



Sussex Botanical Recording Society

Newsletter

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President's Message

First we send good wishes to our Chairman Rod Stern, who is recovering from a broken leg after a fall. We hope that he is mending well, and wish him a very speedy recovery. You will be pleased to hear that, during his enforced immobility, Rod has been writing accounts of the Sussex *Hieracium* species for the new *Flora*.

One week last September I was very surprised to hear that our SBRS Newsletter for May 2003 was mentioned in the *Pharmaceutical Journal* of 20th September 2008. This is a national journal, which goes to all registered Pharmacists in the UK. The reference in the Journal was to our report on *Guizotia abyssinica* growing under bird feeders in gardens long the south coast and in flowerbeds on Brighton sea-front. Known as niger seed, this plant with yellow daisy-like flowers is native to East Africa, but is widely grown in India both for the oil in the seeds and for export as bird food.

At the autumn meetings Alan Knapp reported that not only had a number of new members joined the SBRS during 2008, but a good proportion of them had actively recorded for the new *Flora*. This is welcome and encouraging news. We send thanks to them and also to the many older members who have continued to send records and plant details. We also thank those contributing to the good progress of the editing and the writing of species accounts and introductory chapters. We thank all who are working towards the final publication, which we hope could be in 2012.

With best wishes to all for a happy and rewarding 2009.

Mary Briggs

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Secretary's Note

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 7th March 2009

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

Saturday 7th November 2009

The Autumn Get-together will be held in Staplefield Village Hall. The doors will be open from 10.00 a.m. and the meeting will start promptly at 10.30 a.m. There will be reports of field meetings and interesting records and an illustrated talk. Please remember to bring a packed lunch; tea or coffee and biscuits and possibly cakes will be available. Members are invited to bring digital photographs or slides to show in the afternoon, books and plants for sale and any items of interest or specimens for display.

Rita Hemsley

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Treasurer's Note

A gentle reminder that subscriptions for 2009 are at same rate as for 2008:

Individual Member£5.00
Joint Membership at one address£7.00

Subscriptions may be paid at the AGM in March, the Autumn Get-together in November, or sent by post to me at my home address.

Thank you,

Trevor Lording.

Postage on samples & cards

by Alan Knapp

Please remember that if you send samples or record cards which exceed the Royal Mail size limits for small letters in any dimension (length, width or thickness) you MUST use a large letter stamp. Putting on a first class small letter stamp is no substitute.

If you don't do this, the recipient is charged the extra postage plus a £1.00 handling fee and has to collect the item from the Post Office, as they have now stopped delivering such letters.

Be especially careful with any non-standard envelopes or envelopes containing samples which make them thicker as, even though they may appear to be A5, if they are larger in any dimension they do not count as small letters. I have recently had to pay a surcharge on a package 1mm too thick because it contained rose hips.

Abandoned copies of *Watsonia* and *Adastra*

by Nick Sturt

A number of copies of the above were left behind after the November Get-together at Staplefield, having probably been offered for sale. I shall be happy to return them to their owner if he or she cares to contact me.

Tortoise in clover

Pat Donovan has a delightful recorder's tale. She needed some additional species for the tetrad she was working on and remembered a tortoise of her acquaintance – a 50-year old female called Toby, who adored *Trifolium micranthum* and would always make a bee line for it. Pat went to visit her and, sure enough, she obliged.

Obituary: Stan Heyward

by Mary Briggs

Sadly we report the recent death of Stan Heyward of High Salvington. Stan, with his late wife Vera, were major recorders for the *Sussex Plant Atlas* (1980), and they were known as a particularly reliable recording team. For many years Stan and Vera were farmers at Ashington, and they recorded *Ranunculus tripartitus* on a neighbour's farm.

For a number of years Stan and Vera attended botany classes by Oliver Buckle, giving them a good grounding in accurate recording, and for the *Atlas* their tetrads included most of Amberley and Rackham Wild Brooks. They refound *Baldellia ranunculoides* in a Rackham ditch, and a new Amberley locality for *Thelypteris palustris* in Rackham woods. Later they were part of the Amberley monitoring team which met regularly for a dozen years at the request of the Inspector following the Public Inquiry into pump drainage of the Wild Brooks in 1978.

Until the week before he died Stan was meeting remaining members of Mr Buckle's botany class in the Worthing area. He will be very much missed by his many friends

BSBI Meeting - Amberley Wild Brooks, 23rd August 2008

by Alan Knapp

The following is a slightly shortened version of a report which will appear in the BSBI Newsletter:

On one of the few sunny mornings in August, nineteen members gathered on the track leading north from Amberley village onto the Wild Brooks. The site is an SSSI, and much of it is nature reserve owned by the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the RSPB.

