



Sussex Botanical Recording Society

Newsletter

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President's message

As our Chairman announced at our Autumn Get-together, I am retiring as BSBI Recorder for W. Sussex due to my poor sight, which means that botanizing, reading and writing are now nearly impossible. I was appointed in 1975, following Oliver Buckle, and in 1997 Dr Alan Knapp was appointed as joint Recorder, until his sad death in 2010. As you will all know by now, Mike Shaw was appointed as Recorder for VC13 last year, and I hope that he has much fun as I have had. Throughout these enjoyable 36 years I have met so many grand people and, through the recording, first for the *Sussex Plant Atlas* and then for the many botanical projects since, I have seen so many fascinating local plants, and explored so many unusual corners of Sussex. There is so much to learn, for example when a name for a strange Umbellifer, sedge or *Callitriche* is requested...

Special projects in the early days included surveys of St. Leonard's Forest, the Mens, and the winterbournes in the Chichester area, as well as the BSBI Monitoring Scheme. One of the first was the survey of road verges in the 1970s, for which I had the job of collating information on the notable verges identified by Sussex botanists, and then taking local highway authority staff to show them the plants. In those days wildlife conservation was a new idea for most people, and not the well-known cause which it is today, and so I was very surprised when I saw that the Crowborough representative had a copy of Bentham and Hooker open on his desk! - that man had the verges with *Phyteuma spicata* (Spiked Rampion) in his care, a number of which still survive.

On a different subject, many members will probably have noticed the increasing numbers of oddly late-flowering specimens of several species. We are asked to preserve autumn-flowering Dandelions as a late food source for bees. And I was interested to receive a phone call from a Swiss friend who reports from Wengen that in the Alps this year *Gentiana acaulis* (Trumpet Gentian) flowered in autumn - the first time that it has been seen to do so by the local botanists - until it was buried by December snow.

Mary Briggs

Newsletter Editor:- Frances Abraham

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Secretary's Note

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 3rd March 2012

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

Saturday 3rd November 2012

The Autumn Get-together will be held at Staplefield Village Hall. The doors will be open from 10.00 a.m. and the meeting will start promptly at 10.30 a.m. The meeting will include progress on the New Flora, reports of field meetings and an illustrated talk. Please remember to bring a packed lunch; tea or coffee and cakes will be available. Members are invited to bring books and plants for sale, any items of interest or specimens for display and digital photographs or slides to show in the afternoon. Thank you to the members who made the delicious cakes for our Get-together last year; offers of homemade cakes are always welcome and prove very popular, and the sale of them boosts our funds.

Numbers attending last year's Get-together were much lower than usual; please remember to put the date in your diary now, so you do not forget to come to this very enjoyable day - and make a note of the AGM as well.

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Membership List

I can email the latest address list to any member who would like one, but for reasons of confidentiality this list is not available on the website.

Rita Hemsley

Email Addresses

Postage is going to increase significantly and it is necessary for us to try to reduce the cost, which particularly affects the distribution of the Newsletter. It would help considerably if we sent the Newsletter electronically. I should like members who have an email facility, which we believe is most of you, to make use of it. If you don't have a computer then it will be posted in the usual way.

We ask that you notify Arthur Hoare <ahoare@sweethaven.biz> with your email address if you have not already done so.

We will ensure that email addresses are only used for SBRS business.

Rod Stern
Chairman

Treasurer's Note

First of all, renewed thanks to all who have generously donated money towards the New Flora Fund. Our total now stands at circa £15,000. We do not yet know the date of publication nor the anticipated cost, but the latter is likely to be significantly in excess of current funds so further donations are always welcome.

The subscription rates for the calendar year 2012 remain at £5 for a single membership and £7 for joint membership at one address, with part of the subscription going into the Flora Fund. Payment may be made to me, as may unpaid subscriptions for 2011, at the AGM or Autumn Get-together, or they may be sent to me at my home address: Westfield House, Church Road, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 1EE.

Trevor Lording

We believe that Hawkweeds are at present under-recorded in Sussex, and ask that members should make a special effort with them in 2012. Specimens should be sent to Rod Stern for identification to species:

Collecting Hawkweeds by Rod Stern

Although there are 411 species of *Hieracium* in Sell and Murrell's *Flora of Great Britain and Ireland*, only about 30 have been recorded in Sussex. Many of these are very rare in Sussex so that there are only about ten or twelve which one is likely to find.

It is quite important to note the advice about collecting *Hieracia*. They should if possible be collected when they have started to flower; specimens with 0-1 stem leaf should not be collected after the middle of June, those with 2-8 stem leaves not after July, and others not after the end of August.

A whole plant cut at the base but above the rootstock should be collected. Specimens of secondary growth should not be selected (this often happens when surrounding vegetation is swiped or cut early in the season and regrows). If there are only one or two or very few plants, they should not be collected.

Specimens being sent by post should be sent with a SAE and have been pressed in the fresh state under a heavy weight, between newspapers. Information required includes the name of the collector, date of collection, habitat (e.g. roadside bank, stone wall, woodland ride etc.) and location (preferably a 6-figure grid reference). Useful but not essential are the tetrad and the colour of the fresh styles (often discoloured).

