



Sussex Botanical Recording Society

Newsletter

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Chairman's Message

I write this at the damp end of November with the Editor standing over me, the cold barrel of her pistol pressed to my temple as the deadline for copy approaches. I should not have procrastinated but, in my defence, it has been a long, gentle descent through Autumn with too many lovely days for communing with Nature. Sooner or later, however, it is a question of What does the botanist do in Winter? Some of us, of course, defect to birds or, maybe, we prefer to sit by the fire and re-catalogue our collection of vintage matchbox labels. Mary, our late and much loved President, was aware of our discomfort and every so often would set botanical tasks to tide over the more single-minded member. There were, for example, quests for *Ruscus aculeatus* (Butcher's-broom) and *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge). But the most satisfying for those of us towards the western end of the county was the year she issued a challenge to find the leaves of *Arum italicum* subsp. *neglectum* (Scarce Lords-and-ladies): vegetating by the fireside was exchanged for vegetation on the scarp slope of the Downs – never mind that in this chilly location we were rarely exposed to the cheer of a low Winter sun. But I hear a clamour of protest from bryologists and other devotees of so-called Lower Plants, because for them the Winter is a time of great activity as they lag themselves with layers of woollen jumpers, scarves and mittens and sally forth in pursuit of their more subtle quarry. Alas, my own knowledge of bryophytes allows me to misidentify only about five species of moss with any degree of confidence. In the membership, however, there are a number of very knowledgeable Lower Plantsmen and I hope that before too long the exciting new SBRS website, constructed for us by Mike's son Roger, will enable them to exchange notes and pool their knowledge. Howard, of course, has been paddling his intrepid canoe up the less frequented backwaters of the plant kingdom for many years and you will find in Issue 81 another fascinating report of his discoveries. And by the time this Newsletter appears in your inbox (or flops in a comfortably solid way upon your doormat), the early bulbs heralding Spring will be inching their way through the soil and the vascular plant specialists at least will be thinking of the joys of

the Spring to come. You will doubtless be forming your own plans for botanical explorations in 2016, but do not omit to enter on your new calendar the details of the field meetings. There is nothing like getting into the field as part of a jolly band of plant recorders: there is always something useful to learn and something special to find. Memories to enjoy by the fireside next Winter.

Nick Sturt

Secretary's Note

Thank you to all of our members who kindly made cakes for the 2015 Get-together. These were delicious and sold out, with members buying slices to take home.

Dates for your Diary:

Saturday 5th March 2016

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 2.00 p.m. at Staplefield Village Hall. After the AGM, dates and information will be given about this year's field meetings and there will be details of interesting records found in 2015. There will be a report on the New Flora. Please bring your digital photographs of Sussex plants to show to the meeting, which will finish with tea and biscuits and possibly cakes! The hall will be available from 1.30 p.m. if you wish to bring any books or plants for sale.

Saturday 29th October 2016

The Autumn Get-together will be held at Staplefield Village Hall a little earlier this year to avoid Bonfire Night. The doors will be open from 10.00 a.m. and the meeting will start promptly at 10.30 a.m. Please remember to bring a packed lunch; tea 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 to show in the afternoon. Offers of homemade cakes are always welcome (see above) and prove very popular.

Rita Hemsley

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Treasurer's Note

Welcome to 2016. Following preparation of the Society's Accounts for 2015 I shall update you, in the May 2016 Newsletter, as to the state of the Flora Fund, however I am able to tell you that things are progressing fairly well, so thank all of you who have donated to the Fund. Further donations to the Flora Fund are always welcome so if you are so minded please send any donation to me.

It is likely that subscriptions for 2016 will remain as for 2014 i.e. £8 for an individual and £11 for two people at the same address and receiving one copy of the mailings. Subscriptions may be sent to me at my home address, paid at the AGM in March or at the Autumn Get-together in November. If anyone has not paid their subscription for 2015 (or for earlier years) - 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

SBRS website reborn

by Mike Shaw

As our Chairman announced at the autumn meeting, Roy Wells has reluctantly decided to step down from the post of Webmaster. The Committee is very grateful for all of his hard work over several years keeping the site updated and running smoothly. My son Roger has kindly been working to redesign the website using a content management system called

WordPress which will make it much easier to maintain and keep current than the existing website. The new site will not only look more attractive, but will have more regularly updated content, and modern features which will make it more visible to potential new members and easier to use for members who use mobile devices like iPads. Ideas we want to incorporate include: platforms to share information and photos with other members, for example news of interesting finds; resources for plant identification; and better links to other organisations and websites. We are also considering the publication of our Rare Plant Register on line and the possibility of entering records via the website.

We will also be using this as an opportunity to investigate alternative ways of accessing plant data lists rather than the map we have all become used to. The size of our database increased hugely during recording for the new Flora, making updating of the map very time-consuming, and now that phase is over the need for comparative lists has become unnecessary. A functioning version of the map page will be available on the new site, but the data underlying the map and tetrad lists will not be updated.

The transition to the new site will take place by spring of 2016 and will be a seamless process. Members may be asked to reset their passwords for the new site and will be able to navigate the site at least as easily as before.

Further information will be available at the AGM and the current website will continue to work as normal, although no maintenance or updating is likely to take place.