The meeting started with Frances Abraham and Alan Knapp giving a brief history of the Brooks and outline of the day's programme. We then moved on to the drainage ditches which are the habitat for the majority of the interesting species in the area. The first stop revealed a variety of common aquatics including *Elodea nuttallii*, *Glyceria maxima*, *Lemna gibba*, *Lythrum salicaria*, *Spirodela polyrhiza*, *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, *Stachys palustris* and *Veronica catenata*. We were pleased to find *Lemna gibba* as, although known from this area in the past, it had not been seen for some time. Further on we reached a side channel with a dense mass of *Sagittaria sagittifolia*. David Streeter demonstrated the key distinguishing features of the leaves of *Berula erecta*. An area of open water by a sluice produced the first sighting of *Potamogeton acutifolius* which, although described as critically endangered in the Red Data List, is plentiful in many of the ditches in this area. The characteristic features of a very flattened stem and

strongly acuminate leaf tip were shown. In the same place we were pleased to find a good patch of *Groenlandia densa*, a species which has recently declined significantly in Sussex.

A detour toward the bank of the River Arun produced *Potamogeton natans*, *P. pectinatus*, *Rorippa sylvestris* and *Sium latifolium*, but of most interest were a number of plants of *Schoenoplectus x kuekenthalianus* (*S. triqueter* x *tabernaemontani*) growing on the very edge of the river amongst *S. lacustris*. Unfortunately *S. triqueter* has gone from the Arun valley but *S. tabernaemontani* is still present. On returning to the main track Frances was soon able to point out plants of *Leersia oryzoides*, which is not uncommon on ditch edges on the Brooks. As is typical with this species the inflorescence was hidden within the upper leaf sheath, but opening this up revealed the florets. We were also able to feel the leaves and understand why the English name Cut-grass is so appropriate. Nearby we got our first view of flowering *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*. Other species in and beside the ditches included *Carex pseudocyperus*, *Elodea canadensis* and *Epilobium palustre*, the last being very rare in Sussex.

We retraced our steps southwards to Amberley village, noting two large patches of *Lathyrus sylvestris* beside the track, and drove to the eastern end of the site, known as Rackham Brooks. After lunch a short walk took us to another area of damp grassland with ditches. One of the wider ditches contained masses of *Potamogeton acutifolius* and, after many attempts with the grapple, a few tiny plants of *Potamogeton trichoides* were also found. *Leersia oryzoides* was scattered along the ditch edge and one plant had the inflorescence exerted from the leaf sheath. Other finds of interest were a few patches of *Stellaria palustris*, and several small colonies of *Persicaria minor*. In addition, a number of commoner species typical of wetlands such as *Bidens cernua*, *B. tripartita*, *Eleocharis palustris*, *Mentha x verticillata* and *Rorippa palustris* were seen. In several places the leaves of *Oenanthe aquatica* were present but no flowering plants could be found. As we returned we saw the leaves of *Potentilla palustris* and, in the adjacent grassland, there were a few plants of *Carex disticha*. Unfortunately the ditches where *Baldellia ranunculoides* has its only West Sussex site were choked with vegetation and there was no hope of re-finding it this year.

The leaders would like to thank the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the RSPB for permission to visit reserve areas, and David Streeter for his invaluable help.

Japanese Knotweed

by Frances Abraham

We usually look upon Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) with loathing, but perhaps we should give it another chance of a place in our affections. In an article in the May/June 2008 issue of the magazine *Eat Sussex*, Fergus Drennan makes a splendid case for adding it to our diet.

Apparently in Japan the shoots are normally stir-fried, but there are many other culinary uses. The seeds can be eaten raw or cooked, or ground into flour. The roots are said to be edible and to be useful in the treatment of Lyme disease, but should be taken with care as 75g is a toxic dose for a 75kg person. The most appetising part seems to be the tender young spring shoots, which can be used like asparagus or rhubarb. As a rhubarb substitute it apparently makes excellent crumbles, jam, wine and cordials. The stems can be used as a vegetable - for example, slightly sweetened to accompany a game dish. Knotweed has a somewhat acid flavour, due to the presence of calcium oxalate, which is also occurs in rhubarb and sorrel.

With thanks to Pat Donovan for pointing out the original article, and to the editor of *Eat Sussex* for permission to use information from it.

Rothschild's Sussex Reserves

by Frances Abraham

Already in the early years of the 20th century there was concern that sites known for their wildlife were vanishing under bricks and mortar, woods were being felled, and wetlands drained. There was as yet no legal protection for wildlife sites, and nature reserves barely existed. In 1912 the banker and entomologist Charles Rothschild founded the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves which, after numerous changes of name, is now known as the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. With great prescience, he organized the compilation of a shopping list of those sites which were deemed to be most important for the preservation of wildlife. He hoped that they would be acquired by bodies such as the fledgling National Trust.

Naturalists around the country were consulted, and a questionnaire was filled in for each proposed site, accompanied by a map. Good examples of important habitats were wanted, and also sites where rare species occurred. It seems astonishingly forward-looking that habitats of importance in a European context were given extra weight in the selection process. Places which were thought to already be in safe hands were excluded. Unfortunately some of the questionnaires and maps have been lost, and many of the maps do not show the boundaries of the sites, so in some cases guesswork is needed to work out which areas were intended.

