and Mike – and Ann Sankey from Surrey as well as officials in the BSBI – will be ready to support you as you learn the ropes.

## **The SBRS website**

**by Brad Scott**

Thank you to everyone who has contributed items for the Latest Sightings part of the website over the last year. It is a nice, important feature that helps to keep the content fresh and current, so I'd appreciate more submissions! The minimum requirement is a decent photo, a title and some text, though you can include more pictures and write as much as you like. Items do not only need to be about rare and interesting plants; some of our newer members may also like to

read pieces about relatively common plants as well. Once you have written something you can send it to me at: [webmaster@sussexflora.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@sussexflora.org.uk).

I'm steadily adding several of the articles from back issues of the newsletter to the website to make them a bit more accessible. You can find these under 'Resources'. If there any any of your personal favourites that are not yet there, let me know and I will get them online.

And finally, there is only one page on the site which requires a password, and that is the committee contact details, for which the password is: Primula.

## **The new Flora of Sussex**

**by Nick Sturt**

Sitting around the table in the bar of the Blacksmith's Arms at Adversane one evening in June 2004 were the six members of the Working Group delegated by the Committee of the SBRS to oversee the production of a new county Flora: Frances Abraham, Mary Briggs, Paul Harnes, Arthur Hoare, Alan Knapp and the author. It would be wrong to assume that the idea of a Flora proper (as distinct from an Atlas) had not entered the minds of several of those present before, but it was Paul who had initiated the project when as BSBI Recorder for East Sussex he began to hive off post-1999 records and conspired with Alan to do likewise in West Sussex. Together they made detailed plans, which included Alan's grand design of creating software to manage recording, and then approached the other four to see if they were willing to become involved. The whole scheme was laid before the full SBRS Committee and, with the encouragement of the then Chairman, Rod Stern, the official Flora Working Group (FWG) was formed. At the 2004 Autumn Get-together the enterprise was announced to the membership – who seemed more than eager to take up the challenge – so that 2005 saw the first dedicated recording effort and the implementation of Alan's IT-based management system with the web-site tetrad map at its heart. As most of you will know, in 2010 we lost Alan, and then in 2014 Mary. Around this time the project faltered a little but there was never any question of giving up. Co-opted onto the FWG at strategic stages were Mike Shaw, David Streeter, Trevor Lording and Brad Scott, and I must emphasise that without their sustained hard work as well as their different fields of expertise this project could not have reached completion.

Some 13 years and nearly 500,000 records after the beginning we are approaching the publication in early February 2018 of the *Flora of Sussex*, 80 years

after Lt-Col A.H. Wolley-Dod produced the last. At around 500 pages of 325 x 252mm, it is a substantial book, but not (we trust) one that will be too heavy to browse comfortably in the average botanist's fireside armchair. It is an informative book with authoritative introductory chapters on history, geology and soils, habitats and vegetation, changes in management and land-use, work in conservation, and a formal analysis of change in the flora of the county since the *Sussex Plant Atlas* of 1980. The species accounts themselves take up this theme of change since that work, and the distribution maps which accompany a very large number of these present the comparative data, a theme which was agreed right at the start of the project. The accounts present historical and ecological information and much besides, particularly in the case of those species special to Sussex; and, since the brief was to include more or less every species of vascular plant ever found in the wild in the county, there are some 2,750 taxa covered in all. It is also an attractive book, liberally illustrated with relevant diagrams and maps and photographs of Sussex plants in Sussex locations. Working harmoniously with Pisces Publications over the last year or so has resulted in the book that the FWG felt was wanted – a book which we hope you will want to own, and one that will surely be a source of reference and pleasure for botanists across the county and well beyond for a very long time.

I have described the book as 'attractive'. The Flora Working Group was impressed by two recent publications on Sussex, namely the *SOS Birds of Sussex* and Michael Blencowe and Neil Hulme's *Sussex Butterflies*. We recognised that taking the trouble to produce a work of some aesthetic appeal was not just worthwhile for its own sake but could bring the subject to the attention of a wider audience and stimulate interest in plants at a time when conservation needs all the supporters it can get. Peter Creed at Pisces – who published the butterfly volume – gently nudged us towards a cover picture featuring the coast. There were a number of other possibilities, for one of the great charms of Sussex for the naturalist is the variety of its beautiful and interesting habitats, so that we could have chosen to go with a photograph of, say, Amberley Wild Brooks or Ashdown Forest or Pevensey Levels. But one stretch of chalk cliffs and the only relatively untamed river estuary on the long coastline of Sussex were deemed, for want of a better word, 'iconic', and when approached Evan Jones was quietly confident that he could deliver a shot of *Seseli libanotis* (Moon Carrot) against a background of the Seven Sisters. The flyer depicting the cover of the book amply demonstrates his success. As for the title, there were far fewer options, although at a recent Recorders meeting at the

Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre I am told that specialists from other branches of natural history made their own suggestions, notably *The Insect Food Plants of Sussex* and *The Fungal Substrates of Sussex*!

Many of you reading this will have contributed records. Of course, there would not be a book if there had not been so many hours of work from SBRS members in the field and I have already mentioned the figure of nearly 500,000 records. The survey area covers all of West and East Sussex in terms of the botanical vice-counties established by Watson in the 19th century and still used by recorders today. But we go further to include parcels of land which are or have been part of West and East Sussex administratively including, for example, far-flung Griggs Green now in Hampshire and parts of the grounds of Scotney Castle otherwise in Kent. For the survey the natural choice of unit was the  $2 \times 2$  kilometre square or tetrad, essentially because the *Sussex Plant Atlas* adopted this unit and comparison was to be a key theme of the work. Latterly we are seeing a trend elsewhere towards monad recording: this certainly has its advantages but there is also a school of thought which believes that Sussex as a whole entity is just too large a county to be covered on this scale, given the number of field botanists available. The survey area for the Flora covers 1053 tetrads; and those who especially like statistics are directed to the introductory chapters where they will find more.

Many of you also made generous donations to the project, providing the wherewithal to produce something which we hope will live up to your expectations. By 2015 it was felt that we had achieved a satisfactory coverage of the survey area, in terms of both the degree and uniformity thereof. Thereafter we have been attending to checking, final drafts, illustrations and more checking; and there has been much to do since the first meeting with Peter Creed to bring everything together for publication. This has been a complex project. In the course of gathering data and preparing the volume there have inevitably been a large number of bodies and individuals who have made important contributions – extracting historical data, visiting herbaria, writing specialist sections, overseeing recording in hectads, sourcing and providing photographs and other graphic material and so on – and it is not surprising that the Acknowledgements are lengthy. We owe the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre, however, a huge debt, most particularly for the production by Andrew Lawson of the maps which form a vital part of the Flora.

Thus I commend this book to you. It has taken a great deal of time to produce but I am sure once it is in your hands you will agree that the effort has been worth it. Do take advantage of the pre-publication offer with or without the postage option and please, please, tell your friends!