Lower Plants: New and Interesting Records

by Howard Matcham

Cattle drinking troughs, usually of galvanised steel, are often left filled with water when the cattle have departed and can be superb small temporary bodies filled with interesting algal species. This has certainly been the case for the past three years and 2015 was no exception. Visiting the village of Poling in June of this year, I walked from the church south to Black Ditch, which empties into the River Arun at Lyminster. Passing through a grass ley I could not help but notice a large semi-abandoned water trough filled with moss and filamentous algae. Filling a collecting bottle, I returned home to view the

contents under my microscopes. Two species from this tank are new records for the United Kingdom! *Mougeotia ventricosa* is a filamentous species previously reported from the British Isles from a single collection by the River Crolly (Gweedore River), Donegal, western Ireland (West 1904; John *et al.* 2011), where it was last seen in the ultimate decade of the 19th century. It is possibly extant but has not been reported subsequently. It is widespread but local in Europe, and local in the USA (Wehr *et al.* 2015). *M. ventricosa* possesses obliquely ellipsoid to subspherical aplanospores which are diagnostic; zygospores are unknown. The collection was later confirmed by David John at the Natural History Museum - a most unexpected addition to the algal flora of Sussex.

Cosmarium regnellii is a not uncommon desmid but the Poling collection had a puzzling sculpturing. I sent it, via Chris Carter (Northampton) who takes beautiful photomicrographs of my collections, to David Williamson (Leicester), an authority on the group, who suggested that it belonged to a *forma* previously seen only from a collection gathered in Switzerland! The next cow to drink from this trough will produce rich milk indeed!

For the past two years a small group from the SBRS has been looking at the botany of the stream, ponds and surrounds at Botany Bay, Seaford College, Duncton. This also included a visit by Tom Ottley, Sussex bryophyte recorder, who e-mailed me to say that he had seen the encrusting freshwater red alga *Hildenbrandia rivularis* (Rhodophyta) on submerged flints in the stream. On a later visit to survey this area with Bruce Middleton I found that this bright pink unmistakeable species was fairly frequent on long submerged stones. It has also been recorded from Bignor Mill Stream and the Upper Lavington Park Stream, on both occasions by Nigel Holmes in January 2010. However, it remains a very rare species in Sussex, so imagine my surprise when I discovered it in the Mill Stream at Fishbourne and later in the Bosham Stream at West Ashling.

Even rarer is the crustose thalloid brown freshwater species, *Heribaudiella fluviatilis* (Phaeophyta), which to my amazement is colonising hundreds of submerged flints in a 300m stretch of the Mill Stream at Fishbourne. The nearest locations to this large colony are Devonshire and then northeast England. The collection I sent to Chris Carter for imaging possessed abundant sporangia (spore-producing structures) and samples of the collection have been sent to John Wehr at Louis Calder Centre, Fordham University, New York for DNA sequencing.

Bosham Stream: when I waded along the streambed looking for *H. fluviatilis*, which was not present, I noticed that several submerged flints were colonised by an aquatic *Verrucaria* lichen which when viewed under my microscopes I was able to identify as *Verrucaria rheitrophila*. This is an exceptionally rare species in West Sussex with only two previous records, the first from the bed of the River Rother at Chithurst in 1971, and more recently a collection in 2006 by Simon Davey (pers. comm.) from a calcareous stream at Fulking. My collection was confirmed by the curator of lichens at the Natural History Museum, Holger Thüs, who is a specialist in the genus, and this collection is currently being DNA sequenced.

References:

- John, D.M., Whitton, B.A., Brook, A.J. (2011). *The Freshwater Algal Flora of the British Isles*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
 Wehr, J.D., Sheath, R.G. Kociolek, J.P. (2015). *Freshwater Algae of North America*. Academic Press.
 West, G.S. (1904). *A Treatise on the British Freshwater Algae*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

(A longer version of this report will be published in Adastra 2015)

Field Meeting reports 2015

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

VC13 West Sussex

by Nick Sturt unless noted otherwise

29th April Western Rother Valley

(Leader: Dawn Nelson)

On a sparkling Spring morning with swallows aloft, eleven botanists shook off the lethargies of winter and followed Dawn with eager anticipation of the joys ahead: full-on vascular plant recording without the shackles of tetrad lists and irritating cries from a Flora Group apparatchik of 'that's already on'. We positively sailed along Cumber's Lane piling on species and arguing merrily about such matters as the status of an old pear tree and the shape of the fronds of *Polypodium interjectum* (Intermediate Polypody). Steven's pteridological expertise was illuminating not only throughout the day but throughout a fern-filled Summer. *Polygonatum multiflorum* (Solomon's Seal) had already been spotted on a bank

before we entered the wood where Mike found a 20m swathe of it. There was much else besides to keep the party busy until a somewhat windswept lunchtime spent among the Lupins which are still sown by the National Trust in memory of the late owner beside the A272.