By 1915, 284 sites in Britain and Ireland had been selected, and the list was presented to the government. In the event, due largely to the Great War and to Rothschild's illness and early death in 1923, his plan was shelved for many years. However, it was not forgotten, and was used as a reference in the 1950s in the selection of the first Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs). The list included eight sites in Sussex: Amberley Wild Brooks, Ashdown Forest, Camber Castle, Chichester Harbour, Hempstead Wood near Hailsham, Kingley Bottom (ie Kingley Vale), Lewes Downs and Selsey Bill. It is thought that Pagham Harbour is intended by Selsey Bill, and Rye Harbour by Camber Castle.

Nearly 100 years later, it is interesting to see what has become of those eight Sussex sites. In fact all but one are not only now SSSIs but also bear other conservation designations and are wholly or partly managed as nature reserves. For example, Kingley Vale was one of the first NNRs and is now also an SAC (Special Area of Conservation). Amberley Wild Brooks was included on the original list for its bog, although that had long been destroyed by 1915. However, it is still very species-rich and is now a RAMSAR site and SPA (Special Protection area), and the greater part is managed as a nature reserve. The area of Lewes Downs which was listed includes the Sussex Wildlife Trust's Malling Down reserve. Oddly, the adjacent downland of Mount Caburn was omitted from the list – it is now an NNR and, with Malling Down, lies within the Lewes Downs SAC. Ashdown Forest is also an SAC and SPA. Rye Harbour is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Chichester Harbour is a RAMSAR site and SPA. Pagham Harbour is a RAMSAR site, SPA and LNR.

The exception to this blizzard of designations is Hempstead Wood, which was apparently proposed in order to conserve Spiked Rampion (*Phyteuma spicata*) and the Heath Fritillary butterfly. Most of the wood has been destroyed by housing development, coniferisation and roads - it is bisected by the A22. When I visited in April 1993 a scrap now known as Chichele Wood remained more or less intact to the east of the A22 at TQ578101. It was still an attractive wood with oak standards over hornbeam and hazel, with some ash, holly, field maple and aspen. Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) were abundant, with some Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Wood Spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*) and Pignut (*Conopodium majus*). However, the Rampion has apparently gone (but please prove me wrong) and the Heath Fritillary is extinct in Sussex. The original site suggested for the protection of these species seems to have been Abbots Wood nearby, which does still support Spiked Rampion, and it is not known why Hempstead was substituted for it.

VC13 Field Meetings 2008

by Nick Sturt, Rita Hemsley & Arthur Hoare

Fishbourne, 17th May (NS)

An interesting day in the former territory of two Sussex botanists of substance: F. H. Arnold and R. C. Stern. On the debit side it proved impossible to re-find *Catabrosa aquatica* (Water Whorl-grass), *Geum rivale* (Water Avens), *Juncus subnodulosus* (Blunt-flowered Rush) or *Triglochin palustris* (Marsh Arrowgrass), but there was much on the credit side, not least the lack of the lavishly forecast rain. The group set about ransacking Fishbourne Churchyard for aliens before moving on to more natural habitats. Two Chichester Harbour specialities gave themselves up: *Carex divisa* (Divided Sedge) in profusion and scattered *Cochlearia anglica* (English Scurvy-grass). It was the day of the Umbellifer, however, with the likes of *Petroselinum segetum* (Con Parsley) and *Torilis nodosa* (Knotted Bur-parsley) on the Harbour walls, and occasional *Apium graveolens* (Wild Celery) and *Anthriscus caucalis* (Bur Chervil), again by the creek. The patch of *Lepidium latifolium* (Dittander) growing by the outfall of the Lavant was visited for its connection with Arnold, but there was a more extensive stand found later up the creek (*sine remulo*, naturally). *Alopecurus bulbosus* (Bulbous Foxtail) was plentiful in places as we wended our way back to the freshwater marsh where *Carex disticha* (Brown Sedge) was well represented, and distinct from its cousin *C. divisa*. The party was also able to compare the Pond Sedge *Carex riparia* with its slenderer relative *C. acutiformis*, noting the different shape of the male glumes. The Millpond provided *Carex paniculata* (Tussock Sedge), *Cyperus longus* (Galingale) and *Hippuris vulgaris* (Mare's-tail), all there in Arnold's day. From there along the A259 many more species were ticked off, prize among them the modest *Lepidium ruderales* (Narrow-leaved Pepperwort) drawn to our attention by Matthew. Finally the members (25) counted the flowering spikes of *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum* (Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem or Bath Asparagus) along Apuldram Lane (67) at the suggestion of Rod (80). Anne de Potier may have abdicated as Queen of Chichester Harbour, but she was able to make a considerable contribution to the success of the meeting. Over 50 species, many of them notable, were added to the 200+ squares SU80H and M.

Haywards Heath, 18th June (RH)

Our Hon. Sec. and alfresco gourmet writes:

Apologies for absence were readily forthcoming for this meeting, and three people eventually came on a very dull, dark evening with the constant threat of rain. Local footpaths through overgrown woods and streams on the way to the cemetery gave us a variety of new records for the tetrad, including the not altogether welcome *Allium triquetrum* (Three-cornered Garlic). The low-lying, boggy area in the cemetery itself was covered profusely with *Wahlenbergia hederacea* (Ivy-leaved Bellflower) for at least 10m and other parts gave us several *Carices* including *C. echinata* (Star Sedge) and *C. pallescens* (Pale Sedge). The wind was so strong and the weather

so cold that the recording card was blown into a stream and had to be retrieved rapidly by Judy. Returning by different footpaths it became so dark that the delicate flowers of *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling) found earlier could not be seen and we were forced to stop recording at 8.30 pm on what should have been one of the lightest evenings of the year. Nevertheless, 50 new records were added to the tetrad total.