## **Bryological activities in Sussex**

**by Brad Scott**

Botany doesn't stop in the winter months, and several of us continue recording as long as it's not pouring or there is snow on the ground. Before he handed over the reins as county recorder, Tom Ottley initiated a project to do more focussed tetrad recording of the bryophytes of Sussex. Though many parts of the county are well recorded, large areas had no records at all, so a small group of us are steadily remedying that. You can read about our progress on the blog: <https://sussexbryophytes.wordpress.com>

We are always keen to see new recorders and encourage and help with identification. You can either contact us to come along with one of our regular recording sessions, or come to one of the meetings of the South East group of the British Bryological Society. Further details are on the blog, and please do let us know if you are interested in coming along because they do sometimes get cancelled at short notice (because of rain or snow etc). The BBS meetings for the rest of the season are:

- Sunday 21 January 2018: The Mens
- Sunday 4 February 2018: Microscope workshop in Lewes
- Sunday 4 March 2018: Oldbury Hill and Ightham Common
- Sunday 25 March 2018: Sheffield Forest

Contact Sue Rubinstein ([sue@mrluk.com](mailto:sue@mrluk.com)) or Brad Scott ([brad.scott@brambletye-publishing.co.uk](mailto:brad.scott@brambletye-publishing.co.uk)) for more information.

## **Book review by Nick Sturt:**

***Sussex Butterflies: a Twenty-first Century Atlas***

**by Michael Blencowe and Neil Hulme**

Whenever I go to this book – and I have been to it often since it was published – I smile to recall snippets of Michael Blencowe's exuberant Powerpoint trailer. Once the visions pass – and I may need to seek help with this – there is a feast of facts on Sussex species. It is a great pleasure to sit down and read the extended accounts from which the enthusiasm of the two authors shines out. There is scholarship as well as entertainment, and this is a book that will do a lot of good by engaging those

with a passing interest in the subject and turning them into ardent butterfly fans and so committed conservationists. As I mutter elsewhere in this issue, we urgently need more and more people to promote conservation on the public agenda. Of course, Butterflies can do this better than most other insect groups – by the nature of things, not many casual country-lovers are going to find themselves swept off their feet by Earwigs or Caddis-flies. Not only is the text of this volume approachable and beautifully written, the photographs are apposite, attractive and often sublime. There are helpful features on identification – for example the differences between Common and Essex Skippers – and, in addition to distribution maps, locations are given where at the right time of the year you are most likely to be able to observe a particular species: on checking with Blencowe and Hulme it turned out not to be especially unusual to happen upon a Clouded Yellow at Cuckmere Haven in September as Elisabeth and I did. I can imagine enjoying reading and re-reading chunks of this book over the coming Winter, emerging in the Spring to track down species which have eluded me in seasons past. And I have yet to find the story about Michael's painful encounter with a barbed-wire fence to which he repeatedly alluded in his presentation.

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## **Obituary: Wendy Meadway 1932-2017)**

**by Roy Wells**

Wendy Meadway, who died in October 2017, was a member of the society for the last ten years and attended many field meetings during the period of recording for the new Flora. She was passionate about nature and the countryside, and the SBRS was only one of the many societies and groups to which she belonged and in which she took an active part. She was very knowledgeable about birds, butterflies and all aspects of nature. A committee member of the local Eastbourne branch of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, she regularly led walks in the district.

Born and raised in London, she attended art college and followed a long and distinguished career as a commercial artist and illustrator. Her range was wide, including technical subjects as well as all aspects of nature. She illustrated many children's books and wrote and illustrated a book of birds for children. She was prodigiously talented and her paintings, especially of flowers and birds were accurate and exquisite in their detail. Googling Wendy's name will give an idea of her work, many of her books still being in print.

Widowed and without children, she had no surviving relatives apart from cousins in Australia. The large number of people at her funeral was testament to her involvement with others and her capacity to make friends.

## **Obituary: Malcolm McFarlane 1935-2017**

**by Frances Abraham**

Malcolm was a longstanding member of the SBRS but in his later years became frail and probably few current members of the Society know much about this most interesting man. Born in Tunbridge Wells, he was keen on botany from an early age, enthused like so many of his generation by the Flower Fairy books, and then by a teacher at Tonbridge School. After National Service in Kenya he read Natural Sciences at Christ's College, Cambridge and specialised in botany. Malcolm at first intended to enter the Church, but decided instead to become a teacher. He taught for a short time as Assistant Biology Master at Northampton Grammar School. He joined the Northampton Natural History Society and in 1962 published a paper on Northamptonshire liverworts in the Journal of the Northampton Natural History Society and Field Club. Also in 1962 Malcolm met his wife Judith and they soon set sail for Nigeria. Malcolm was Senior Biology Master and later Senior Science Master at Ijebu-Ode Grammar School in Lagos. He enjoyed his years there and found time for botanising in the rainforests – he found a moss new to science which was named after him. However, by 1971 the McFarlanes had two small daughters, Clare and Frances, and the family returned to the UK to give them an English education. They lived in Hastings and then Buxted before moving to Blackboys in 1994. Malcolm continued to teach for some years and, discovering the Quakers, was accepted as a member of the Religious Society of Friends in 1986. He suffered from disabling ataxia, which he bore uncomplainingly, and ill-health forced his early retirement in 1989.

Malcolm continued to botanise for as long as possible, especially on Chailey Common and Ashdown Forest. His records appear in the *Sussex Plant Atlas* (1980) and the *Atlas of Sussex Mosses, Liverworts and Lichens* (1991), and he was a contributor to the *Flora of Ashdown Forest* (1996).

We shall miss Malcolm's quiet, friendly presence at our meetings, and we send sympathy to his family.

## **Field meeting reports 2017**

### **West Sussex VC13**

(Reports by Nick Sturt unless noted otherwise)

#### **April 12th Crawley Down and other churchyards**

(Leader: Arthur Hoare; Report: Arthur Hoare/Frances Abraham)

Ten members gathered at Crawley Down churchyard to contribute to the Churchyard Survey. Arthur had seen it in late summer last year, and came armed with an already impressively long species list. Brad informed us that no bryophytes had been recorded previously in the tetrad (TQ33N) and he rapidly improved the situation. Most of the churchyard consists of grassland, some short-cut, some rougher, but there are patches dominated by *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather) with a more heathy flora. Woodland species occur on the shaded margins. Of spring-flowering plants, we admired glorious drifts of *Anemone nemorosa* (Wood Anemone). *Carex caryophyllaea* (Spring Sedge) was common in short turf, along with *Conopodium majus* (Pignut). Both native *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell) and the introduced hybrid *H. x massartiana* were present here as in so many churchyards – a useful lesson in distinguishing the two. Overall, we managed to add a number of early species to the list. There was a rich flora of later-flowering species: we saw leaves of *Betonica officinalis* (Betony), *Succisa pratensis* (Devil's-bit) and *Solidago virgaurea* (Goldenrod) amongst others, and some of us vowed to return later in the year. We were impressed by the number of *Hieracium* (Hawkweed) rosettes present and Mike Shaw and Arthur returned in June to collect specimens. The locally frequent *H. sabaudum* (Autumn Hawkweed) occurs – but also a good number of *H. cheriense* (Cher Hawkweed), of which there had been no confirmed Sussex records for many years – a splendid find, unfortunately just too late to be reported in the new Flora.