The afternoon was dedicated to Fyning Moor SSSI and all the specialties of this swampy woodland eventually yielded themselves up: *Geum rivale* (Water Avens) and its hybrid with *G. urbanum* (Wood Avens), *Carex paniculata* (Greater Tussock-sedge), *Ribes nigrum* (Black Currant), *Dryopteris carthusiana* (Narrow Buckler-fern), *Stellaria neglecta* (Greater Chickweed) and *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* (Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage). The last was difficult to find, possibly not having thrived in a comparatively dry winter. In addition to the wood there was a rushy meadow, where Frances re-found the leaves of a fine colony of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid). Dawn brought the day to an end with a team-building exercise involving scaling fences and crossing bogs: give or take the odd ripped Norfolk jacket and nearly lost wellington-boot, this was highly successful and the company dispersed glowing with achievement. Dawn, as usual, had done us proud. And it was especially good to welcome new-member Alison, Fiona (representing the National Trust), and Caroline from Natural England. It was thanks to Caroline that we were able to enjoy Fyning Moor with the permission of the owner.

9th May Binsted Woods

(Leader: Peter Jones)

Such was the faith in the forecast of the possibility of the merest brush with a light shower that when at the start a few drops fell the party moved off confidently into Binsted Woods. A decidedly soggy hour or two later we were ticking off plants on a disintegrating recording card, but at least the bluebells were uplifting. Peter further enhanced the proceedings by recalling Lorna Wishart, the wife of the former owner, and her romance with Laurie Lee. He also took us to the remains of her secret garden – a Camellia or two and some low stone balustrades sequestered deep in the trees. All this was nearly as poignant as the thought that the part of the woodland complex we had just recorded – Spinningwheel Copse – could be bulldozed as one of the potential routes for the A27 Arundel bypass. Amongst a fine assemblage of ancient woodland indicators there were *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple-orchid) in profusion, *Conopodium majus* (Pignut) and the delicately waving culms of *Milium effusum* (Wood Millet). Having been averted in the 1990s, the threat of the bypass has returned and some members of the

SBRS are helping to record the flora of the area between Binsted and Lyminster for MAVES (Mid Arun Valley Ecological Surveys). Everyone we encountered was interested in and supportive of our mission, and after lunch – when the sun had thankfully evaporated most of the accumulated damp on clothes and cards – we were invited into a parcel of land on Tortington Common to survey it for the owner. The SBRS is not a campaigning organisation but it can through gathering data help to identify which areas are most botanically rich, so informing decision-making. Woodland on the coastal plain of Sussex is scarce after the steady clearance of centuries past, and so the Binsted-Tortington complex is especially precious.

This field meeting brought back a useful collection of records, from the ancient woodland of the western portion through to the lighter and heathier east. There was no time on this occasion to investigate the damp and sedgy rides of the part nearer to the A27. An interesting collection of plants was appreciated by the twelve members, however, including *Callitriche obtusangula* (Blunt-fruited Water-starwort), *C. platycarpa* (Various-leaved Water-starwort), *Lathyrus linifolius* (Bitter-vetch) and *Luzula x borrieri*, the hybrid between *L. forsteri* (Southern Wood-rush) and *L. pilosa* (Hairy Wood-rush).

Back at the cars the thoughts of at least one person turned to where one might ask Peter to lead next year, assuming he can take time off from his new career as artisan baker and confectioner.

June 28th Henfield

(Leaders: Nick Sturt & Frances Abraham)

Arthur saw off the party of twelve from the car park as the author and Frances felt some regret that they would not have his expertise on tap to deal with the baffling aliens which were expected on the route around Henfield town. The aim was general recording – and a splendid 230 or so records for TQ21C was amassed by the end of the day – with a special look-out for plants with a connection to William Borrer. While both leaders fell over each other to delegate responsibility to the other, Malcolm and Helen confidently conducted the group along Cagefoot Lane to view the plaque commemorating the house in which the Great Botanist was born. It was but a short step from there to find the first Borrer plant, *Fumaria capreolata* (Ramping Fumitory), after which they just kept coming – *Impatiens parviflora* (Small Balsam), and several *Geranium* species, including *G. lucidum* (Shining Crane's-bill) and *G. rotundifolium* (Round-leaved Crane's-bill). *Allium roseum* (Rosy Garlic) and *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum* (Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem) were fittingly

represented on Borrer's Bank, where an information board explains how these species originate from his wonderful garden, which has now been built on.

In the afternoon we sallied out onto the Common, which looked a little in need of grazing but still yielded some good species, such as *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath Grass) and *Pedicularis sylvatica* (Lousewort). The best plants, however, were in the dampest region and included *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel), *Carex panicea* (Carnation Sedge) and – a real rarity in Sussex these days – *Triglochin palustre* (Marsh Arrowgrass). The proceedings came to a conclusion with a shower of rain not quite sufficient to stop play on the cricket-pitch and thus allow an inspection of the *Chamaemelum nobile* (Chamomile). And so a drifting back to the cars, with the feeling of having had a good day 'in the field' – the meeting enlivened by the presence of two bright new members, Rachel and Tom.

