



Sussex Botanical Recording Society

Newsletter

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Editor's note

This is usually the spot in the Newsletter for the President's Message, but sadly David is unable to write one this time. He has a good excuse – he is in the throes of moving house and, indeed, counties. He is leaving Heathfield and will be living in VC17 in Surrey, but fortunately not too far from Sussex. Of course plants do not recognise county boundaries and I am sure that neither do Presidents and that David will continue to botanise with the Society.

Had he been able to write his Message, I suspect that he would have used it to tell the full story of the first Sussex record of *Bunium bulbocastanum* (Great Pignut) on a SBRS field meeting last year, as mentioned in Nick Sturt's report on page 5. We hope to include it in the May Newsletter.

Frances Abraham

Treasurer's Note

Welcome to 2019. As you now know the Flora has been published and I may report that it has been well received and is selling steadily. I shall give fuller details in the Accounts for 2018 in due course. It is likely that subscriptions for 2019 will remain as for 2018 i.e. £8 for an individual and £11 for two people at the same address and receiving one copy of the mailings as they arise. Subscriptions may be sent to me at my home address, paid at the AGM in March or at the Autumn Get-together in October. If anyone has not paid their subscription for 2018 - 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

Rod Stern

Just before going to press we learned of the death in a nursing home in Fishbourne of Rod Stern, SBRS Chairman from 1986 until 2012. In partnership with Mary Briggs, Rod played a key role in shaping and steering the Society. A full obituary will appear in the May Newsletter. On behalf of the membership we should like to convey our sincere sympathies to Vanessa.

Nick Sturt

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 2nd March 2019

As usual, the Annual General Meeting will be held at 2.00 p.m. at Staplefield Village Hall. After the AGM, there will be information on this year's field meetings, and details of interesting records received in 2018. The hall will be available from 1.30 p.m. if you wish to bring any books or plants for sale. Members bringing digital photographs of Sussex plants are asked to include captions. The meeting will conclude with tea and cakes.

Saturday 26th October 2019

The Autumn Get-together will be held at Staplefield Village Hall. The doors will be open from 10.00 a.m. The meeting will start promptly at 10.30 and will include a talk. Please remember to bring a packed lunch; tea, coffee and cakes will be available. Members are invited to bring books and plants for sale, any items of interest or specimens for display, and digital photographs to show in the afternoon. Offers of homemade cakes are always welcome: they are greatly enjoyed.

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The SBRS Committee

by Nick Sturt

The current members of our Committee are listed on page 12. Our President is appointed without term, and Matthew is an *ex officio* Committee Member by reason of being BSBI Assistant Vice-county Recorder. All other Committee Members have indicated that they are willing to stand again for election at the AGM with the exception of Ruth. We have benefited from Ruth's input to the Committee for too short a time but as there is soon to be a little companion for Esmebelle she understandably feels that she (and Richard!) will be fully employed; I hope that in the fullness of time Ruth will be able to return to help steer the Society.

I thus invite nominations for two vacant posts, Hon. Secretary and Committee Member, to reach me with the signature of a proposer and seconder by 3rd February 2019; the nominee should, of course, be willing to stand. In the absence of a Secretary we have continued to share the secretarial tasks among the Committee and indeed beyond, for Elisabeth Sturt has been kind enough to co-ordinate the refreshments at both indoor meetings with a reliable team of helpers. And I must express my especial gratitude to Kathryn Knapp who has for some years been sending out to you the Newsletters and occasional emailings; her efficient work has included proofreading the Newsletter. Brad has now kindly taken on the brief of email communications with members and Peter Smith has offered to print and distribute the hard copies of the Newsletter.