Coppard's Gap: mystery solved by Frances Abraham

In the last Newsletter I asked if any members knew where Coppard's Gap, site of several interesting early plant records, is or was located. Three members came to the rescue and the mystery is solved! Helen Swyer and Andrew Guest both suggested Portslade. Andrew pointed out that the name is actually marked on the first edition of the one inch Ordnance Survey map, which was first published in 1813, although the survey had been carried out some years earlier. Coppard's Gap is at TQ262048, and the area is now completely built up. Elizabeth Rich came up with some fascinating information about the Coppard family of shepherds, the last of whom, Harry Coppard, died in 1963. Generations of Coppards ran sheep on the Downs for various farms over the years, but always, it seems, in the area north of Portslade and Brighton from Poynings to Ditchling Beacon, and there is surely a connection between them and the Gap... The book *Barclay Wills' The Downland Shepherds* ed. by Payne & Pailthorpe (Alan Sutton 1989) has much information about the Coppards. See also *The South Downs* by Peter Brandon (Phillimore 1998) for intriguing hints about the coastal Gaps of Sussex and their use by local shepherds involved in smuggling...

Black Poplars near Burgess Hill by Frances Abraham

As reported in the Newsletter of January 2011, on the field meeting in the Burgess Hill area on 31st July 2010 we found what appeared to be a hitherto unknown mature Black Poplar in a small wet woodland. I returned later in

the year and found three others close by. The largest measured nearly 3m gbh (girth at breast height). The native form of Black Poplar (*Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*) is rare in Sussex. Until 2010 only 34 mature specimens were known, and one of these died in 2002. Cuttings from each of these trees are 'farmed' at Wakehurst Place in a fruitful collaboration between the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Sussex Wildlife Trust's Black Poplar Working Group, and several thousand saplings have now been planted across both counties. The Sussex population consists of several different clones, one of which is of particular importance as it appears to be resistant to a disease which is devastating some Black Poplars elsewhere in the UK.

The four new specimens were a cause of excitement, and samples were sent to the Forestry Commission in Midlothian for DNA analysis. They proved to be of a clone previously unknown in Sussex, identical to the northern population which gave rise to the name Manchester Poplar.

Retirement of Mary Briggs as Recorder for West Sussex

At the Autumn Get-together at Staplefield on the 5th November the Chairman announced the retirement of Mary Briggs as BSBI Recorder for West Sussex VC13. He noted that she is also President of SBRs, and that he was very glad that she was continuing in this position.

He continued: I have known Mary for many years. We first met at the BSBI conference on Oak in 1973, which was one of the best of such conferences. It was held at Sussex University. The proceedings were published as the *The British Oak* (BSBI/Classey 1974). I have a list of participants, some of whom are still with us, as well as Mary and me, for example David Streeter (who gave a paper) and Oliver Rackham. Those we knew at the conference who are no longer with us include Francis Rose, Frank Penfold and our previous president J.F.Sutcliffe.

I moved to Sussex shortly after this, started attending meetings of the Sussex Flora Society, and got to know Mary well. I appreciated her great botanical knowledge, her enthusiasm and love of botany, and also her unrivalled knowledge of Sussex, particularly West Sussex where at about this time the BSBI appointed her as Recorder for VC13. Latterly Alan Knapp shared the job as Joint Recorder until his sad death in 2010 and, as reported in the last Newsletter, we are delighted to now have Mike Shaw in post.

We couldn't have had a nicer person than Mary. Her delightful personality is so much appreciated by all those who have had dealings with her. Apart from her work for the BSBI, of which she was General Secretary for many years and also President, and the very many excursions she led abroad, she has been able to devote much time to Sussex botany. This has included work for the Sussex Flora Society in preparation of the *Sussex Plant Atlas*, the

authorship of the Supplement to the *Atlas*, a very nicely produced *Guinness Book of Wild Flowers* and the charming book *Sussex Wild Flowers*, the editorship of the *Sussex Rare Plant Register*, and currently work for the on-going *New Flora of Sussex*.

For all these reasons she well deserved the award of the MBE. It is to a great extent her diplomacy and knowledge of people in Sussex, as well as her guidance, good humour and hard work which makes botany for us in Sussex so enjoyable. Although she has retired from the Recordership, we are thankful that we will continue to have the benefit of her great botanical expertise.

Rod then presented Mary with a bouquet of flowers as a gesture of appreciation from the Society.

West Sussex Field Meetings 2011 by Nick Sturt

Southwater, 16th April; leader Arthur Hoare

The author ventured with Arthur into TQ21U where nostrils were at once charmed by the fragrance of bluebells *en masse* and sundry other woodland delights awaited, with *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks) being especially appreciated. Amid swathes of *Anemone nemorosa* (Wood Anemone) and other spring fare the wood in question, south of Denne Park, was mysteriously criss-crossed with low walls of green plastic sheeting: all was revealed by a stray employee: the area was designated as an extension to a golf-course and the fences were in place to corral newts for relocation. It was rather dispiriting to find that this patch of sylvan treasures, including *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple Orchid) and *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) would soon be no more. Meanwhile the other half of the sixteen members were led by Mike into TQ21Y where he worked them mercilessly until the 300 species total was passed. The afternoon was a plenary session in TQ12S looking for missing species to add to the tally of 306. In Nutham Wood it was *Allium ursinum* (Ramsons) in profusion that impressed itself upon the olfactory sense, and there was a host of old woodland indicator species, with *Crataegus laevigata* (Midland Hawthorn) very frequent. A very satisfying day and it was particularly pleasing to welcome Kathryn and Josie to the team. It is worth recalling that it was Alan Knapp who developed this format of meeting (in the morning split into groups/afternoon all together) for maximising the effectiveness of field meetings for recording for the New Flora.