9th July Peppering Farm, Norfolk Estate

by Frances Abraham

(Leaders: Dick Potts & Frances Abraham)

We had a very special treat when the Norfolk Estate invited us to visit their chalky arable on the Downs above Burpham. This was at the instigation of Dr Dick Potts, whom some members may remember giving a fascinating talk at our Autumn Get-together a few years ago. Dick has been recording arable weeds on downland between the Arun and the Adur for many years, and is working with the Estate to restore wildlife-friendly habitats. The primary aim is to benefit Grey Partridge, but there are magnificent spinoffs for the flora. Meeting at Peppering Farm, we were driven in 4 x 4s along the chalky tracks, tumbling out at intervals to enjoy the flora. We started with *Orobancha elatior* (Knapweed Broomrape), parasitic on *Centaurea scabiosa* (Greater Knapweed), in one of its few Sussex sites on a chalky bank. We saw a wonderful collection of arable weeds, including *Legousia hybrida* (Venus's-looking-glass), *Valerianella dentata* (Narrow-fruited Cornsalad), *Thlaspi arvense* (Field Penny-cress), *Silene noctiflora* (Night-flowering Catchfly), *Lamium amplexicaule* (Henbit Deadnettle) and *L. hybridum* (Cut-leaved Deadnettle). Best of all were a few plants of *Polygonum rurivagum* (Cornfield Knotgrass). Other interesting species were present on headlands where seed mixtures had been sown for game birds. These included *Camelina sativa* (Gold-of-pleasure). *Rapistrum rugosum* (Bastard Cabbage) has long been known in this area, and is fairly widespread. Last stop was a newly created dewpond, where we lingered to enjoy linnets, swallows and corn buntings. We offer our thanks to Dick and to the Norfolk Estate for a most enjoyable and interesting afternoon.

July 18th Levin Down

(Leader: Nick Sturt)

The tour of this Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve was greatly enhanced by the presence of Ann Griffiths, who has looked after it for so many years and not only knows it inside out as it is today, but understands the historic and indeed the prehistoric context. Thus the eight members' botanical journey was punctuated with all sorts of interesting information, including the theory that it takes its name from the Anglo-Saxon for 'Leave-alone' owing to its steep sides being unsuitable for cultivation. The eastern side, where the loess soil supports a community of acid-loving plants such as *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather) and *Potentilla erecta* (Tormentil), is under restoration and progressing splendidly; in one area there was an abundance of *Thymus pulegioides* (Large Thyme). On the chalk itself there was exquisite turf offering almost all the species that could be desired, notably much *Asperula cynanchica* (Squinancywort) and *Campanula glomerata* (Clustered Bellflower). The party saw different patches of the county's two commonest Eyebrights (*Euphrasia nemorosa* and *E. anglica*). Here and there *Cuscuta epithymum* (Common Dodder) rampaged and the article in the recent Newsletter by Rosalind was recalled: on this site she had traced the stems back to no less than 22 different hosts. Meanwhile Ann was multi-tasking by doing her butterfly survey, with Brimstones, Marbled Whites, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and Small Skippers in quantity. The sun shone down, Yellowhammers repeatedly declined cheese, a Red Kite swept overhead, and all seemed well with the world. Members dispersed in the afternoon mellowed by the experience: it was especially good to be in the company of Steven and Sue C. from over the border in Surrey, to have the grass expertise of Sue D. on hand, and to welcome Colin to his first meeting.

July 29th Lavington Common by Mike Shaw

Leader: Mike Shaw

Despite the unseasonably cool weather, eleven members assembled at the car park where we were given an introduction to the management of the heathland reserve by Fiona Scully of the National Trust. We then walked into The Plantation to a boggy area where some scrapes had been created, together with a small pool. *Carex nigra* (Common Sedge) was found at the pool edge, with *Drosera rotundifolia* (Round-leaved Sundew), *Salix repens* (Creeping Willow), *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush) and *Carex echinata* (Star Sedge) on the damp track nearby. Another similar track provided our first sighting of *Drosera intermedia* (Oblong-leaved Sundew), with *Rubus bertramii* (Bertram's Bramble) under the adjacent bracken. The group slowly

retraced its steps back to the car park where the leader had planned lunch, but an advance party, led by Frances, decided they couldn't wait and were found further along the track by a cattle trough, rebelliously tucking into their sandwiches. Before joining them, Nick took a couple of us to see an interesting *Potentilla* spotted earlier on the main track. None of us recognized it so reference books were extracted and we eventually keyed it out to *Potentilla norvegica* (Ternate-leaved Cinquefoil), an introduced species not recorded in Sussex for over 40 years.

Lunch over, the group reassembled in the car park having admired the *Potentilla* on the way. We then headed onto the main part of the common north of the road, noting a single bush of *Rubus laciniatus* (Cut-leaved Bramble) by the side of the track. The common was very dry, but interesting plants were seen in some areas, chiefly in scrapes of various ages, including *Eriophorum angustifolium* and *vaginatum* (Common and Hare's-tail Cottongrass), *Rhynchospora alba* (White Beak-sedge) and more *Drosera intermedia*. At the pool we were tempted by Richard's offer to use his grapnel, recalling the hilarious entertainment it had provided at Steyning last year, but sadly had to decline as Fiona pointed out that the pool was too acidic for plants and was chiefly preserved as a dragonfly habitat.

Returning to the car park, Frances bade her farewell, while the rest of us spent the remaining time exploring a damp ride in the northern part of The Plantation, adjacent to the road. This proved to be an inspired decision and produced some of the best finds of the day, including more *Isolepis setacea*, nice patches of *Centunculus minimus* (Chaffweed), *Carex demissa* (Common Yellow-sedge), *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath-grass) and frequent bushes of *Rubus glanduliger* (Gland-bearing Bramble). We then joined the road and walked along the verges back to the car park, recording *Carex muricata* subsp. *pairae* (Prickly Sedge) amongst others. Altogether the meeting produced 176 records, including nine sedges and nine rushes, with several new to the tetrad. A good day was enjoyed by all, with a wide range of interesting plants, pleasant weather, and good company.