We moved on to Turners Hill churchyard (TQ33H) for lunch – a fortunate choice as it is furnished with many seats and has a delightful view: it perches on the watershed between the Mole, Medway and Ouse. Although less species-rich than Crawley Down churchyard, we saw plenty to keep us interested. *Carex caryophyllaea* was common here too. Arthur showed us *Galanthus plicatus* (Pleated Snowdrop) and its hybrid with *G. nivalis* (Snowdrop) – it's easy when you know how.

The group then moved on to Ardingly churchyard which had a carpet of *Selaginella kraussiana*



(Krauss's Clubmoss) around many of the gravestones: this was a first for many of the recorders and was much admired. *Leontodon saxatilis* (Lesser Hawkbit) was there – I wonder, is there any churchyard where it is missing? We had fun sorting out the *Veronica hederifolia* agg. and found both ssp. *hederifolia* and ssp. *lucorum* to be present. It was great to see one or two of us guided by Brad's enthusiasm to take a look at a few mosses and liverworts. A good day and as always most enjoyable.

### **May 14th Weald and Downland Living Museum, Singleton**

(Leader: Elisabeth Sturt)

With the prestigious new Gateway Project complete, the Open Air Museum has been relaunched as the Living Museum. For the 13 members attending, the morning's task was to survey the well-wooded north-facing slopes, starting at the reconstructed Anglo-Saxon Hall house and following a path uphill. Along this route were set attractive waymarkers depicting some of the trees to be found, perhaps the most noteworthy being *Carpinus betulus* (Hornbeam), which is not usually associated with the Downs in Sussex. There were quite a number of mature trees and abundant evidence of regeneration, and our President was a little reluctant to rule out the population being native, citing the presence of the species on the chalk in East Kent. Regarding the ground flora, there were some species characteristic of ancient woodland such as *Lysimachia nemorum* (Yellow Pimpernel), *Oxalis acetosella* (Wood-sorrel) and *Veronica montana* (Wood Speedwell). Visitors from East Sussex enjoyed *Galium odoratum* (Sweet Woodruff) in quantity, and all appreciated a scattering in one area of *Neottia nidus-avis* (Bird's-nest Orchid). Bryophytes received a degree of attention, mainly as part of the President's ongoing project of educating the Chairman, who managed to recognise *Ctenidium molluscinum*, *Thuidium tamariscinum* and a few more.

Lunch overlooking the Market Square was followed by a tour of three of the gardens recreated to make historical matches with their houses: Walderton, Poplar Cottage and Bayleaf. The priority here was to record weed species, but since many of these had their uses in households past it was not always easy to determine which were more crop relic than uninvited guest: this made for an extremely interesting afternoon. Members were able to compare the fruits of two *Valerianella* (Cornsalad) species: *V. locusta* was plentiful and appeared to be in cultivation, whereas the little *V. carinata* present looked more like a genuine weed. Had there been a prize it would have been Judith's for *Geranium*

*rotundifolium* (Round-leaved Crane's-bill) – as it was, she merely added to the Brownie points already gained by bringing husband David to his first West Sussex meeting. Around 90 species were recorded in each of the two sessions, with only a very limited number common to both habitats – the most notable, perhaps, being *Galium odoratum*. The Museum proved a lovely place in which to wander remote from the cares of the world, full of birdsong, history and the sort of architecture that fits so well into the natural environment. Our thanks go to the management and to Elisabeth for setting up the meeting.

### **May 31st Shoreham Beach**

(Leaders: Jacky Woolcock/Nick Sturt; Report: Nevil Hutchinson)

Shoreham Beach Local Nature Reserve (LNR) was identified as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance in 1992, designated a LNR in 2002 and declared as such in 2006. It consists of just over 11 hectares (27 acres) of shingle beach, the vegetation of which includes some rare plants that were on the 'hit list' drawn up by the organisers. 17 SBRs members braved the beautiful weather to meet at Shoreham Fort car park at the easternmost end of the reserve. Jacky had kindly organised free parking for both cars and bicycles. At the appointed time (traditionally ten minutes after the advertised start time) we were briefed by Nick until Jacky led the charge over the grassy bank in search of unusual clovers. *Trifolium scabrum* (Rough Clover) and *Medicago polymorpha* (Toothed Medick) were soon bagged, but we dipped on *Trifolium suffocatum* (Suffocated Clover). On the way to the beach to start the formal recording, a nice patch of what was perhaps the 'star' of the meeting, *Trifolium stellatum* (Starry Clover), was found on the bank around the car park where we'd congregated before the start. The shingle was dominated by large stands of flowering *Senecio cineraria* (Silver Ragweed), *Crambe maritima* (Sea Kale), *Centranthus ruber* (Red Valerian) and *Erigeron glaucus* (Seaside Daisy), interspersed with *Glaucium flavum* (Yellow Horned-poppy) and *Malva arborea* (Tree Mallow). *Cymbalaria muralis* (Ivy-leaved Toadflax) and *Ameria maritima* (Thrift) were also abundant. Less showy were frequent clumps of *Beta vulgaris* (Sea Beet) just coming into flower. *Catapodium marinum* (Sea Fern-grass) and *Vulpia bromoides* (Squirrel-tail Fescue) were amongst the *Poaceae*.

Areas of short matted vegetation were scrutinised thoroughly by members adopting the 'botanical prayer' position (face to the floor, hand lens to eye, backside to sky). Prayers were answered with *Sagina apetala* ssp. *erecta* (Annual Pearlwort) and

*Cerastium diffusum* (Sea Mouse-ear). Less taxing to observe was the stand of *Silene italicum* (Italian Catchfly), misidentified in the past as *S. nutans* (Nottingham Catchfly). Unfortunately this had largely gone over, but the carpophore:capsule ratio was discernible. *Papaver rhoeas* (Common Poppy) was actually an exciting record, it not having been recorded for some time. *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese Honeysuckle), another garden escape, was putting on an impressive display. *Gladiolus communis* ssp. *byzantinus* (Eastern Gladiolus) was another obvious garden escape that caught the eye.

Having ploughed down the foreshore at a formidable 0.2 mph, the suggestion of lunch was accepted without dispute. The aspect was lovely, with the hot sun sparkly on the calm sea and a gentle breeze to prevent over-heating. The afternoon produced *Vicia lutea* (Yellow Vetch), *Trifolium striatum* (Knotted Clover), *Ranunculus bulbosus* (Bulbous Buttercup), *Solanum dulcamara* ssp. *marinum* (Bittersweet) and possibly *Sol ardeat* (Sunburn) for those less assiduous about sunscreen application. Other natural history observations included an attractive Lackey Moth (*Malacosoma neustria*) caterpillar and several glimpses of the naturalised Italian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis sicula*).