Mile Oak, 20th July (NS)

Rita had prepared meticulously and, to start with at least, was firmly in command of her eleven troops. The awe of the Chairman was such that he arrived long before his customary few minutes after the nick of time. Then we were off with instructions not to dally in TQ21I but to secure *Centaurea calcitrapa* (Red Star-thistle) for the neighbouring tetrad. That done, a more relaxed air set in and we ambled up past Whitelot Bottom, steadily picking off species characteristic of the chalk, including scattered *Filipendula vulgaris* (Dropwort) and one or two very large examples of *Rhamnus cathartica* (Purging Buckthorn). Even with over 150 species on the TQ21I card by lunchtime, we were assured by our leader that there was no scope for complacency as we climbed up onto Thundersbarrow Hill to admire spectacular views in all directions. Here we came across some interesting specimens, for example *Geranium columbinum* (Long-stalked Crane's-bill) and *Erigeron acer* (Blue Fleabane). The arable weeds were nothing to write home about, with the exception of some fine *Papaver hybridum* (Prickly Poppy) with its spiny globose fruits and a tiny fragment of *Legousia hybrida* (Venus' Looking-glass); strange to relate, *Epilobia* (Willowherbs) were scarcely seen all day. As we turned south the path led through a low spiny forest of *Centaurea calcitrapa*. We came upon *Centaureum pulchellum* (Lesser Centaury), *Phyteuma orbiculare* (Round-headed Rampion) and then into very fine chalk grassland with both *Carex flacca* (Glaucous Sedge) and *Carex caryophylla* (Spring Sedge) and eventually the sought-after *Asperula cynanchica* (Squinancywort) appeared. We slipped back into TQ21I again, adding these and other goodies (even a little *Anthyllis vulneraria* (Kidney Vetch) and *Hippocrepis comosa* (Horseshoe Vetch)) to the tally. Towards the end, when Rod and Ernie had unaccountably gone AWOL, Arthur demonstrated the two sweet-briars growing side by side, the acicles on the stem of *Rosa rubiginosa* (Sweet-briar) clearly distinguishing it from *R. micrantha* (Small-flowered Sweet-briar). At the cars fatigue and euphoria mingled – a very useful contribution had been made to the new *Flora* – but most of all we saluted our leader for a thoroughly enjoyable expedition. No-one so much as dreamed of remarking on how late we had taken lunch.

Southwater, 17th August (AGH)

The idea of this meeting was to follow up the very successful meeting of April 2005 and fill in the gaps left by the missing species. With poor weather forecast I did not expect a large gathering but as it happened the day turned out much better than expected. Twelve members arrived and after the usual greetings and general banter we split up into three groups of four, with each group having a different tetrad to survey. Being so close to the junction of four tetrads none of us had far to walk, in fact one group only managed about 400yds in the whole morning. It was arranged that we should meet up again for lunch after which we joined forces to survey the fourth tetrad. The plan worked well with the three groups producing a total of 208 new records in the morning and all together in the afternoon we added another 94 new records; 302 being a very worthwhile tally for the day.

Arthur's group headed off to the SE along the Downs Link into TQ12S and soon found *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax) on the disused railway track. In an adjacent damp meadow *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid) in seed, this being identified by the hollow stem - and having been told that it was to be found there! Back on the track another nice find was *Geranium columbinum* (Long-stalked Crane's-bill).

Alan ventured forth with his group into TQ12T and was soon having fun with the critical genus *Cotoneaster* finding *C. franchetii*, *horizontalis* and *microphyllus*. Many grasses featured in his list including *Bromus commutatus* (Meadow Brome) and *Digitaria sanguinalis* (Hairy Finger-grass). Another good find was *Rumex x pratensis*, the cross between *Rumex obtusifolius* x *R. crispus*. I'm sure that this is more common than our records would suggest.

Nick led his group into TQ12M and, having Rod with him, it was no surprise to see *Quercus x rosacea*, the cross between *Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea* in his list. A surprise find was *Verbena bonariensis* (Argentinian Vervain) which is appearing more frequently of late, no doubt a garden escape but one that could become established and it is worth keeping a lookout for it.

After lunch we all followed Alan in searching the hedgerows and road verges in TQ12N. *Verbena bonariensis* was seen again and in fact was found in three tetrads. Two of the best finds of the afternoon were *Silene coeli-rosa* (Rose-of-heaven) and *Geranium nodosum* (Knotted Crane's-bill) both of which are new Sussex records. These are all casual garden escapes which were found on a newly seeded road verge, but should not be ignored as they are part of the ever-changing scene. Who knows but that they may become established and turn out to be a threat to our native flora.