August 9th Danes Wood and The Rewell by Peter Jones
(Leader: Nick Sturt)

A warm, sunny morning heralded this meeting of nine members, who gathered in a quiet lane edging Danes Wood – a westerly outpost of the larger Rewell Wood or 'The Rewell', as many locals know it. Under the leadership of our Chairman we were

tasked to find missing species within the squares SU90T and Y. The pleasant coolness of the path into the wood presently gave way to a wider, dappled ride of ruts, rushes and some persistent puddles. Mike commenced the search for *Luzula x borrieri*, the hybrid of *L. pilosa* (Hairy Wood-rush) and *L. forsteri* (Southern Wood-rush) and, while several candidates appeared, none was convincing until he was eventually successful and found a good example to show us before lunch. Borrer again cropped up when Steven showed us the salient points in a 'typical specimen' of *Dryopteris borrieri* (Borrer's Male-fern) which obligingly grew near similar fern species for comparison. *D. affinis* (Golden-scaled Male-fern), he pointed out in case we had not noticed, had an indusium 'like a Cumberland sausage'. We wandered along rides and tracks finding our way into Rewell Wood. Mike found what appeared to be a *Potentilla* hybrid, *P. x mixta* (Hybrid Cinquefoil), which he declared had 'good achenes', but on consulting Stace was found to be *P. anglica* (Trailing Tormentil). Silver-washed fritillaries and other butterflies danced in the sunlight above the herbage in the rides. Dawn suddenly announced that we were in the vicinity of the *Gnaphalium sylvaticum* (Heath Cudweed) that she had discovered a few years ago. 'I'll just go and look for it', she said, and pushed her way through the wall of vegetation edging the ride where we were gathered... and she vanished! She was back soon with sticks in her hair proclaiming 'I've found it'. And she had – eleven excellent specimens hidden in a glade under an oak tree. We walked along a return route hoping but failing to find *Centunculus minimus* (Chaffweed), which had previously been seen in ruts in this part of The Rewell. We admired the egg-like seeds of *Lithospermum officinale* (Common Gromwell), which someone rather poetically described as 'jewel-like'. Returning to Danes Wood, we found a good stand of *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather) in flower and a large foreign interloper, *Erica lusitanica* (Portuguese Heath), along with a fine specimen of *Cotoneaster rehderi* (Bullate Cotoneaster). We crossed what was a working gravel-pit some 30 years ago, looking in vain for *Filago minima* (Small Cudweed), but then a fine stand of *Hieracium umbellatum* attracted our attention and Mike was happy. Near the *Hieracium*, and watching us with a distinct expression of curiosity was a large cricket bearing a curved yellow pronotal stripe reminiscent of a broad smile which Steven told us was a Roesel's Bush Cricket. And so back to the waiting cars, but not without a smattering of unexpected calcicoles such as *Carlina vulgaris* (Carlina Thistle) and *Blackstonia perfoliata* (Yellow-wort).

VC14 East Sussex

(Reports are by the leaders except for the Pevensey Levels and Waterhall meetings, which are by Helen Proctor)

May 17th Friezeland Wood, Tunbridge Wells

(Leaders: Geoffrey Kitchener and Helen Proctor)

Seven SBRS members met up with thirteen members of the Kent Botanical Recording Group on a warm, dry and sunny morning. The objectives were to collect missing Sussex Plant Atlas (SPA) records in TQ53U for Sussex in the morning and help with monad recording for Kent in the afternoon. The river Grom marks the county boundary. Our route took us through the wood and in a loop on the southern side of the river in Sussex, before crossing the river into Kent. The fit and able negotiated a steep path to see a large clump of *Symphytum tuberosum* (Tuberous Comfrey). *Lythrum portula* (Water-purslane) occurred in the wet woodland. Lured by the sight of *Geranium phaeum* (Dusky Crane's-bill), *Meconopsis cambrica* (Welsh Poppy) and *Dryopteris borrieri* (Borrer's Male-fern) on the other side of the river, a certain Kentish botanist took a short cut and paddled across the river! We added three *Cardamine* species: *C. pratensis* (Cuckooflower), *C. bulbifera* (Coralroot) and *C. amara* (Large Bittercress). The latter covered a 10 metre length on **both sides of the river**, so everyone was happy. We added 58 records to TQ53U.

We walked uphill for lunch at the High Rocks and a group photo. It was then that we discovered another missing species, *Homo sapiens* x 5! Mobile phone contact brought them back from the High Rocks Pub but they missed lunch! In Kent, *Cardamine bulbifera* flowered profusely on the roadside. Over 400 flowering stems were counted. Back at the cars, Sarah Kitchener kindly provided tea and cakes, a new Kentish tradition of which I thoroughly approve!