The weather, company and plants all conspired to make this an excellent day. *Ranunculus bulbosus* (Bulbous Buttercup) turned out to be the only new species.

## June 24th The Pools, Henfield

(Leader: Nick Sturt)

The two meadows at The Pools down the road from Woods Mill had been flagged up by Ben Rainbow some four years ago but for various reasons it had not been possible to arrange a visit until this year. Mike had been due to lead this but had double-booked himself with a school reunion and so while we pottered pleasantly among Ringlets and Marbled Whites he was doubtless reminiscing about the fragrance of boiled cabbage and the allure of Matron's comely ankle. A couple of days earlier Mike and the author had carried out a rather disappointing recce but, even if badly under-grazed, the fields retained some vestiges of their former glory, vestiges which on the day the team of ten were able to refind, notably *Achillea ptarmica* (Sneezewort – Nevil enthusiastically demonstrated that the plant lived up to its name), *Carex caryophyllaea* and *leporina* (Spring and Oval Sedge), and *Trifolium medium* (Zigzag Clover). Had our own event been school-based it would have been Ady who would have carried off all the Speech Day prizes for she trotted back and forth constantly with samples that

we had missed and it was she who pointed out that the odd specimen of *Schedonorus pratensis* (Meadow Fescue) in our hands was in fact x *Schedolium loliaceum*, the hybrid with *Lolium perenne* (Rye-grass).

Over lunch Sue D. made a wish to be transported back to Henfield Common... and so we were! It was an intensive afternoon which benefited from the pooled expertise of the group and, where this failed, the comprehensive resources of Priscilla's portable reference library. Three spikes of *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) by the roadside provided diversion before a spell of some serious graminology – abundant *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath Grass), patches of *Bromus commutatus* (Meadow Brome), some *Molinia caerulea* (Purple Moor-grass), *Schedonorus pratensis* and the hybrid with *Lolium* again and, to Sue's even greater delight, *Agrostis vinealis* (Brown Bent). Then into damper territory with many of the specialities known to Borrer: *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel), *Carex disticha* (Brown Sedge), *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid), *Epilobium palustre* (Marsh Willowherb). Gareth pounced on a single flowering stem of *Hypericum elodes* (Marsh St. John's-wort), Steven drew attention to *Rumex* x *pratensis* and all was well with the world... The activity proved so absorbing that it was nearing 5 o'clock when it was felt time to return to the cars. Sitting in the bar of the White Hart afterwards, Elisabeth and the author reflected on the botany of the day. We may also have speculated just a little about Mike's school nickname.

## 9th August Amberley Wild Brooks

(Leaders: Frances Abraham/Sue Denness; Report: Frances Abraham)

Despite a dire weather forecast a good crowd of members gathered at Rackham to look at the ditches and wet grassland of The Hales, the eastern end of Amberley Wild Brooks. This interesting area was in the 1990s one of the most species-rich parts of the Wild Brooks: the northern ditches cross peaty ground adjacent to the acid Lower Greensand but calcareous water flows in from the south and supports additional species. Although cattle were present, the meadows and ditch margins were in general under-grazed, so some species known here were either not found or were scarce. Nonetheless, we saw a fair collection of the plants for which this area is known. Aquatics included the now uncommon introduction *E. canadensis* (Canadian Waterweed). *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit) and *Sagittaria sagittifolia* (Arrowhead) were in flower. *Potamogeton acutifolius* (Sharp-leaved Pondweed) is remarkably indifferent to water quality at Amberley and flourishes along the Greatham parish boundary in the heavily iron-stained



water of Smith's Ditch, accompanied by *P. natans* (Broad-leaved Pondweed) and *P. trichoides* (Hairlike Pondweed). Several sedges were in evidence, including *Carex vesicaria* (Bladder Sedge) and *C. rostrata* (Bottle Sedge). Both *Sparganium erectum* (Branched Bur-reed) and the less common *S. emersum* (Unbranched Bur-reed) grew with *Glyceria maxima* (Reed Sweet-grass), *Lythrum salicaria* (Purple Loosestrife) and other taller species along the channel sides. The rare *Leersia oryzoides* (Cut-grass) is the star of the show along ditch margins and is plentiful by Smith's Ditch. Almost the entire UK population occurs in the Arun catchment from Amberley up to Plaistow and Horsham. We saw numerous spikes of its glossy pale yellow flowers: formerly considered a shy flowerer, it seems to come out more often of late - this year in July, a full month earlier than normal. Before we were finally defeated by torrential rain we managed to see a number of plants of the uncommon *Stellaria palustris* (Marsh Stitchwort), for which this may now be the best part of the Wild Brooks. After much searching a little *Persicaria minor* (Small Water-pepper) was found in one of the few patches of well-grazed marginal vegetation on the bank of Smith's Ditch. So, although we were only on the Brooks for a short time and explored only a few hundred metres of ditch, our efforts were not wasted. But it was a hunched and dripping party which shambled back to the cars.

We gratefully thank the RSPB for kind permission to visit this part of their Amberley Reserve.

### August 20th Graffham Common

(Leaders: Nick Sturt & Dawn Nelson)

Ten members converged on the revised venue of Graffham Common and set about the Sussex Wildlife Trust domain in SU91J with aplomb. Much management work is being done on the Lower Greensand heaths of W. Sussex and this portion is responding well, with *Drosera rotundifolia* and *D. intermedia* (Round-leaved and Intermediate Sundews) in the damper spots amid gorgeous patches of *Calluna* (Heather) and our two species of *Erica* (Cross-leaved Heath and Bell Heather). A feature of the day were the impromptu study groups which set themselves up – to sort out *Agrostis canina* and *A. vinealis* (Velvet and Brown Bent), *Carex binervis* and *C. laevigata* (Green-ribbed and Smooth-stalked Sedge), and *Juncus acutiflorus* and *J. articulatus* (Sharp-flowered and Jointed Rush). One or two persons present, who had better remain nameless, declared themselves 'lazy botanists' preferring what they called 'jizz'. Doubtless there are things to be said on both sides although it may not be wise to do so here or indeed anywhere else. James meanwhile was sensibly avoiding controversy by engaging in

what is now apparently called pan-recording, his botanical attention being distracted by the myriad insects of the heath, a proportion of which were surprised to find themselves deftly pootered. Sticking to the botanical brief, Ron derived quiet amusement from presenting to the leaders the tiniest possible specimens of trees. And so the morning passed quickly with more than 100 species of the plant kingdom ticked off. Post prandial sherbet lemons were provided by Rachel and we were off again, led by Frances to a boggy region where we were too late to find any traces of *Eriophorum vaginatum* (Hare's-tail Cottongrass) but caught up with the *Carex echinata* (Star Sedge) which had been on the wish-list.