Pulborough, 6th September (NS)

Sixteen assorted waterproof outfits assembled for a splash around Pulborough in the company of our President and Frances. Right from the start there was plenty to interest and the station seemed to exercise a magnetic hold on the group as Alan burdened the card

with some choice records such as *Erigeron acer* (Blue Fleabane) and *Vulpia myurus* (Rat's-tail Fescue). Meanwhile the shadowy figure of A. Spiers was lurking ready to administer the *coup de grâce* in the rather unprepossessing form of *Poa humilis*. (Those of a nervous disposition are advised to ignore the pun.) Edging slowly along a footpath past much *Populus tremula* (Aspen), and gleaning species such as *Vicia hirsuta* (Hairy Vetch) from a neighbouring rough meadow, at length we came to the church, and binoculars fastened on the encrusted Horsham slabs above the north aisle: there we made out *Ceterach officinarum* (Rustyback) and a Polypody which we wanted to be *P. cambricum*. By now the light showers we had experienced had become more emphatic and it seemed wise to take an early lunch under the shelter of the roof of what was once the lych-gate. The party remained in good spirits and sorties were made to examine what was definitely *Polypodium cambricum* on the churchyard wall, and to collect further species for the card. Eventually it looked bright enough to start the afternoon session, but no sooner had we crossed the London Road than further deluges occurred. Nonetheless we ventured along a track where *Ceterach* again adorned the walls, and across the cricket pitch where play had been abandoned, while sportsmen in the pavilion marvelled at our hardiness or possibly foolhardiness. We added further species from a stream and its wooded banks and returned across the cricket field, Helen tenderly holding her umbrella over a bedraggled Alan. And so at last it was our turn to 'draw stumps'. We declared (rather than admitted that rain had stopped play) having put up a remarkable score of over 200 species, no less than 100 of which were new for the tetrad, and taking TQ01P through the magic 300 barrier by a comfortable margin.

VC14 field meetings 2008

by Pat Donovan, Roy Wells and Alan Knapp

Nymans, 19th April (PD)

Despite the weather, which was cold, damp and windy, 28 enthusiasts gathered in Nymans car park for the first meeting of the year, including two hardy people who had come by public transport from Brighton on the train and bus. The morning was spent in the woodland gardens and Alan, who was keen to encourage new members in the practice of plant recording, soon had a cluster of people round him as he pointed out the key characters of similar plants, eg *Veronica hederifolia* ssp. *hederifolia* and ssp. *lucorum* (Ivy-leaved Speedwell), a tricky one for some.

Some plants originally grown in the main gardens have escaped across the road and naturalised,

including *Erica lusitanica* (Portuguese Heath), *Trachystemon orientalis* (Abraham-Isaac-Jacob) and *Scilla liliohyacinthus* (Pyrenean Squill). A small patch of *Lathraea clandestina* (Purple Toothwort) was found in a damp hollow under willow.

In the afternoon we went into Cow Wood, mainly to check on the health of *Hymenophyllum tunbridgense* (Tunbridge Filmy-fern), which appears to be flourishing - perhaps not the right word for a plant which lurks under dark, damp rocks never looking any different year by year. Another fern re-found was *Dryopteris aemula* (Hay-scented Buckler-fern) but Roy, who has an eye for it, discovered a new site by a stream at the bottom of a very steep slope. Few people ventured down but took his word for it! Nick produced a two inch length of leaf which he assured us was *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge) and Alan was pleased to record *Euphorbia amygdaloides* (Wood Spurge), which needs searching for in some tetrads and was not previously recorded in this one.

Etchingham and Robertsbridge, 3rd May (PD)

On a warm sunny day in late spring eleven members met near Etchingham (TQ72C). We started recording by meandering slowly down Ludpit Lane, a typical Wealden lane with banks topped with hedges and trees, which included *Prunus cerasifera* (Cherry Plum), *Crataegus x media* (hybrid Hawthorn), *Viburnum opulus* (Guelder-rose) and *Quercus cerris* (Turkey Oak). On the banks *Viola reichenbachiana* (Early Dog-violet), *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple-orchid) and both *Luzula pilosa* (Hairy Wood-rush) and *L. forsteri* (Southern Wood-rush) were found. Crossing a damp field, where Arthur lost his stick in the long grass after photographing a fine specimen of *Ranunculus repens* (Creeping Buttercup), *Alopecurus geniculatus* (Marsh Foxtail) grew in a wet patch and in nearby woodland *Ranunculus auricomus* (Wood Buttercup) was recorded. Typical Rita, stopped off on her way home from Robertsbridge and walked back to the field for another unsuccessful search.

After lunch we drove to Robertsbridge (TQ72G), the observant spotting a few spikes of *Cardamine bulbifera* (Coralroot) on the way. The station car park was pleasingly neglected and was probably formerly the goods yard. Some typical railway plants included *Senecio viscosus* (Sticky Groundsel), *Centranthus ruber* (Red Valerian) and *Erodium cicutarium* (Common Stork's-bill) which was growing on newly-laid ballast. The star plant, however, was *Saxifraga tridactylites* (Rue-leaved Saxifrage), hundreds of them in an area securely fenced off, so difficult to photograph. Walking on towards the River Rother Alan was in his element and soon found *Ranunculus peltatus* (Pond Water-crowfoot), *Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum* (Watercress) and *Cardamine amara* (Large-leaved Bittercress). The total number of records for the two tetrads was 320.