Portsmouth Museum: volunteers wanted

Portsmouth Museum holds the herbarium of the Bognor naturalist H.L.F. Guermonprez (9000 sheets) and also Sussex specimens collected by the Hampshire botanist A.W. Westrup (153 sheets). For some years access to these has been difficult but the Museum now has a Curator of Natural History, Christine Taylor, and things are looking up. Christine has asked for volunteers to catalogue and order these collections. She writes that job consists of:

1. Cataloguing
2. Making genus folders
3. Identification/checking id of specimens
4. Remounting specimens where necessary
5. Repair of detached specimens
6. Reorganising the collection into taxonomic order

If you are interested in taking part please contact her:
Christine.Taylor@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

SBRS website

by Brad Scott

The information and resources on the website continues to expand. Most of the old Newsletters from 1984 are now available, and more will be added in the coming months, including materials from the Sussex Flora Society from 1972. Many thanks to Nick and Arthur for making their archives available. In parallel with that, various interesting articles from old Newsletters have also been added to make them more accessible. Recent additions include Paul Harmes on snowdrops (1994), Nick on Guermonprez (1997) and Judge Done (1999), and Tim Rich on Wild Asparagus (2000). More will be added over time, and if there are any of your particular favourites that you would like to see on there, let me know.

Many thanks too for all submissions for the Latest Sightings feature. The Hastings group provided a nice account of their discovery of *Scleranthus annuus* (Annual Knawel), and Matthew has been a major contributor, having written about how he didn't find *Pimpinella major* in Wannock, though did locate a transient *Lens culinaris* (Lentil) in Eastbourne. His piece on exploring the Pevensey Levels with Evan Jones is well worth a read too. There are also short pieces on interesting finds, such as Howard Matcham's *Orobancha minor* var. *flava* at Goodwood, and Wendy Tagg demonstrating with her find of *Polypogon monspeliensis* (Annual Beard-grass) at Uckfield that new tetrad records are coming in all the time. Please do send me contributions for Latest Sightings; they are much appreciated, and give a nice picture of what members are doing out in the field during the year. All we need is a title for the piece, at least one picture (in focus, please! Habitat is fine), and a bit of text. It can be 100 words or 1000 or more.

Finally, there is now facility on the website for non-members to sign up to the email list so that they can receive limited information about the society. If you know of anyone who might be interested, do get them to sign up.

Vascular Plant Recording in 2019

by Nick Sturt

Thanks to Helen's skills of co-ordinating, we have had three productive years of the Churchyard Survey Project which has generated a wealth of interesting data and also much enjoyment. As Helen herself emphasises, it is important to feed back information to those who manage the plots and to those who have a stake in them: in some cases there will be praise and encouragement, in others advice as to how

biodiversity might be increased through adjustments to the management regime. And as a general point it is ever more vital to interest those who may not otherwise have thought much about the subject in the plants that they see around them in Sussex. We must not take them for granted in these difficult times!

All of the above holds good when we embark upon the next project, the identification and surveying of village greens and recreations grounds. Like churchyards, they are often relics of valuable habitats, they are not always known about or appreciated, and they are vulnerable to changes in management which can result in a drastic decline in biodiversity. The SBRS has the knowledge and expertise to locate and assess these relatively small areas and, by sharing the information gained, help to protect them and even improve them. As with the churchyards, we shall establish a system of co-ordinating the work across West and East Sussex and gathering the data gained. The Committee feels that this should be the major work of the Society for the next year or so and encourages as many members as possible to take part. Those with the relevant expertise should also provide lists of bryophytes and fungi – waxcaps sites are to be noted in particular. As with churchyards again, the information we gather will be made available to the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre in connection with its work on Local Wildlife Sites.

Apart from village greens and the remainder of the Churchyard Survey, which I should like you to regard as our priorities, there is endless scope for further recording across the county, be it the monitoring of scarce species or individual sites, quests for exotic aliens, expeditions to re-find notable records from the past or simply surveying a chosen corner of your countryside or town... Whatever you do in 2019, enjoy!

PS Please make sure that where your site covers more than one tetrad you provide separate lists for each. It also greatly facilitates the processing of the data if the SBRS Excel recording card is used to submit the records to the Vice-county Recorders.

New book on the Weald:

David Bangs has just published a fascinating new book *The Land of the Brighton Line, A field guide to the Middle Sussex and South East Surrey Weald*.

David writes:

This book is my attempt to write a comprehensive field guide to the central Weald. It covers the band of

countryside either side of the London-Brighton railway, between the North and South Downs, between the Rivers Adur and Ouse, and between Dorking and Oxted.