Bolney, 14th May; leader Nick Sturt

By the start of 2011 TQ22 had been covered well – only one tetrad had fewer than 250 species – but there were nevertheless multitudes of missing

species, most from the *Sussex Plant Atlas* for which very thorough workers had evidently gone on a botanical rampage. The only remaining blue square in the hectad fell to Dawn, who bagged Eric and Steven and shot off in a cloud of dust. Arthur headed for TQ22F with his merry band, leaving the VC13 Field Convenor with Frances, Judy and his better half. With the Knapp Formula in play the afternoon saw members united for a gentle stroll around Bolney village, featuring two traditional society favourites, holding up local traffic and raiding front gardens. There was also a detour into countryside where some *Carex pseudocyperus* (Cyperus sedge) and *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit) around a pond to the south caused remark. All in all the territory of the day was rather mixed, with some chemical farms and trashed meadows as well as some Pignutty (*Conopodium majus*) woodland and Wild Service-tree (*Sorbus torminalis*), but the tally of new species recorded amply repaid the effort.

Parham Park, 4th June; leader Frances Abraham
Serene and sequestered beneath the magnificent Downs amid rolling parkland lay Parham House, seventeen SBRS members and – serenest of them all – Frances. It was especially good to have a strong contingent from Worthing completed by Beryl visiting from Somerset. We embarked upon a tour of the four tetrads which converge in front of the main house, well furnished with species lists: through sandy grassland punctuated by clumps of *Carex spicata* (Spiked Sedge) to ponds which, fed by the spring-line at the foot of the scarp, were still high despite the alarming drought of April and May. After lunch we got our eye in for *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath Grass), which revealed itself in quantity, *Carex panicea* (Carnation Sedge) and, in a damp ride, both *Valeriana officinalis* and *V. dioica* in close proximity (Common and Marsh Valerian). It was shortly after this that Frances – by now not quite so serene – pronounced her brain ‘jellified’ and gave the map to the author. By 4.45 numbers had dwindled and weary limbs were rested in front of the House before the final push uphill to the few remaining cars. But even here there were notable plants – a patch of *Carex arenaria* (Sand Sedge) and a crispy clover which proved to be *Trifolium striatum* (Soft Trefoil). To use a word beloved of the leader, the day was totally ‘fab’. We are grateful to the Parham Estate for permission to visit areas not normally open to the public.

Bolney, 25th June; leader Nick Sturt

Mike’s find of *x Festulolium loliaceum* (*Festuca pratensis* x *Lolium perenne*, Hybrid Fescue) shared first prize for the day with Kathryn’s headless *Epipactis purpurata* (Violet Helleborine) whose

grey/purple stem and dark leaves were almost invisible in a shady lane. It was Bolney Take 2 and once again the Field Convenor split the members and despatched them imperiously to the four quarters of the compass: a men-only team comprising Arthur, Mike and David to TQ22W (Ansty), Frances, Judy and Steven further north to TQ22X, and heading himself with Kathryn and Elisabeth into TQ22L west of Bolney village. The afternoon saw a combined assault on TQ22S from Pitts Head hard by the A23. The leader felt a little apologetic as neither the arable nor the damp woodland provided rich pickings, and yet there was plenty to entertain and indeed baffle in the form of a recalcitrant oak (Rod later determined it as *Quercus x rosacea*), a field corner with a tricky *Barbarea*, and some annoying agricultural *Bromus*. Without actually stumbling upon any little botanical nook worth writing home about the haul of about 150 species for the day was another very good achievement.

Ashington, 23rd July; leader Nick Sturt

The morning’s challenge was to raise the total species of three different tetrads to over 300 each. Occasionally being known to do The Decent Thing, the Field Convenor took the least promising square and, with the valiant efforts of Judy, Martin and Ernie, somehow the target was reached – without actually seeing anything memorable except for the identical particularly obstinate *Bromus* which had puzzled members on the previous VC13 meeting. At lunch it became obvious that the all-girl group (Carol, Dawn, Frances and Sylvia) had ventured into even less inspiring territory but at least they were cheerful about it. The boys, on the other hand (Arthur, Eric and Mike), brought back shed-loads of records from their search in and around Ashington itself, including vast numbers of aliens which reflected the gang’s particular predilection. Meanwhile David and Steven had been engaged in their own personal quest for orchids, returning, alas, with *nul points*. Could the afternoon provide botanical stimulation for all? Well, not at first as Ashington churchyard was comparatively barren and the fields which followed were well fenced against naturalists, but eventually species on the missing list began to crop up. Spot of the day was awarded to Judy for her *Elytrigia atherica* (Sea Couch) on the verge of the A24. Although the territory had been largely disappointing, 39 new species were added to the afternoon card for TQ11H, and again the total for the day was excellent.