Hooe area, 25th May (RW)

The weather report was awful, and the ten people who set out from Hooe Church for tetrad recording might

have expected a poor day, but the forecast heavy rain arrived early and spent itself overnight, leaving a bright sunny warm day. We covered several habitats, ranging from agro-chemical fields to hay meadows and marshland, with extensive ditches, where Alan was able to demonstrate his prowess at tossing the grapnel. Over 120 records were added to the two tetrads, taking them both well over the 200 mark. Nice finds included three *Fumaria* (Fumitories), *Equisetum palustre* (Marsh Horsetail), *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort), *Potamogeton crispus* (Curled Pondweed), *P. trichoides* (Hair-like Pondweed) and a fine flowering group of *Hottonia palustris* (Water-violet).

Bopeep and Firle area, 8th June (AGK)

On reaching the meeting point at Bopeep we discovered that the breezy, sunny conditions were ideal for hang-gliding, and the whole area was teeming with people. Once we had managed to find the few remaining spaces in the car park we set off north-westwards for our morning recording in TQ40X. At first we crossed a rather dull area of grassland but soon came to the more interesting scarp slope. In all 61 species new to the tetrad were found, including a number of chalk grassland species such as *Arenaria serpyllifolia* (Thyme-leaved Sandwort), *Euphrasia nemorosa* (Eyebright), *Gymnadenia conopsea* (Fragrant Orchid), *Trisetum flavescens* (Yellow Oat-grass) and *Viola hirta* (Hairy Violet). Perhaps the most surprising find, given that it was early June, was a single plant of *Gentianella amarella* (Autumn Gentian) - we did check that it was not *G. anglica*.

After lunch we moved westwards to a quieter and rather poorly recorded area on the Downs above Firle and set off towards Blackcap Farm in TQ40S. Despite the unpromising appearance of the area, the tracksides yielded some chalk grassland species, including a single plant of *Filipendula vulgaris* (Dropwort). More interesting were the surroundings of the farm, where a flourishing colony of *Geranium colominum* (Long-stalked Crane's-bill) was spotted. As we passed the farm we noticed a weedy garden and Ady used her charm on the owner to allow a few of us to go in, adding *Euphorbia helioscopia* (Sun Spurge), *Fumaria officinalis* ssp. *officinalis* (Common Fumitory), *Lamium amplexicaule* (Henbit), *Papaver dubium* ssp. *lecoqii* (Long-headed Poppy) and *Viola arvensis* (Corn Pansy). The owner was somewhat puzzled by our activities but very friendly, and said that she'd be happy for us to take all the 'weeds' away. As the area further south appeared dreary, we returned to the car park and finished the day by recording the small area of chalk grassland within that tetrad. The road verges at the top of the scarp had *Anthyllis vulneraria* ssp. *vulneraria* (Kidney Vetch), *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid), *Gymnadenia conopsea* (Fragrant Orchid), *Koeleria*

macrantha (Crested hair-grass) and *Polygala vulgaris* (Common Milkwort), completing a very pleasant day by adding a total of 85 new records to the tetrad.

Ashburnham Estate, 28th June (RW)

Twenty-one members met for a visit to the Ashburnham Estate, a Capability Brown landscape managed by its current owners on conservation lines. We only had time to visit the lakes and meadows, some of them ancient unimproved grassland and some more recently returned to hay meadow from agricultural use. The observant party recorded an impressive 274 species, including *Adiantum capillus-veneris* (Maidenhair Fern) in quantity, *Acorus calamus* (Sweet-flag), *Aira caryophylla* (Silver Hair-grass), *Alisma lanceolatum* (Narrow-leaved Waterplantain), *Callitriche brutia* (Pedunculate Water-starwort), nine *Carex* species including *C. strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge), *Galinsoga quadriradiata* (Shaggy-soldier), *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush), *Petasites japonicus* (Giant Butterbur) and *Rosa tomentosa* (Harsh Downy-rose). *Houttuynia cordata* seemed to have become established, a first record for the county. Despite an extensive search, *Anagalis minima* (Chaffweed) was not found. Another visit has been requested for the end of April 2009 to visit the woodland and other parts of the estate.

Brede High Woods, 3rd August (AGK)

About fifteen members arrived on time, despite the damp morning and early start time, for a multi-tetrad meeting in the area around the north of Brede High Woods. For the morning, we split into three groups to record TQ72V, TQ72W and TQ82B. Interesting finds included *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort) in 72V and W, *Lychnis flos-cuculi* (Ragged-robin) in 72W and *Echinochloa crus-galli* (Cockspur) in two places in 82B. In the afternoon we recorded as a single group and set off down some wet woodland rides. We intended to stay in TQ82A but an unintentional diversion brought us again into 72V, where we had some interesting finds including a good colony of *Carex viridula* ssp. *oedocarpa* (Common Yellow-sedge) and a patch of *Scutellaria minor* (Lesser Skullcap). We returned to 82A where we found both *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine) and *E. purpurata* (Violet Helleborine). In the end the day produced over 200 new records for the area.