May 30th Hastings

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

The meeting was billed as "Hastings habitats", including Alexandra Park, and our intention was to show just what plant treasures are to be found in urban Hastings. The upper part of Alexandra Park is quite informal, and it was there that we started with a walk through remnant woodland that had been planted many years ago with a variety of mostly unusual trees, including a number of different Hollies. We had Owen Johnson with us so identification was a breeze. Native species growing happily among these exotics included *Sanicula europaea* (Sanicle) and *Melampyrum pratense* (Common Cow-wheat), but our pièce de resistance

was a shady bank covered in flowering *Hieracium grandidentens*.

Next destination was Old Roar Ghyll at the top of the Park - how many towns can boast a ghyll in the middle of an urban area? A splendid display of *Milium effusum* (Wood Millet) greeted us as we entered the ghyll. A Hastings speciality, the parasitic *Lathraea squamaria* (Toothwort), grows on ledges on the sandstone as well as on the ground, looking ghostly white in the cool light. One of its hosts here is the Railway Poplar, a form of *Populus x canadensis*. We continued to Little Roar waterfall at the top of the ghyll, pausing to examine species including naturalised *Potentilla indica* (Yellow-flowered Strawberry) and, *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood Sedge), which was common along our route. By now stomachs were rumbling, so it was a brisk walk to Owen's house, where we ate lunch in unusual comfort and enjoyed the luxury of non-thermos tea, followed by a walk into the depths of his wonderful garden, once a clay pit.

The afternoon was spent looking at an entirely different habitat still well within the urban area: sandy grassland around the castle rocks on the West Hill. On the top we found *Sedum anglicum* (English Stonecrop), rare in Sussex, and *Trifolium arvense* (Hare's-foot Clover), both abundant and coming into flower, as well as *T. subterraneum* (Subterranean Clover) in full flower. *Osmunda regalis* (Royal Fern) - not a regal size here - and *Blechnum spicant* (Hard Fern) grow in the crevices of the rocks. The latter fooled several as it wasn't looking very well in such an open habitat. And a small Brome may turn out to be *Bromus hordeaceus* ssp. *ferronii* if its awns begin to curve outwards as it matures.

Rita was quite relieved to find she did **not** need to climb down the rocks to reach the base! An easy path took us to lots of flowering *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird's-foot) but best of all was about five plants of the equally tiny *Vicia lathyroides* (Spring Vetch), also in flower. It has been known from this location for over 150 years. We made nearly 200 records, some of which were new to these well-recorded tetrads.

June 7th Little England Farm

(Leader: Jacqui Hutson)

We were slow to leave the parking place because the heavily mown roadside verge yielded several finds, including a species that puzzled all the experts. The sun shone as eight of us wandered through the meadows, woods, stream sides, and by the lake on Michael Whitaker's farm. We found *Impatiens parviflora* (Small Balsam) growing, surprisingly, in the shade at the edge of a concrete yard but the other 148 species we recorded were in more expected

places. Eight species were missing SPA species and nine species were new records. The meadows varied in their species composition and diversity - some with abundant *Leucanthemum vulgare* (Ox-eye Daisy), others with *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid), *Lotus* spp. (Bird's-foot-trefoils), or *Ranunculus* spp. (Buttercups) being most noticeable. *Alopecurus geniculatus* (Marsh Foxtail) growing in a wet corner of a field provoked a debate settled without too much trouble. Apart from the plants we enjoyed encounters with several insects - identified for us by one of the group. We lunched in a meadow above the lake where the rather difficult-to-place fragrance of *Mentha arvensis* (Corn Mint) assailed our noses. The day ended with a little diversion to a nearby lane where we delighted in the sight of several spikes of *Phyteuma spicatum* (Spiked Rampion).

21st June Waterhall Conservation Area

(Leader: John Patmore)

Eight members and a visitor met in the golf club car park. The weather was dry, sunny and warm when sheltered from the cool breeze. Our purpose was to collect records for the Friends of Waterhall, who are involved with the management of the area. We explored the chalk grassland which surrounds the golf course. Despite the dominance of *Brachypodium rupestre* (Tor-grass) and the thatch of dead grass on the first hillside, many good chalk grassland plants occurred here. These included *Hippocrepis comosa* (Horseshoe Vetch), *Anthyllis vulneraria* (Kidney Vetch), *Helianthemum nummularium* (Rock-rose) and *Scabiosa columbaria* (Small Scabious). We stopped for lunch on the sunny south side, where *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath Grass) was seen. Later, a dewpond was investigated, and *Nymphoides peltata* (Fringed Water-lily) and *Elodea nuttallii* (Nuttall's Waterweed) were abundant. A total of 193 species was recorded. Two members continued to Whitehawk, Brighton, to see *Rubus x knappianus*, which now covers six square metres.

4th July Offham and Hamsey Marshes, Lewes

(Leader: Peter Smith)

Six members explored the marshland areas north of Lewes in delightfully sunny weather. TQ41A is one of the richest environments in Sussex, and with 537 species already recorded, we had no strong expectations of adding many more. However, after sustaining a few wet feet, we were able to enjoy finding *Groenlandia densa* (Opposite-leaved Pondweed), *Alisma lanceolatum* (Narrow-leaved Water-plantain), *Oenanthe fistulosa* (Tubular Water-dropwort) and *Apium graveolens* (Wild Celery). Added attractions were spectacular marsh frogs, a

peregrine falcon, and some grey mullet in the Ouse. Among the five new records that we did achieve were *Oenanthe lachenalii* (Parsley Water-dropwort), and *Callitriche brutia* ssp. *hamulata* (Intermediate Water-starwort). Those who were able to stay to the end of the day were rewarded with *Senecio aquatica* (Marsh Ragwort), *Berula erecta* (Lesser Water-parsnip), *Potamogeton lucens* (Shining Pondweed), and a fine display of *Hottonia palustris* (Water-violet).