The next part of the day was over the road in SU91P. Here a rough carpet of *Molinia caerulea* led uphill and at its edges sheltered a number of species not seen earlier, such as *Ulex minor* (Dwarf Gorse) and an *Eleocharis* (Spike-rush) which took the fancy of both Dawn and Sue D. Again a total of 100 species was achieved with ease – ease not being the sole prerogative of the lazy botanists! A sandy field of maize back in SU91J provided the last challenge – not the negotiation of the tall gate so much as the array of arable weeds. A shrinking violet of a *Geranium pusillum* (Small-flowered Crane's-bill), some heroically-awned *Echinochloa crus-galli* (Cockspur) and a *Polygonum* (Knotgrass) that even a lazy botanist would take the trouble to inspect. Sue and Dawn, on the other hand, working independently, proved their specimens to be the elusive *P. rurivagum* (Corn Knotgrass). They were still smiling as they drove off in their cars. Their smiles must have lasted long into the evening for after careful examination in their homes they both reported the *Eleocharis* to be multicaulis (Many-stalked Spike-rush).

### East Sussex VC14

(Reports by the leaders)

#### 10th May Cowden and Holtze

(Leaders: Geoffrey Kitchener/Brad Scott)

Gorgeous sunshine greeted the nineteen assembled members of the Kent and Sussex groups for our annual cross-border meeting. Progress out of Cowden village was very leisurely as unusual garden escapes were noted, and included a diversion to inspect the extensive timber framing under the tower of the church, as well as useful lessons in differentiating *Veronica* species. Crossing the Kent Water meant that the Sussex recording task could start, though was complicated by the relatively small area we covered spanning four different tetrads. Many banks included

sizeable populations of *Tellima grandiflora* (Fringecups), and *Polystichum aculeatum* (Hard Shield-fern) was observed on both sides of the Kent Water by Kitford Bridge, though a putative *P. x bicknellii* (*Polystichum setiferum* x *aculeatum*) was only found on the Kent side. Permission had been obtained to explore around Furnace Pond, which added several new tetrad records, and the highlight was *Carex x boenninghausiana*, the hybrid between Greater Tussock Sedge and Remote Sedge (*C. paniculata* x *remota*) though it too was only found on the Kent side. However, considering how frequent the two parent species are along this stretch of Kent Water it is possible that it could be found in Sussex. By the end of the day a considerable number of new tetrad records had been added to the small Sussex fragments of TQ44, and the Kent group closed the meeting with their traditional fare of tea and cake in the car park.

### 24th May St Dunstan's Farm, Warbleton

(Leaders: Jacqueline Rose/Judy Clark/Ellen Campbell)

The sun shone, the clouds were few, and it was very warm for late May. A select group of eleven met to explore meadows at St Dunstan's Farm, meadows still managed traditionally and one of the few areas of unimproved species-rich grassland remaining in the Weald. They are indescribably beautiful. Tiny white stars of *Linum catharticum* (Fairy Flax) and Milkworts in colours of white, pink and blue (*Polygala serpyllifolia* and *P. vulgaris*) were interspersed with patches of pink *Pedicularis sylvatica* (Lousewort) while yellow Buttercups and white Ox-eye daisies danced in the breeze. Early orchids, including *Anacamptis morio* (Green-winged Orchid), were already over but *Dactylorhiza fuschii* (Common Spotted Orchid) and *D. maculata* (Heath Spotted Orchid) were in full flower, enabling us to compare their markings, and a few *Neottia ovata* (Twayblade) added their delicate spikes to the mix. We saw ten different sedges including the rare *Carex pallescens* (Pale sedge) and *C. panicea* (Carnation sedge) with its fat utricles, the latter made memorable for some us by Helen's mnemonic - pregnant panicea! Then there was great excitement when we found an apparently dioecious sedge. Could it really be *C. dioica*? No, just a misbehaving *C. laevigata* (Smooth-stalked Sedge). Not to find *C. pulicaris* (Flea Sedge) was disappointing (but it is still there and was seen in early June) but was more than made up for by half a dozen plants of the East Sussex speciality, *Phyteuma spicatum* (Spiked Rampion), just coming into bloom. Many thanks to David and June Hobden for their hospitality, not least the provision of tea and coffee making facilities.

### 14th June The Crumbles

(Leader: Matthew Berry)

There was a time when the leader wondered whether he would be guiding a botanical field meeting or something altogether more nostalgic, his role reduced to pointing out where such and such a species used to grow. In the event, the gods of "progress" half-smiled on us, and enough floristic interest remained to warrant a repeat of a walk made in July 2016 with members of the Hastings Botanical Group. Attendees who had participated in that earlier walk could not but be struck by the sheer speed of change however.

The first plant of interest was *Linum bienne* (Pale Flax) growing on thinly vegetated, impoverished ground by Atlantic Drive, a few of its delicate blue petals just hanging on. We were less fortunate with *Anagallis monelli* (Garden Pimpernel) which, having shed all of its petals, proved surprisingly difficult to find on the flat, weedy ground, sandwiched between a car park and a cycle path opposite Bates Wharf.

The next stop further along Harbour Quay was a man-made shingle ridge which, besides bearing numerous tussocks of *Cortaderia selloana* (Pampas-grass), has more surprisingly been colonised by damp-loving plants, including *Juncus* (Rush) and *Carex* (Sedge) species, *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed), and a large, probably growing, stand of *Calamagrostis epigejos* (Wood Small-reed). A single plant of *Descurainia sophia* (Flixweed) provided some interest in a flowerbed of the Harbour Medical Centre, a few just recognisable plants of *Lamium hybridum* (Cut-leaved Deadnettle) clinging on around the base of its stem. The stony ground on the north side of Pacific Drive has now been divided in two, the easterly half partitioned off and under development. The low, sandy bank which forms the beginning of this ground, however, was more or less untouched, and we found *Galium parisiense* (Wall Bedstraw) exactly where it had been seen the previous year. *Verbena rigida* (Slender Vervain) was flowering well, while the flowers of *Malva alcea* (Greater Musk-mallow), growing fifty metres away, were still tightly in bud. On the other side of the bank we noted the shiny green, patch-forming leaves and curious globular flower heads of *Acaena novae-zelandae* (Pirri-pirri-bur). The sandy, gravelly substrate here, criss-crossed by dog walkers, is clearly to its liking, the number of plants having exploded since it was first observed in 2014: the dry open conditions of the site are threatened by this species almost as much as by new housing. The flowering and fruiting remains of *Trifolium resupinatum* (Reversed Clover) were seen on the verge of Old Martello Road as we headed southwards in the direction of the beach.