Recording notes by Alan Knapp

1. Extra information in records

It is not unusual to receive records, either on cards or in electronic form, where information on the odd casual alien is given in great detail (GPS grid refs. etc.), but no information is given on the rarer native species which are marked with a plus sign on the back of the recording card. In general, getting good information on the latter is much more valuable than great detail on odd casual

aliens or dumped garden throwouts, so please remember to give full information for them. Extra information on the more common species is also of great value if they are in any way unusual - for example, a very fine colony or presence in an atypical habitat.

2. Species needing care in identification

Based on experience of checking records, it is apparent that records for some species are especially likely to be erroneous. For these species please check carefully and add a note on the card or the comments field of electronic records to say you have checked. The following is a list of species where errors are most common and special care is needed:

Aphanes arvensis/*A. australis* - Some floras say you can use the stipule teeth to separate these two but it is not very reliable. It is better to stick to the character of the form of the junction of the sepals and the fruits. In *A. australis* the top of the fruit curves in and the sepals continue curving inwards, whereas in *A. arvensis* the sepals curve back out above the junction with the fruit, forming a "neck". Note that fruits are present for a surprisingly long period so it's worth checking at almost any time of year rather than just recording *Aphanes arvensis* agg.

Lepidium heterophyllum/*L. campestre* - Take great care if just flowers but no fruits are present. With just flowers you can use the anther colour but the purple coloration in *L. heterophyllum* can be very hard to see and often is only along the edges of the anthers. Please say on the record how you identified it.

Malus sylvestris - Sometimes this is crossed off accidentally instead of *Malva sylvestris*. Also it is easy to mistake some of the less hairy forms of *M. domestica* for this. *M. sylvestris* should be completely hairless (leaves **and** calyx hairless).

Rubus caesius - take great care when identifying this in the absence of fruits. It seems that some records off the chalk are errors for forms of *R. fruticosus*. Please state on the record that it was identified using fruits if this is the case.

Tripleurospermum maritimum - always use the fruit characters (shape of oil glands and ribs - see Stace). Do not assume that the presence of fleshy leaves means that it is this rather than *T. inodorum*. Confirm on the record that you did use the fruits for identification.

Flora Progress by Alan Knapp

The recording for our new flora has gone well with over 40,000 new records in 2008, a tremendous effort by all those who have sent in records. Once again we have had a significant contribution from a number of new members. The record total has reached just over 251,000 which was what we hoped to achieve this year. All whole tetrads within the county have now had at least one good recording visit although we have not yet achieved our target of getting all whole tetrads over 150 records by the end of 2008. There are still 21 whole tetrads with less than 150 records and a few partial tetrads around the edges, especially in TQ63, TQ82 & TQ92, which have had very little recording. The number of well recorded tetrads has risen sharply since January with 238 having over 300 records (compared with 148) and 808 with over 200 (compared to 550). The current position is shown on the map.

Now that winter is here work has resumed on writing the draft species accounts and we have now completed 680 accounts and a number of major groups including *Apiaceae*, *Caryophyllaceae*, *Rosaceae* and *Orchidaceae* have draft accounts for all species.

As announced at the Autumn Get-together we have a provisional timetable for what we need to do achieve a publication date in 2012. In outline it is:

2009/10

- More targeted recording (see below)
- Complete the bulk of the draft species accounts by end of winter 2010/11
- Start proof-reading/checking in winter 2010
- Get photographs of species/habitats for illustrating the flora

2011

- Contact publishers to get rough costings
- Contact organisations who might provide grants toward publication costs
- Fill gaps in recording - very focussed recording on (hopefully) a small number of under-recorded areas and scarce species not refound
- Complete drafts of species accounts, continue proof reading & checking
- Get draft versions of introductory chapters (Geology, Habitats etc.)
- Get final photographs