Thornham, 21st August; leader Nick Sturt

Chichester Harbour is always a popular venue with members, as the Field Convenor was reminded by

one of them just when he suspected from the impressive turn-out that it was his personal magnetism. We plumped once again for the Knapp Formula, with groups led by Dawn and Elisabeth to Westbourne tetrads and the Not So Magnetic One to Thornham Lane. Thanks to the vigilance and expertise of his team there were many rediscoveries in this last tetrad (SU70S) which was already on 333: re-finds such as *Spiranthes spiralis* (Autumn Lady's-tresses) and *Juncus maritimus* (Sea Rush) on the edge of the Harbour, and not a few new records besides, including a little *Salicornia fragilis* (Fragile Glasswort). At one point the group peered through binoculars at a distant post which Anne identified as an Osprey. The Westbourne groups returned brimming with records and *joie de vivre* for a communal lunch. After which a stroll along the side of the creek and so through boatyards to Hermitage. The indefatigable members studied the lists and plugged gaps as they went – more *Juncus maritimus* and *Glaux maritima* (Sea Milkwort) – and enjoyed much *Inula crithmoides* (Golden Samphire). Then a commemorative photograph in front of the house on the A259 where Rev. Dr. F. H. Arnold lived from the 1870s to 1906, recalling another taken some 20 years before on a previous field meeting. On that occasion the new owners of the house had entertained members most hospitably and Tony remarked that the effects of the tumbler of mint julep he had rashly consumed on that occasion had only just begun to wear off. It was a perfect day out of late summer, and as usual a meeting in this neck of the woods was rendered all the more profitable and enjoyable by the guidance of Anne de Potier

East Sussex Field Meetings 2011

by Helen Proctor, Roy Wells and Rita Hemsley

West Hoathly, 2nd April; leader Rita Hemsley

The first field meeting of the year was well attended. We divided into three groups for the morning. In Courtland Wood in TQ33Q Tony found a large well-established patch of *Scilla bythinica* (Turkish Squill) and some planted and self-sown conifers. Several interesting naturalised plants were in Highbrook churchyard including *Cardamine heptaphylla* (Pinnate Coralroot), found by Helen and later confirmed. 23 new records were added for this tetrad. The group who visited TQ33K added seventeen new records and found a patch of *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* (Daffodil), which the owner of a nearby house told them had been there 28 years ago when they moved in. In TQ33L the recorders added 25 new records including *Crataegus x media* (Hybrid Hawthorn) on

Chiddinglye Farm. After filling all the available picnic tables for lunch at West Hoathly (which I am reliably informed included ostrich sandwiches, did I hear that right?) we left in one group to record in TQ33R. We had a successful afternoon on a route that took us through Sharpthorne, giving us some garden escapes, and Shagswell Wood with its ancient woodland indicators, and added 49 new records. Arthur found *Viola x bavarica* (Hybrid Dog-violet) and *Crataegus laevigata* (Midland Hawthorn), but the highlight was walking back through West Hoathly and finding large quantities of *Montia fontana* (Blinks) on the roadside verges. In all 114 new records for the start of the recording season.

Brightling area, 30th April; leader Ann Callow

Because Pat was unwell, her daughter, Ann Callow, kindly led this meeting, attended by about fifteen members on a warm dry day. The party split into two groups for the morning and joined up at lunchtime. Matthew has kindly provided a list of records. The meeting was well timed to find several early species in TQ62Q, including *Carex caryophylla* (Spring Sedge), *C. pilulifera* (Pill Sedge), *C. ovalis* (Oval Sedge) and *Aira praecox* (Early Hair-grass). Other species indicative of good habitats were *Spergula arvensis* (Field Spurrey), *Poa pratensis* (Smooth Meadow-grass) and *Pedicularis sylvatica* (Lousewort). In TQ62W, highlights were *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge) by a woodland stream and *Dryopteris affinis* ssp. *affinis* and ssp. *borreri* (Scaly Male-fern). *Sempervivum tectorum* (Houseleek) was found on a roof of a farm building, but my notes do not state who clambered up to look!

Stonegate, 29th May; leader Roy Wells

Nine members met at Stonegate Village Hall and walked across fields to the northern part of TQ62T, first entering Church Wood Shaws, where *Veronica montana* (Wood Speedwell) was the only new record. The exceptionally long, dry and warm spring had reduced the ghyll stream to a trickle and the woodland had more the appearance of August than May. However, recording increased with a field of unimproved grassland that was spangled with the jewel-like flowers of *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling), *Vicia sativa* ssp. *nigra* (native Common Vetch) and *Vicia tetrasperma* (Smooth Vetch). Occasional *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) added to the display. Profuse seedlings of a *Myosotis* were positively identified as *M. discolor* (Changing Forget-me-not) when a few flowers were found. We took lunch sheltering from the high winds and enjoyed half an hour of sunshine. After lunch, a farm track alongside arable gave us *Lepidium campestre* (Field Pepperwort), *Bromus*

commutatus (Meadow Brome), *Lolium multiflorum* (Italian Rye-grass) and *Silva silaus* (Peppercress). *Genista tinctoria* (Dyer's Green-weed) was also there in quantity. Another unimproved meadow showed *Rhinanthus minor* (Yellow-rattle) and *Linum bienne* (Pale Flax). A couple of large ponds had modest numbers of marginal species but lacked floating aquatics. By the end of the day we had met our target by bringing the number up by nearly 40 to over 260 species in the tetrad. We ended the meeting with a ramble around Stonegate village and increased the records for TQ62U to 300.