On the beach itself the main interest was also provided by legumes, *Melilotus indicus* (Small Melilot), *Medicago polymorpha* (Toothed Medick), *Trifolium scabrum* (Rough Clover), *T. striatum* (Knotted Clover), and a decidedly incongruous population of *T. hybridum* (Alsike Clover), as well as one or two self-sown *Cordyline australis* (Cabbage-palms). The final leg of the walk took in a single plant of *Polycarpon tetraphyllum* (Four-leaved Allseed), and scattered plants of *Juncus gerardii* (Saltmarsh Rush) on dampish, sandy, saline ground close to the shops and eateries of the Waterfront.

I hope the ten members who attended thought it had been worth the journey, however far. It was certainly a great pleasure to show them some of the botanical riches of this area while they still remain.

### 8th July Pevensey Levels

(Leader: Jane Birch)

A fine warm day with some sunshine saw a good turn-out of fourteen people to White Dyke Farm on the Pevensey Levels to look at macrophytes in some of the ditches owned by Mr. & Mrs Walker. They kindly let us park some cars in their garden and gave permission for the group to wander off the footpaths. Jane gave a brief introduction to the Pevensey Levels and explained that Natural England would welcome more information for this sector.

A really nice assemblage of species was found including three new records for the tetrad. The first ditch was full of the nationally declining *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit) and *Oenanthe fistulosa* (Tubular Water-dropwort) both of which were in full flower. The group looked at how dominant the invasive non-native *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* (Floating Pennywort) can be in a ditch when it gets established, and Jane explained the investigative work being done to try and control the spread. At the next two ditches Jane got out her grapnel and people were able to look closely at some submerged species including *Potamogeton pectinatus* (Fennel Pondweed), the nationally vulnerable *Potamogeton acutifolius* (Sharp-leaved Pondweed) and *Hottonia palustris* (Water-violet). All the native duckweeds were found with the exception of *Wolffia arrhiza* (Rootless Duckweed) which is usually found further east on the Levels. A number of emergents were also found, including both *Alisma plantago-aquatica* (Water-plantain) and *A. lanceolata* (Narrow-leaved Water-plantain), and *Butomus umbellatus* (Flowering-rush).

As we moved from ditch to ditch a rota was set up to retrieve Jane's walking pole and grapnel, at least one of which had been left behind each time!

Over lunch in a lovely hay meadow Jane got out some samples of aquatic species, collected previously in case we didn't find them. These included *Potamogeton crispus* (Curled Pondweed), *P. natans* (Broad-leaved Pondweed) and *Berula erecta* (Lesser Water-parsnip).

The afternoon session yielded the native *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort), Greater Bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris*) and the alga *Chara globularis* (Fragile Stonewort). The highlight of the day seemed to be the discovery of a single *Utricularia* flower until we headed back along a final ditch to discover extensive beds of the beautiful Bladderwort in flower, which resulted in much daring bankside photography! We made 92 records from TQ60E.

### 19th July Michelham Priory

(Leader: Helen Proctor)

Ten members met in the car park where the head gardener, James Neal, gave a brief introduction to the grounds. Parts of the ground are now in Higher Level Stewardship and there is an increased interest in gaining more knowledge of all aspects of the natural environment.

We walked along the strip of semi-natural ancient woodland outside the moat where we recorded *Poa nemorosa* (Wood Meadow-grass) and *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* ssp. *montanum* (Yellow Archangel). We spent the rest of the morning exploring areas within the moat. The margins of the moat hosted many native plants including *Bidens cernua* (Nodding Bur Marigold) and *Lythrum salicaria* (Purple Loosestrife). However, *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan Balsam) and *I. capensis* (Orange Balsam) are also rampant in some areas. Despite earlier dredging, two aquatic plants were recorded. These were *Potamogeton obtusifolius* (Blunt-leaved Pondweed) and *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort). *Menyanthes trifoliata* (Bogbean) is established in a small pond. Several planted meadows have native species well-established. The flower and shrub beds also host many native species and archeophytes although some are less welcome to the volunteer gardeners who struggle to eradicate surplus *Aegopodium podagraria* (Ground-elder)! *Erigeron karvinskianus* (Mexican Fleabane) is present on the walls of the Priory. One plant of *Malva neglecta* (Dwarf Mallow) is long-lived, sharing a space with the roots of a grape vine. *Polypodium interjectum* (Intermediate Polypody) was found near the Priory, later confirmed by Mike Shaw.

After lunch, we explored the fields outside the moat but little of interest was added. A total of 224 species were recorded in two tetrads, TQ50P and U.

## 8th August Firehills, Hastings

(Leaders: Ellen Campbell/Judy Clark/Jacqueline Rose)

It was a day of cloud and sunshine. Nine of us walked over the Firehills to the survey site, which gave everyone a chance to see the extent of the work carried out by contractors with diggers in 2015. The aim of our survey was to monitor management operations, and the date had been chosen for the maximum flowering and recognition of heathland species. However the weather pattern had wound up the season prematurely, leaving us with quite a lot of hay to ponder over! We looked at two areas of regenerating heathland. Heather cuttings from Brad's home patch, Ashdown Forest, had been scattered on one of the survey plots. There wasn't a lot of difference between the two, and Michael Woodhouse, who has known the area for decades, remembered that many of the species we found had grown on the Firehills before the gorse crowded and shaded them out. *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather), *Erica cinerea* (Bell Heather) and *Ulex minor* (Dwarf Gorse) have appeared and are thriving, as well as *Cuscuta epithymum* (Dodder) which shows a predilection for *Teucrium scorodonia* (Wood Sage). It would be useful if it helped keep the *Ulex europaea* (Gorse) down. There is a wet flush which has attracted *Carex demissa* (Common Yellow-sedge), *C. binervis* (Green-ribbed Sedge) and *C. flacca* (Glaucous Sedge), as well as *Ranunculus flammula* (Lesser Spearwort), *Typha latifolia* (Bulrush), *Iris pseudacorus* (Yellow Iris), *Juncus bulbosus*, *J. conglomeratus* and *J. articulatus* (Bulbous, Compact and Articulated Rushes), *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort) and *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush). The latter is also forming a dense springy turf of dwarf plants by the footpaths. In all we recorded 69 species in the relatively small area. Brad surveyed the mosses, and found eight typical heathland species. A Wall Brown butterfly caused a brief excitement, and proved a first for the tetrad. Lunchtime in sunshine with views over the English Channel was blissful. Many thanks to all our helpers, especially those who had travelled a long way. We were particularly pleased to have Sian Matthews join us, who had come all the way from Nottingham.