22nd July Cherry Garden Farm and Berry Wood

(Leaders: Philip Glyn & Helen Proctor)

A select group of five, including our Chairman and his wife, met Philip and Pam Glyn at Cherry Garden Farm. Over tea and coffee and a sumptuous feast of home-made cakes, Philip gave us a brief introduction to his estate before a guided tour. Stepping a few yards into the garden we ticked off all but one of the common *Epilobium* (Willowherb) species. Speedwells flourished too, with a white flowered *Veronica agrestis* Green Field-speedwell, sharing space with the vegetables. It was pleasing to see a plant of the not so common *Filago vulgaris* (Common Cudweed) and also *Glebionis segetum* (Corn Marigold), which had arrived unaided. *Rhinanthus minor* (Yellow-rattle) had been sown in the meadow and was reducing the vigour of the grasses. *Betonica officinalis* (Betony) was making a colourful display. The rayed form of *Centaurea nigra* (Common Knapweed) occurred here as well as the hybrid *Hypericum x desetangsii* (Des Etangs' St. John's-wort). Along the outcrop of Tunbridge Wells Sandstone known as Mills Rocks, we saw *Festuca altissima* (Tall Fescue), carefully protected against browsing deer. After lunch on the cliffs we continued to Berry Wood. The entire wood has been enclosed in deer fencing which has allowed the ground flora to flourish. The ride had been scraped six years ago and is mown every September, with the cuttings removed. Species included *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St. John's-wort), *Scutellaria minor* (Lesser Skullcap), and three sedges species. In a coppiced area we saw one stem of *Epipactis purpurata* (Violet Helleborine). A huge, old coppiced tree of *Tilia cordata* (Small-leaved Lime) was admired as well as a *Crataegus laevigata* (Midland Hawthorn) shrub beside it. We recorded about 250 species, including several SPA missing species for TQ43D. 4pm was teatime in the wood. A kettle boiled over a wood fire and home-made cakes were again on offer.

1st August Forest Row

(Leaders: Roy Wells & Ruth Eastwood)

The aim of the walk was to contribute to the new Flora and to move TQ43H over the 300 species mark.

We visited the southernmost part of TQ43H and the northerly edge of TQ43G. Eleven SBRS members set off and we didn't get very far before we encountered a spoil heap in the golf course car park. This gained us five new Flora records. Later on a pond proved profitable. Overall we had success, adding sixteen new Flora records to TQ43G including *Eleocharis palustris* (Common Spike Rush) and *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush). We achieved our aim, and at the end of the day TQ43H had a total of 316 species recorded.

26th August Pevensey Levels

(Leader: Jane Birch)

The forecast of heavy rain threatened to cancel the meeting. However, gentle persuasion and members' faith in the convenor's plan led to its continuation. Jane, our aquatic plants enthusiast, went out, aquatically, to collect fresh material. She invited seven members back to her house for an informal workshop. She showed us the vegetative differences between *Potamogeton acutifolius* (Sharp-leaved Pondweed) and *P. obtusifolius* (Blunt-leaved Pondweed) and between *Berula erecta* (Lesser Water-parsnip) and *Sium latifolium* (Greater Water-parsnip). Two microscopes were on hand to enable further study. By 2pm the rain was replaced by a cool breeze and we ventured out to Martin Hole's farm for an exploration of two ditches. We were pleased to find the leaves of *Hottonia palustris* (Water-violet), and *Butomus umbellatus* (Flowering-rush) still in flower. The highlight was finding the world's smallest flowering plant, *Wolffia arrhiza* (Rootless

Duckweed) on the leaves of *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit). A big thank-you to Jane for her hospitality.

5th September Ashdown Forest

(Leaders: Ruth Eastwood & Helen Proctor)

Thirteen members gathered for the Ashdown Forest Marsh Gentian Hunt in TQ42P and TQ43F. All were eager to win the prize for finding the first *Gentiana pneumonanthe* (Marsh Gentian). The party aimed to survey recorded localities, which involved striking out across the marshes, and some of us wished we had worn wellies! As Ruth found the first one the prize quickly became for the second plant found. Tim Rayner enjoyed his chocolate prize at lunchtime and went on to become the star Gentian finder. Most plants were still in bud. If the sun had shone we would perhaps have got more than the glimpse of the stunning Gentian blue. Once we got our eyes in, the Gentians became almost commonplace in small areas. Other highlights of the day were *Drosera rotundifolia* (Common Sundew), *Cuscuta epithymum* (Dodder) and a Wasp Spider (*Argiope bruennichi*). Overall, there were fewer plants in fewer places in comparison with earlier records, and it was clear that in some areas management should change to prevent the Marsh Gentians from being shaded out.