Horam, 18th June; leader Helen Proctor

A select group of four members met in Horam car park to record in TQ51T. From the car park we passed *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia-creeper) covering half the pavement width. *Lobelia erinus* (Garden Lobelia) had escaped from its intended home in a hanging basket and *Erigeron karvinskianus* (Mexican Fleabane) was happily established outside a hairdresser's abode. *Vulpia myuros* (Rat's-tail Fescue) was found on a track close to the former railway line. By pure chance we met the owner of a garden that contained unimproved grassland. Thanks are due to Andy Billings for giving us access and for allowing several native plants to survive including several *Sussex Plant Atlas* species needed for our records! Eighteen spikes of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) were counted. In all seventeen species were added to the records, bringing the tetrad total to exactly 300! As there were frequent torrential showers, skills were developed in juggling with umbrellas, the recording card, and list of missing species. In the afternoon, we recorded plants in TQ51Z. Thanks are due to Emma Gower for allowing parking on her land and for advice on botanically worthy sites. Sapperton Meadows, a SSSI, had vast quantities of *Achillea ptarmica* (Sneezewort). One flower spike of *Dactylorhiza maculata* ssp. *ericetorum* (Heath Spotted-orchid) was found alongside more plentiful *D. fuchsii*. The afternoon remained dry with the rain only returning at the end of the day.

Hailsham, 9th July; leader Wendy Meadway

Nine members met in the car park below Hailsham Leisure Centre on a dry, mild day with sunshine in the afternoon. The purpose of this meeting was to record plants in TQ50Z, TQ51V and TQ51W. From the car park we walked down a narrow footpath where we recorded *Hirschfeldia incana* (Hoary Mustard). An elm in a hedgerow was confirmed to be *Ulmus minor* ssp. *minor* (Small-leaved Elm). We revisited the pond where *Hottonia palustris* (Water-violet) and *Ranunculus tripartitus* (Three-lobed Crowfoot) had been found several years ago.

Sadly the pond was badly overgrown and dried up and these species had disappeared.

Continuing northwards, TQ51V included a roadside with a few more new species for our list. After lunch, we drove to the Cuckoo Trail car park at Hellingly in TQ51W. Two subspecies of *Arctium minus* were compared. The main excitement though was finding *Crepis biennis* (Rough Hawk's-beard) in two locations. One plant was in flower, enabling examination of the partly pubescent phyllaries. A plant of *Convolvulus arvensis* (Field Bindweed) with deep rose pink flowers was admired and considered almost garden-worthy but - - - NOT IN MY BACK GARDEN!

Flimwell and Ticehurst, 3rd August; leaders Ann Callow & Geoffrey Kitchener

Joint meeting with Kent BRG

This meeting benefited both Kent and East Sussex botanists owing to the considerable overlap here of the administrative and Watsonian vice-county boundaries. From Flimwell, eight botanists reassembled at Pashley Manor's car park. The morning was spent recording in TQ72E. We walked down the road where the Kent members recorded 35 new species for their VC16 records. We then followed a footpath where three trees and a possible seedling of *Sorbus torminalis* (Wild Service-tree) were recorded. Nearby, good quantities of *Senecio sylvaticus* (Heath Groundsel) were recorded in a recently coppiced area. It helped having the national recorder around when looking at a *Rumex*: a rather weak specimen turned out to be *Rumex x duttonii* (*R. sanguineus* x *obtusifolius*). The new records took the tetrad total to over 300.

Back at Pashley Manor, lunch was eaten in the shade of the trees to escape the heat and humidity. In the afternoon, the group returned to Flimwell to explore TQ73A and TQ73F. Following a path from the Royal Oak to some waste ground, the starry flowers of *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St. John's-wort) caught our eyes as well as *Centaureum pulchellum* (Lesser Centaury) and *Epilobium x vicinum* (*E. obscurum* x *ciliatum*). The weedy gravel of the former Bird Park grounds produced a *Hypericum* which was later confirmed as *H. x desetangsii* (Des Etangs' St. John's-wort, *H. perforatum* x *maculatum*). Geoffrey noted that this hybrid has been included on the Kent Rare Plant Register because it continues to carry the genes of a species which has almost disappeared from the county. The car park also produced five *Epilobium* hybrids. In a dumped area there was a shoot of *Sambucus nigra forma laciniata* (Elder, cut-leaved form) and some *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine). At the end of a long afternoon, we were rewarded with the sight of *Lobelia urens* (Heath Lobelia) in its only station in Sussex. In fact

although it has long been claimed as a Sussex plant and is within the current administrative boundary of East Sussex, strictly speaking it is within VC16 West Kent. Known here since 1925, its original woodland site has not been coppiced for many years but some plants still grow along the shaded footpath. However, it was flourishing in an open area of the original Bird Park where grazing, presumably by rabbits, keeps other vegetation at bay while the unpalatable *Lobelia* is avoided. TQ73A's records now topped 300 and 73F (a partial tetrad) now had over 200 records.

Thanks are due to Pat Donovan for organising the meeting and to Judith Clark and Geoffrey Kitchener for their contributions to this report.

Beckley, 3rd September; leader Roy Wells

Four members turned up for the field meeting at Bixley Wood, Beckley. The quality of those four shone through as they managed to bring the number of records above 300 in two tetrads and to find the elusive *Anagallis minima* (Chaffweed) in both. A fine specimen of *Quercus petraea* (Sessile Oak) was seen and *Quercus x rosacea*, its hybrid with the Penduculate Oak, was also found. However to their chagrin, despite diligent searching not even one plant of *Capsella bursa-pastoris* (Shepherd's-purse) was seen, leaving this as a feature of the Missing Common Species List.