## 2nd September Chailey Commons

(Leader: Jackie Hutson)

A brilliant blue sky and bright sunshine welcomed the assembled group of 18 people on Romany Ridge. Several members of the group were new and one was an ex-resident of Sussex, now living in Wales. We crossed the road to Pound Common and headed south-west to a sheltered damp hollow. On the way we admired several individuals of the scarlet but

foul-smelling Devils' Fingers (*Clathrus archerii*), a fungus that arrived from Australia with troops in 1914. Then down to the hollow where we paid homage to 16 spikes of *Gentiana pneumonanthe* (Marsh Gentian). Much photography took place. On from there through a narrow path flanked with *Ulex minor* (Dwarf Gorse), *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather), *Erica tetralix* (Cross-leaved Heath) and *E. cinerea* (Bell Heather) and then to a dampish area where there were many leaf rosettes of *Cirsium dissectum* (Meadow Thistle). They are susceptible to grazing but the Longhorn cattle on the Common had not grazed them down. The ranger told me that some had flowered in late May. This thistle does not repeat-flower as do other *Cirsium* spp. Despite the lack of thistle flowers this small area was interesting in having a good population of *Achillea ptarmica* (Sneezewort) and some Milkworts (*Polygala serpyllifolia* as well as *P. vulgaris*). Across the road on Romany Ridge we recorded four Rush species and plenty of *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort) in an area that had been cleared and scraped some years ago. Steven found some plants of *Dryopteris borreii* (Borrer's Male-fern) in the adjacent woodland as well as other ferns, and Gill, our visitor from Wales, found a tiny plant of *Genista anglica* (Petty Whin) on the path that led us to another wet area by a stream. Some extradisciplinary activity by Brad yielded a rare spider and two springtails, one of which was new to the county, only, Brad remarks modestly, because no-one records this group! There was also some Bryophyte identification taking place but no new taxa were added to the records that the South East Bryophyte Group made last year.

The day ended in the far north of Romany Ridge where we indulged our senses on the perfume of *Agrimonia procera* (Fragrant Agrimony) and debated an unusual looking *Euphrasia* (Eyebright) which could have been a rare species but turned out to be *E. nemorosa* (Common Eyebright) after all. After the group dispersed Elisabeth and Nick Sturt went off to try to refind *Epilobium palustre* (Marsh Willow-herb) but instead found a boggy area that we hadn't come across on our wanderings, and added *Drosera rotundiflora* (Common Sundew), *Eleocharis multicaulis* (Many-stalked Spike-rush) and *Narthecium ossifragum* (Bog Asphodel), bringing our total number of taxa up to 126.

The Field Meeting Convenors would like to thank Geoffrey Kitchener and the SBRS members who led informative and enjoyable meetings, and Brad, Judy, Matthew, Jane, Jacqueline, Jacqui, Nevil, Arthur and Frances for writing excellent reports.

**Helen Proctor and Nick Sturt**

## Churchyard and cemetery recording in 2017

### by Helen Proctor

A field meeting in April to churchyards at Crawley Down, Turners Hill and Ardingly kick-started the botanical season. Members were able to test their vegetative identification skills and help record many less common woodland and heathland species. Exploration of the churchyard at All Saints, Crawley Down was particularly enjoyable and rewarding with 140 taxa being recorded.

Many thanks are due to the members who committed their time to take part. Much useful data has resulted from your recording efforts.

The table below shows the 2017 records from sites with two or more visits by the end of September.

	E. Sussex	W. Sussex
<b>Total records</b>	7017	7717
<b>Participating members</b>	21	12
<b>Sites with two or more visits</b>	65	72
<b>Records per site</b>	46-214	43-170

Many gaps in the distribution have been filled, especially in central West Sussex and further north and east in East Sussex. A total of 286 churchyards and cemeteries have been recorded in two years but there are still many more sites to visit! The number of visits at different times of year influences the number of records, as does the variety of habitats and size of the sites. Congratulations go to Matthew Berry who made 13 visits to Ocklynge Cemetery throughout the Spring and Summer, gaining 214 records including 30 grass species!

Analysis, so far, indicates that the site with the most ancient woodland indicators is St. Leonard's Churchyard at Hollington, near Hastings, commonly known as 'Church-in-the Wood'. Surprisingly, this and only one other site had *Lysimachia nemorum* (Yellow Pimpernel). Iping Marsh burial ground also fared well with eight species including *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine). Sites which scored highly for unimproved grassland indicator species include the churchyards at Burwash Common, Coolhurst, Crowborough St. Johns, Haywards Heath, Lower Beeding and Ocklynge Cemetery.

Further analysis from the records and the survey forms will be available at the AGM in March 2018. If you have not already done so, **please do send a survey form or notes in your own words** on the management of the churchyards or cemeteries that you have visited.

The table below includes a random selection of less frequently recorded taxa in churchyards and cemeteries.

<i>Adoxa moscatellina</i>	Ewhurst Green
<i>Arum italicum</i> ssp. <i>neglectum</i>	Clymping
<i>Asplenium</i> (five species)	Fittleworth
<i>Campanula rapunculoides</i>	Ditchling
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Lewes Cemetery; Lodsworth
<i>Campanula trachelium</i>	Bramber; Duncton RC; East Lavington
<i>Carduus crispus</i>	Coombs
<i>Carex arenaria</i>	Camber
<i>Cerastium semidecandrum</i>	Burton Park, Duncton
<i>Cirsium acaule</i>	Eastbourne (St. Mary's)
<i>Clinopodium ascendens</i>	Hollington (St Leonard's)
<i>Euphorbia amygdaloides</i>	Cowfold RC
<i>Euphrasia officinalis</i> ssp. <i>anglica</i>	Fairlight
<i>Glyceria fluitans</i>	Ardingly
<i>Helianthemum nummularia</i>	East Marden
<i>Hieracium argilaceum</i>	East Lavington
<i>Hordeum secalinum</i>	Cowfold Burial Ground; East Guldeford

<i>Isolepis setacea</i>	Burwash Common
<i>Lysimachia nemorum</i>	Easebourne; Hollington (St. Leonard's)
<i>Montia fontana</i>	Camber; Langney Cemetery
<i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i>	Fairlight (St. Andrew's)
<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>	Crowborough (St. John's); Fairlight
<i>Polypodium cambricum</i>	Amberley
<i>Polypodium interjectum</i>	Parham
<i>Polypogon viridis</i>	Langney Cemetery
<i>Rumex pulcher</i>	Parham; Hastings (All Saints)
<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>	West Wittering
<i>Saxifraga tridactylites</i>	Horsham (St. Mary's); Midhurst; Petworth (St. Mary's); Camber
<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>	Pyecombe
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Westhampnett
<i>Thymus polytrichum</i>	Jevington; Lewes Cemetery
<i>Torilis nodosa</i>	Clymping
<i>Trifolium fragiferum</i>	Ocklynge Cemetery
<i>Trifolium subterraneum</i>	Pulborough; Guestling
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Fishbourne
<i>Urtica dioica</i> ssp. <i>galeopsifolia</i>	Horsham (Hills Cemetery)
<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	Easebourne; East Lavington
<i>Wahlenbergia hederacea</i>	Crowborough (St. John's)