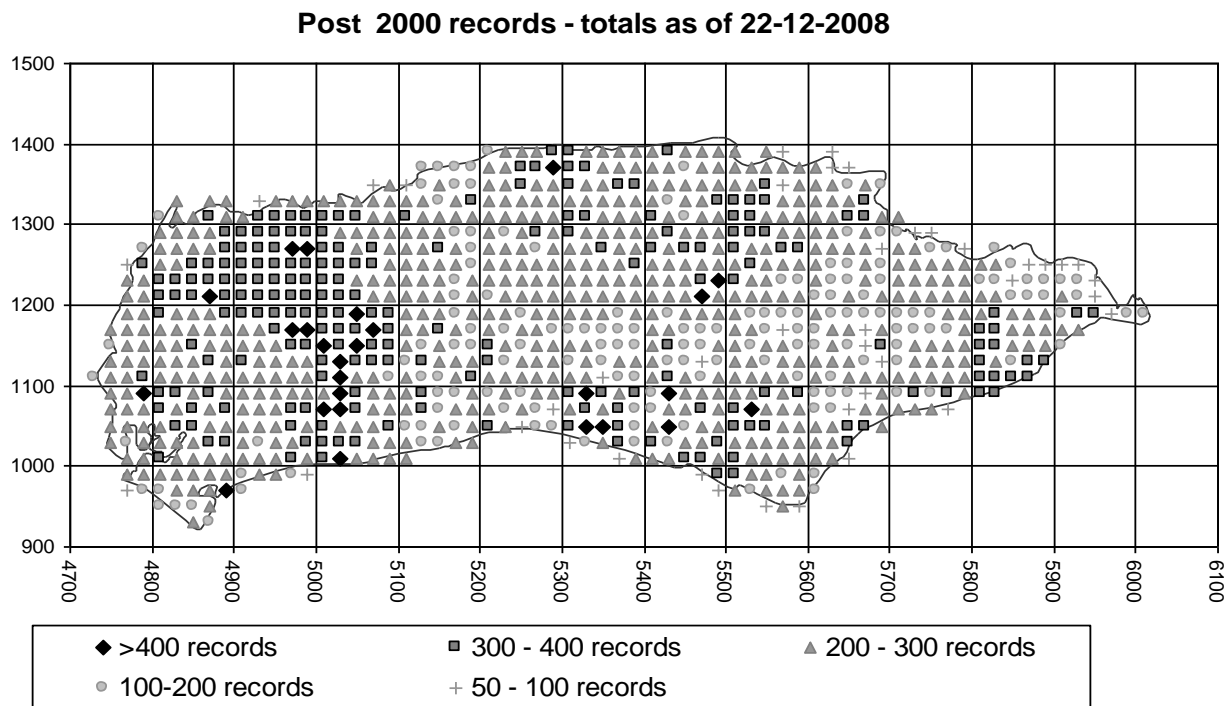
2012

- If possible, some final recording in early part of year
- Complete writing, compile complete drafts, final proofing
- Aim to publish by end of 2012

As mentioned above, in the next two years we need to focus our recording on those areas which are least well recorded and on those scarce species not refound since 2000. Strangely, many of these are in areas which are

already quite well recorded so those of you in such areas will still have plenty to do. The tetrads most in need of more recording are in 10km squares SZ89, TQ13, TQ20, TQ21, TQ31, TQ41, TQ51, TQ61, TQ62, TQ71 and especially TQ82 and TQ92.

We need high quality digital photographs of important Sussex habitats - if you think you can help please contact Arthur Hoare. Please note that images scanned from slides have in general proved to be of unacceptable quality so don't bother to look back at your slide collections.



2009 Field Meetings

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| Sunday 10 May Dawn Nelson | Durleighmarsh Farm. A return to the sandy fields for Spring annuals. Meet at far end of farm shop car park, well sign-posted N side of A272 approx 1.5 miles W of Rogate, SU784234. The farm shop is well worth a look! |
| Saturday 23 May Roy Wells | Bodle Street Green. Multi-tetrad recording am, joining forces pm. Meet TQ654156 Watermill Farm, W turning from North Rd, Bodle Street Green. Roy has homed in on what looks to be an interesting area. |
| Sunday 7 June Nick Sturt | Bignor Hill. Meet in car park at SU973129. Take the lane S from Bignor village at SU984144 which leads through a farm and v. steeply up to car-park on top of scarp. Early Summer in SU91R, especially the hangers. |
| Saturday 20 June Alan Knapp | Iden area. A weekend devoted to neglected tetrads in this part of E Sussex. Come and help for one or both days. Meet TQ915238, ample parking on verges but beware drainage channels. |
| Sunday 21 June Paul Harnes | Iden area. Details as Saturday. |
| Saturday 27 June Frances Abraham | Washington Common. Meet approx TQ121137 in Old London Rd parallel with A24: turn W off N-bound A24 into Rock Rd at TQ123140 and then S almost immediately. Recording TQ11B and neighbouring tetrads. We may move on after lunch. |
| Sunday 19 July Rita Hemsley | Plumpton Green. Tetrad recording in TQ31 with Lovely Rita. Meet at car-park for King George V playing fields just E of Plumpton station, TQ366162; roadside parking available nearby if full. |
| Saturday 25 July Helen Proctor | Chiddingly area. Recording in TQ51L and 51H. Meet at Chiddingly Church car park, TQ544141. |
| Sunday 9 Aug. Nick Sturt | Steyning. Meet in Fletchers Croft (free) car-park (TQ179113), N of High St, entrance from Vicarage Lane opposite parish church. We shall disperse in cars to cover different tetrads in the morning, probably TQ10U, 10Z and 11Q. |
| Saturday 22 Aug. Alan Knapp | NE of Horsham. Under-recorded tetrads in TQ13. Park in rough laybys either side of Hurst Hill approx. 100m N of roundabout with A264, TQ189335. We will then move on NW in the minimum number of cars to the start-point. |
| Late Aug./ early Sept. | It is hoped to hold a meeting at Rye Harbour. Confirmation and details in May Newsletter. |

All meetings start at 10.45. Since some of the venues have limited parking, and for environmental reasons, members are encouraged to share cars whenever possible.

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