Mayfield, 18th September; leader Roy Wells

Nine members successfully defied looming black clouds to drop their cargo over Mayfield, until the day was forced to adopt a sunnier aspect for the afternoon. We split into two groups for the morning and both brought their respective tetrad scores to above 300 records. The number of casual and established aliens was the notable thing about the morning, ranging from *Rhododendron luteum* (Yellow Azalea) and *Lysichiton americanus* (American Skunk-cabbage) to a field of set-aside sown with more than a dozen, including *Agrostemma githago* (Corn Cockle), *Chrysanthemum segetum* (Corn Marigold), *Panicum mileaceum* (Millet), *Setaria pumila* (Yellow Bristle-grass) and *Sinapis alba* (White Mustard). As one group we sallied forth for the afternoon to bring another tetrad, rather frustratingly, to 299 species. *Potentilla x mixta* (Hybrid Cinquefoil) was fairly easily identified, but not so an *Oxalis*, keenly debated and later identified back in the lab by Matthew as *O. corniculata* (Procumbent Yellow-sorrel).

***Cuscuta epithymum* and its hosts on Levin Down by Rosalind Bucknall**

In the summer of 2011 a small population of *Cuscuta epithymum* (Dodder) was observed in short chalk grassland on the Sussex Wildlife Reserve on Levin Down (SU885134). The compartment had recently been grazed by a flock of Herdwick sheep.

This native species, which belongs to the Family Cuscutaceae, is associated with heathlands and chalk downland, where the host species are most commonly *Calluna vulgaris* (Ling), *Thymus polytrichus* (Wild Thyme) and *Ulex* spp. (Gorse), which *C. epithymum* parasitises by means of haustoria. These small suckers are absorbing organs which penetrate the host tissues. The plant has red twining stems and very small pinkish-white flowers, with the leaves reduced to minute scales.

The Dodder seedling germinates in late spring, when the host plants have already developed their shoots. It sends a small club-shaped root into the ground, while its shoot elongates and sweeps around in the air until a suitable host plant is reached. The Dodder stem then twines around the host plant, developing haustoria. The xylem and phloem of these organs fuse with those of the host plant, and the parasite obtains a source of nutrients and water with dissolved mineral salts. The root of the parasite then dies off. However, if the Dodder seedling fails to reach a host plant it does not survive (Lowson's *A Text-book of Botany*. 5th Ed. University Tutorial Press, London. 1920).

Looking at the historical records for Sussex, *C. epithymum* was described as 'common' in Arnold's *Flora of Sussex* in 1887. Wolley-Dod (*Flora of Sussex* 1937) stated that the plant was 'frequent' and was found mainly on heaths. The entry in the *Sussex Plant Atlas* (1980) gives it as 'occasional'. The *New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora* (2002) states that 'the loss of lowland heath, ploughing of chalk downlands, and an increase in scrub have caused a decline in this species since 1930.' Dodder is classified as Vulnerable in the Red Data List (2005) and was covered in 2011 by the BSBI as one of ten threatened plants to be surveyed that year.

On Levin Down a small population of *C. epithymum* was found by my mother and myself in August 2008 (SU887134) and a specimen was verified by Alan Knapp. From observations made during three visits in June and July 2011, a total of 22 species were found to have *C. epithymum* haustoria attached to

them. The short chalk turf had a south-facing aspect with a diverse flora. The host species were:

<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Agrimony
<i>Arenaria serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved Sandwort
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Harebell
<i>Carex flacca</i>	Glaucous Sedge
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Common Knapweed
<i>Clinopodium vulgare</i>	Wild Basil
<i>Euphrasia</i> agg.	Eyebright
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's Bedstraw
<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Perforate St John's-wort
<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	Field Scabious
<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	Rough Hawkbit
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common Bird's-foot-trefoil
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick
<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Wild Marjoram
<i>Polygala vulgaris</i>	Common Milkwort
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Bulbous Buttercup
<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>	Sweet-briar
<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	Salad Burnet
<i>Thymus polytrichus</i>	Wild Thyme
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell

It would be interesting to know if the same or different host species have been recorded in Sussex in the past.

Recording Update **by Paul Harmes (with Mike Shaw & Arthur Hoare)**

The 2011 recording season was our first deviation from the principle of aiming to record 300+ species per tetrad, as we move towards the publication of the new Flora of Sussex. The Flora Working group (FWG) had agreed a strategy whereby we requested the SBRS membership to 'adopt a hectad' (10km Square). Recording was to focus on finding species recorded in the Sussex Plant Atlas, Supplement and Rare Plant Register but not seen since 1999. The previous target of 300 species per tetrad was relegated, but definitely not dispensed with.

40 of the 57 Sussex hectads were adopted and this approach has been quite successful. To 10th December 2011, 9358 new records were added in VC13, and 9661 in VC14. The new Flora database now holds 394,659 records.

The website has been updated by Roy with effect from that date also. Roy has asked that recorders check the map to ensure that it reflects the species numbers in each tetrad that you feel it should. If you think that there are errors, or that records you submitted have not been included, please let him know by e-mail or telephone.

The database has now been frozen until the end of January 2012. This is to enable Mike to carry out an audit, and remove any duplicate records - we believe that there may be about twenty or thirty thousand of these.