### Onwards in 2018

- The list on the website of Diocesan churchyards and cemeteries not yet recorded will be updated. There may be churchyards of other denominations as well as more cemeteries worth recording.
- Please notify Helen of your offer to record a site in order to avoid duplicated effort. Let her know in good time if you are unable to follow up your offer.
- Please aim to make at least three visits to the churchyard or cemetery to include a Spring visit up to May 31st, a mid-summer visit in June or July, and a late summer visit in August or September.
- Please enter records electronically on the new Excel ver.1.7, downloadable from:  
<http://www.sussexflora.org.uk/get-involved/recording/>  
The instructions are at:  
[http://www.sussexflora.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2014/09/Instructions\\_for\\_Excel\\_record\\_card.doc](http://www.sussexflora.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2014/09/Instructions_for_Excel_record_card.doc)

### On the entry sheet, please enter:

- Location + name of churchyard or cemetery.
- Tetrad code. If the site falls into more than one tetrad, a list for each tetrad will be needed.
- Correct status: Native, Planted, Casual or Established or Unknown. Only include planted trees and very large shrubs, not garden plants unless they have acquired 'Established' status. Please add a comment if you believe a native plant has been planted rather than occurring naturally.
- A central grid reference in the Comments column below the last record.
- Notes in the Comments column regarding frequencies and habitats, eg whether on walls, in hedgerows etc.

Before submitting the records: please enter the location and dedication (or "Cemetery") to the **beginning of the file name** and include the full date of the recording.

Please avoid duplicates!

If uncertain of ID, do ask for help. If you are new to recording, please ask for the assistance of an experienced recorder and we will try to find you a 'buddy'.

Please send records soon after each visit to Helen or to [surveys@sussexflora.org.uk](mailto:surveys@sussexflora.org.uk).

Completion of the survey form is appreciated.

Good luck and happy botanising!



## 2018 Field Meetings

<b>Sunday 22 April</b> Leader: Elisabeth Sturt	<b>West Dean Woods.</b> Spring woodland plants on the SWT reserve where traditional coppicing is carried out. The meeting is aimed at beginners, but all are welcome. Best approached from West Dean village, turning off A286 opposite The Dean PH; leave lane at SU845152 and drive carefully down private unmade track, turn left into small field to park.
<b>Saturday 19 May</b> Leaders: Jacqueline Rose, Judy Clark and Ellen Campbell	<b>Great Dixter, Northiam.</b> Our aim is to survey the estate, starting with Weights Wood. From the south turn left off the A28 into Dixter Road. Continue to Great Dixter's grounds. Meet in the car park, just beyond the Oast, TQ818250. Free parking and admission to members on the day. See also Saturday 18 August.
<b>Saturday 2 June</b> Leaders: Ruth Eastwood, Nick Sturt	<b>Ditchling Common.</b> It is a long time since the SBRS has been to this interesting Wealden Common. Meet in the car park at TQ337180.
<b>Wednesday 6 June</b> Leader: Peter Smith	<b>Woodvale Cemetery, Brighton.</b> As a contribution to the Churchyard Survey, we shall record the sections of the three tetrads that lie within the Woodvale, Bear Road and Extra-mural Cemeteries, Brighton. These cemeteries are contiguous with one another. If time we will look at adjacent downland reserves. Park within Woodvale Cemetery at TQ322058.
<b>Saturday 16 June</b> Leader: Nick Sturt	<b>Fulking Escarpment.</b> Chalk grassland. Another meeting aimed at beginners, but all are very welcome. Roadside parking W of Fulking village at TQ243114.
<b>Saturday 23 June</b> Leader: Helen Proctor	<b>Berwick Common.</b> This site includes a small meadow within the Firle Estate. We will record it to assess the current status of long known meadow species. If time, we will move on to a nearby site. Park by track or on roadside, TQ521063.
<b>Thursday 28 June</b> Leader: Frances Abraham	<b>Waltham Brooks, Coldwaltham.</b> SWT Reserve. Damp grassland, ditches, old canal, riverbank, pool margins. Wellies advised. Parking (not ideal) SE of Greatham Bridge on the Coldwaltham/Greatham road. Meet 150m W of the bridge by the footpath at TQ02961626.
<b>Saturday 14 July</b> Leaders: Jane Birch, Helen Proctor	<b>Court Lodge Farm, Wartling.</b> At the north edge of Pevensey Levels, the farm includes the Mark Dyke where we will look for marginal plants and possibly aquatics. Turn right off the minor lane near church; meet in the farm car park, TQ658091.
<b>Wednesday 18 July</b> Leader: Sue Denness	<b>Widewater Lagoon, West Beach Road, Lancing.</b> BN43 5FU. Recording on the beach and around the landlocked, brackish lagoons. Meet in the car park at TQ204042.
<b>Sunday 5 August</b> Leaders: Brad Scott, Geoffrey Kitchener	<b>Medway Valley.</b> Joint meeting with the Kent Botanical Recording Group. Meet at <b>10.15 for prompt start at 10.30am</b> at Ashurst Station, TQ5072 3883. Free parking. A circa 3½ mile circular walk, crossing the Rivers Medway and Grom which form the Vice-county boundary between Kent and Sussex. We will help the KBRG with recording monads in Kent as well as adding to Sussex records.

<b>Sunday 12 August</b> Leaders: Barry Yates, Paul Harmes	<b>Rye Harbour.</b> The saltmarsh re-creation project let the sea back into 17ha in late 2011 and plants have established well. SWT would like some help in surveying for more difficult-to-identify species. Meet in car park, TQ942189. See also Sunday 9 September.
<b>Sunday 12 August</b> Leader: Dawn Nelson	<b>Durleighmarsh Farm,</b> N of A272 W of Rogate. Meet in the farm shop car park SU784237, Postcode GU31 5AX: please park along the S side of the car park away from both the Teabarn and Shop if possible. This will be a 'come and find' recording meeting at a popular SBRS venue: a wide variety of habitats and sensitive farming practices provide a good range of arable weeds.
<b>Saturday 18 August</b> Leaders: Jacqueline Rose, Judy Clark, Ellen Campbell	<b>Great Dixter, Northiam.</b> TQ818250. We will continue to survey the estate, which includes ponds and grassland. For directions see Saturday 19 May, above. Free parking and admission for members.
<b>Sunday 9 September</b> Leaders: Barry Yates, Paul Harmes	<b>Rye Harbour.</b> We will survey the saltmarsh plants, including the five species of <i>Salicornia</i> , and <i>Spartina</i> . Meet in the car park, TQ942189.

**All meetings start at 10.45 am unless indicated otherwise**

SBRS field meetings are arranged for members and their guests.  
Please share cars whenever possible. If you have queries contact Helen Proctor  
01323-844680 [hm.proctor@btinternet.com](mailto:hm.proctor@btinternet.com) (E Sx) or Nick Sturt 01243-551292  
[n.sturt@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:n.sturt@mypostoffice.co.uk) (W Sx).

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

(The Convenors would like to apologise for the clash of dates on August 12th, which was unavoidable)