Recording Update Spring 2016

2015 saw the Society move into post-Flora recording era. At the beginning of the year we invited the membership to go out and enjoy themselves by recording 'what they liked, where they liked, when they liked': a move away from the process of systematic, blanket tetrad recording required for that project. Some of you worked on species, some on specific sites and others on habitats. Several of you were employed on specific monitoring of particular locations, for land-owners, and others undertook recording requests from your County Recorders. Many of you continued to work on the 'Re-finds List' associated with historical records needed to update the databases for the preparation of accurate species accounts for the new Flora.

To all of you, we would like to say thank you for your continued hard work, and for the many new and interesting finds made, many of which will appear in the 'Interesting Records' section of the May Newsletter.

Your Committee attempted to put together an exciting and varied series of Field Meetings for 2015, in close discussion with the Field Meeting Conveners, Helen and Nick, and, with their continued efforts, 2016 should also be an interesting collection.

During the first six months of the year, the second drafts of the Flora species accounts (3000+) were completed, and work has now moved on to the Final Drafts. This is a long and slow process, with much checking of databases, literature, archives and herbaria, as well as spelling, punctuation and consistency, required. This work will continue in the

first half of 2016 and, hopefully, by the autumn we should be in a much better position to take a view on when a potential publication date might be. This, however, is not guaranteed, with many potential obstacles ahead.

Therefore, for 2016, we would ask that you continue recording as you did in 2015. Mike will continue to work with you on the re-finds list, and any updates you find should be sent to him. He also proposes to add a number of species gleaned from working on the herbarium of A.W. Jones (Wilberforce), which is now housed at the Booth Museum in Brighton.

As we move forward, the Society is currently considering a new recording project. As yet, there are no specific plans, but potential proposals have been discussed in committee.

Best wishes for the New Year

Paul Harmes, Mike Shaw & Matthew Berry

Field Meetings 2016

Saturday 30 April Nick Sturt	Patching and Clapham: a gentle beginning to the season recording the villages and surrounding woodland and downland. Roadside parking along (the old) Arundel Rd (N of A27) nr Patching Pond and Worlds End pub, TQ086056.
Saturday 7 May Jacqueline Rose, Judy Clark, Ellen Campbell.	Northiam: Great Gotely Farm, surveying Great Gotely Wood. We will continue to Brickwall Park in the afternoon. Meet in car park, about 50m from Northiam church, at TQ829246.
Sunday 15 May Geoffrey Kitchener and Helen Proctor	Scotney area: near Lamberhurst, with Kent Botanical Recording Group. Meet in the NT car park (£3 charge for non-NT members), TQ686353. Postcode is TN3 8JN.
Wed 18 May Helen Proctor	Ashurstwood: Cherry Garden Farm. From the south, turn right off the A22 on to Wall Hill Road, then right at the post office, left into Ivy Dene Lane. Take the 2 nd left turning, just before the sign for the industrial estate, TQ414370. Meet near the house.
Saturday 4 June Roy Wells	East Hoathly: Rowland Wood and Park Corner Heath, to update previous surveys. Turn off the A22 at the Thatched Garage, then right. Park by roadside at TQ515147.
Sunday 5 June Peter Jones	Bignor Park (courtesy Viscount Mersey). Recording woods and meadows, largely on the Gault clay. Meet SU995166 by roadside at junction of bridleway leading NE.
Wed 15 June Jacqueline Rose, Judy Clark, Ellen Campbell	Salehurst: exploring meadows on Moat Farm. At roundabout on A21 (TQ741242) by Northbridge Street, turn right, then left at church and two right turnings. Moat Farm is at TQ758243.
Wed 22 June Bruce Middleton	Weavers Down. Meet in small car park at SU82193140 having turned S of Longmoor Rd at Griggs Green - care required along bumpy track. Bruce will convey us back into Sussex by Landrover, there to discover heathland treasures.
Saturday 2 July Peter Smith	Alfriston: Rathfinney Vineyard. We will survey areas within and around the vineyard, including an arable reversion strip and chalk downland. From Alfriston, continue for about ½ mile, then turn right. Continue to field centre car park (c.1 mile) at TQ498018.
Wed 13 July Mike Shaw	East Head, West Wittering. Survey this rich habitat and confirm recent finds of <i>Polypodium interjectum</i> , <i>Lepidium latifolium</i> , <i>Filago vulgaris</i> and <i>Crassula tillaea</i> . Meet at SZ766984 at the far west end of the car park. NB let Mike Shaw know your name and car registration at least 10 days before the meeting for free parking courtesy of NT.
Saturday 16 July Jane Birch	Pevensey Levels, to survey aquatic plants in ditches, visited in July 2000, and look for marginal plants. Meet at Rickney Pumping Station, TQ627069.
Wed 27 July Frances Abraham	Arundel Park. Chalk grassland. Roadside parking TQ090023. In Arundel take the South Stoke road past the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust and Black Rabbit pub. No dogs please.
Sat 13 August Nick Sturt	Cissbury Ring: site recording of chalk grassland. Park in Findon Valley off Storrington Rise TQ128077. This is the northern of the two main car parks in Findon Valley.
Wed 24 August Helen Proctor	Cuckmere Haven: saltmarsh plants and chalk downland “specials”. Meet in Exceat Car Park, TV515993. Parking charge.
Sunday 4 Sept.	Details of West Sussex meeting to be announced in May Newsletter

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.

Those attending SBRS field meetings do so at their own risk