For those who still have 2011 records to submit, please get them to me as soon as you can, so that I can process them in time for a new update in early February 2012.

In 2012, we will continue to record as we have in 2011, although we do need to focus more on the missing records I have highlighted above. We also need to ensure that all habitat types within a tetrad have been visited and recorded. Please go over the species lists for each tetrad in your hectad(s) to check that important habitat types have not been missed, and ensure that each has had three or more visits at varying times of year. If you have difficulty with a particular type of vegetation, such as aquatic species or grasses, do please tell Mike or me. If we are not available, tell one of the other members of the FWG, and we will do all we can to assist.

It is important to note that, even if you have upwards of 300 or 400 records in a tetrad, if a habitat type has been missed, or it has not been visited in a particular season, there is still potential to achieve a clearer picture of the tetrad, other than just a large total. Please remember that we also need information on species which you have searched for but failed to find - and information on factors such as, for example, change of land use, which might explain changes in vegetation and the loss of particular species.

Although there will be more information at the AGM, we ask you to continue to send in your records as you have in 2011. This means that all electronic records should be sent to me, for both Vice Counties. All hardcopy paper records and cards should be sent to Arthur. Requests for up-to-date tetrad lists from those who do not have access to a computer should be sent to Mike, with a stamped addressed A4 envelope. Please note that a full set of tetrad lists for a hectad requires at least fifty sheets of A4 paper, and a 92p stamp should be used on your SAE. Please also continue to send requests for recording cards to Mike, again with an SAE, but remember that these can be downloaded from the website or collected from Mike at the AGM or at field meetings.

There are still a number of hectads that have not been adopted. If you have not adopted a hectad as yet, and would like details of what is required, please call me, and I can discuss this with you.

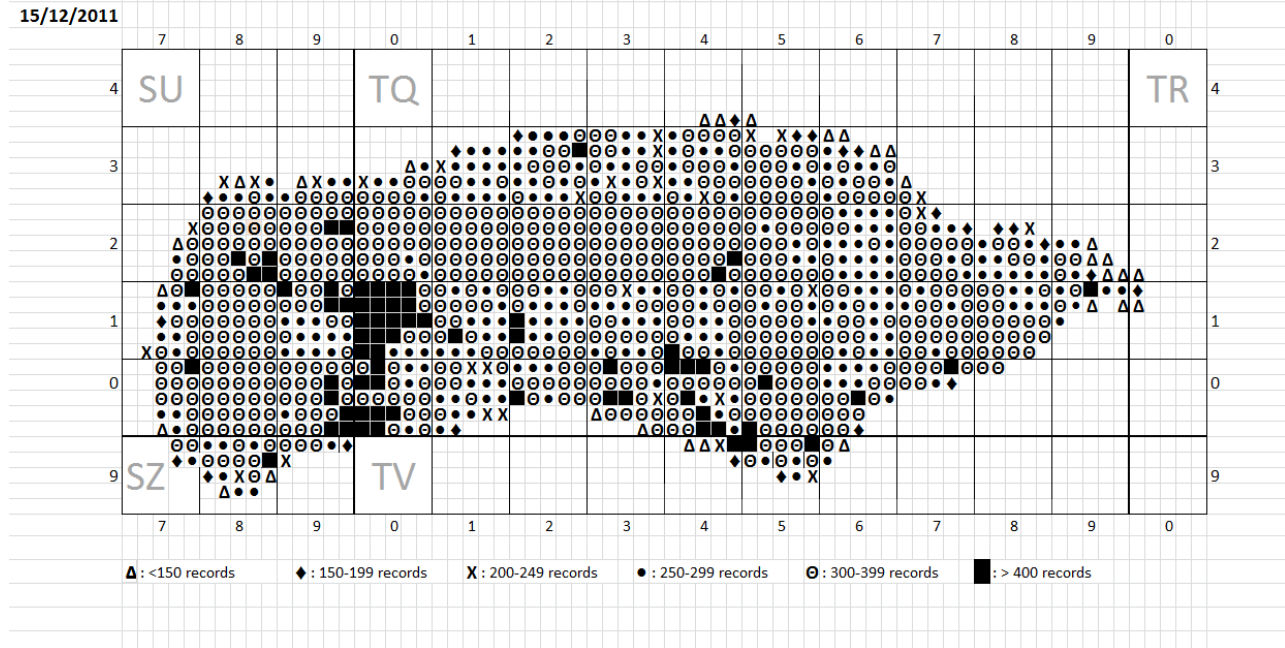
A reminder: in order to avoid confusion, we continue to use the species names in the 2nd edition (1997) of Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles*. We will switch to those in the 3rd (2010) edition at a later date.

On behalf of the FWG, I would like to thank all who have contributed records in 2011, and look forward to receiving your new records in 2012.

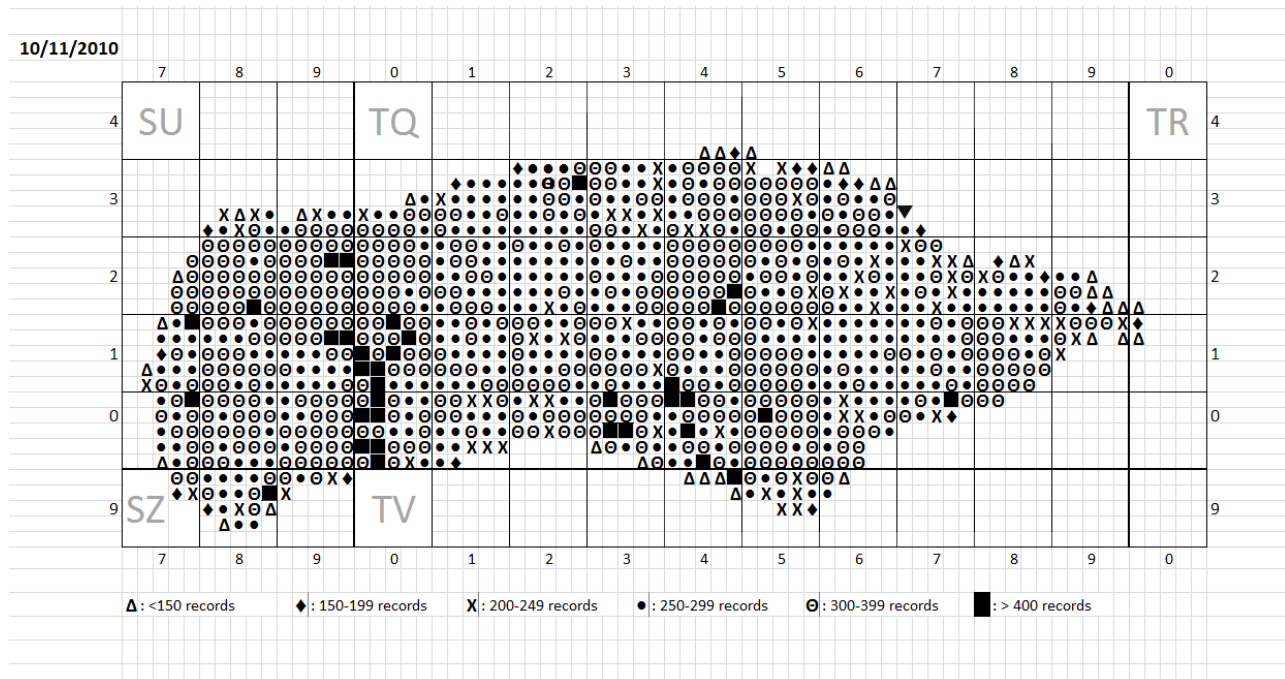
Recording progress maps

The map showing the number of species recorded for each tetrad from 2000 to 2011 is shown below as usual. This time, we are also including beneath it the map showing the position a year ago - it is interesting and encouraging to see them together.

2011



2010



Let's see what we can do in 2012!

Field Meetings 2012

Sat. 28th April Nick Sturt	Worthing area. Multi-tetrad recording in TQ10. Meet in Marine Drive in the open area between Ferring and Goring at TQ103016.
Wed. 2nd May Matthew Berry	Jevington area: we hope to refind <i>Arabis hirsuta</i> and other early downland species. Some steep hill climbing. Meet in Jevington car park at TQ562013.
Sat. 12th May Mike Shaw	Stansted area. Recording in several tetrads, by permission of Stansted Estate. Meet in main car park by Stansted Park Garden Centre SU75901014.
Sat. 19th May Judy Clark/ Jacqueline Rose/ Ellen Campbell	Staplecross area to record early species in TQ72R,V,W & TQ82A. Meet in Brede High Woods car park TQ804206, 2.5 km east of Cripps Corner on B2089.
Sat. 2nd June Roy Wells	Salehurst. A visit to an unimproved meadow nr. Robertsbridge. Meet at Bourne Farm, Bourne lane, Salehurst, TQ759255.
Sun. 17th June David Lang	Plashett Park Farm. At TQ447151, turn off the A26 on to a track. Park where the track crosses a stream.
Wed. 27th June Rita Hemsley	Evening meeting 6.15pm. Wivelsfield. Recording in TQ31P. Meet at Wivelsfield Recreation Ground, Eastern Rd, Wivelsfield, TQ346200.
Sat. 30th June Arthur Hoare/Frances Abraham	Warnham Reserve & Mill Pond. Park just E of the A24 in the Reserve car park on the B2237 at TQ167323. Survey prior to alterations on the Reserve. We hope to move on in the afternoon if time permits.
Wed. 4th July Rita Hemsley	Evening meeting 6.15pm: Wivelsfield again. Rerecording in TQ31U. Meet at TQ369190 nr Wivelsfield Green. Park on road verge.
Sat. 21st July Helen Proctor	Hargate and Broadwater Forests. Meet in layby at TQ569365 on the east-west road between A26 and A267, south of Tunbridge Wells.
Sun. 29th July Nick Sturt	Multi-tetrad recording in TQ21. Meet at Oreham Common TQ222140: there are several laybys. TQ21G and H are in especial need.
Sun. 12th August Nick Sturt	Worthing area 'in the footsteps of Betty Bishop'. Multi-tetrad recording in TQ01. Meet in Poulter's Lane car park off A2032 just E of Poulter's Corner crossroads, TQ134047.
Sun. 19th August Geoffrey Kitchener/ Helen Proctor	Bayham Estate: joint meeting with Kent Botanical Recording Group. Park by side of lane, west of Sunninglye Farm at TQ620379.
Sat. 15th September Barry Yates/Paul Harmes	Rye Harbour to record plants in shingle and newly created saltmarsh habitats. Meet in car park at TQ941189.

All meetings start at 10.45 am unless indicated otherwise.

Since some 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.