Though it is the part of the Weald that I have always known best, I was driven to write about it because it is the part of the Weald most at threat from hyper-development. If we cannot achieve a sea-change in public policy it will be reduced to 'precious fragments' in a generation or so.

I am primarily a naturalist, so there is lots of information on ancient flower meadows, bluebell woods, birds and insects, hidden gill woodlands, ancient trees, and the two forests of Worth and St Leonards. I write extensively about the 'waterlands' - the flood plains and streams of the Rivers Adur and Ouse and the Mole and Eden in Surrey. I write in detail, too, about a range of special species, though I am careful not to reveal the locations of those at risk.

I've attempted to describe all the significant sites, most of which are unknown to the majority of us, and many of which are unrecognised by the conservation community too. There are 148 maps and an even greater number of pictures, plus a scattering of my poems, for this is a work of feeling as well as fact. ***My concerns are for the green places that no one has written about and few know. It is those places that need help most urgently.***

The book is divided in two, with a 'Backstory' section covering landscape history, geology, farming and landownership, the threats this countryside faces, and the different ecosystems. The longer second half is an 'Area Guide' with chapters on all the sub-landscapes, such as 'Henfield to Albourne', or 'Worth Forest', or the 'Reigate and Dorking Low Weald'.

All the significant sites are map referenced and there are maps for many items of interest, like wild daffodil sites, archaic meadows, and ancient trees.

The book is 360 pages and has taken a decade to complete. My aim for it is to be the kind of reference book that all of us who walk in and care for this countryside should have to hand, for '***what the eye does not see, the heart will not grieve over***'.

There is a £5 discount for SBRS members who buy direct from me. It is available in local bookshops and from <landofthebrightonline.co.uk>.

SBRS on Safari

by Nick Sturt

I have recently received a communication from Naturetrek offering a bespoke holiday for SBRS members. As a sample of what might be offered I have been given outlines of 4-night trips to Andalucia, Crete or Sicily in March to May and the Picos de Europa mountains, the Italian Dolomites or Slovenia in June to July, all priced at a little short of £900 inclusive of flights. Single room supplement and personal expenses extra. I can relay further details by email on request should there be interest, with the understanding that I shall put those members expressing interest in touch with each other in order to facilitate decision-making and planning. I believe that we should need a minimum of six in a party.

Field meeting reports 2018

West Sussex VC13

(Reports by Nick Sturt unless noted otherwise)

April 22nd: West Dean Woods SWT Reserve

(Leader: Elisabeth Sturt)

With what joy the first meeting of the year is always greeted! This one was billed as suitable for beginners and of the eleven members lured by the venue and the sunshine it proved possible to persuade Sue, Jill, Richard and Alison that they definitely fell into the more experienced category: still protesting, they were packed off to record a first and a second year coppice plot where, as they anticipated, their skills in vegetative recognition would be put to the test. The remainder enjoyed two hours in a large first year plot well suited to showing species typical of woodland in spring, with Elisabeth in full teacherly mode. For the past week a burst of unusually warm weather had accelerated plant development amazingly and so there were flowers to help in some cases, for example the three woodrushes *Luzula campestris*, *L. forsteri* and *L. pilosa*, but leaf identification was necessary for the umbellifers *Angelica sylvestris* (Angelica), *Conium maculatum* (Hemlock), *Conopodium majus* (Pignut) and *Torilis japonica* (Upright Hedge-parsley); pairs of plants made another interesting study, for example the two woodland Speedwells *Veronica chamaedrys* and *V. montana* with their distinct shades of green foliage, and the leaf texture and spotting that separates *Orchis mascula* from *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Early-purple Orchid and Common Spotted-orchid). It turned out that the so-called beginners group was rather more experienced than it had cared to admit, and not just because it was boosted by the expertise of Joanna and Julian who

had cunningly contrived to arrive too late to be sent off with the experts. But at whatever point he or she feels comfortable on the scale of field botany knowledge, it is a universal fact that no SBRS member ever comes away from a meeting without learning something of value. And so the afternoon session was a consolidation for everyone of the lessons of the morning as the ancient woodland part of the reserve was surveyed. There remained the wander back along the public right of way known to West Deaners as the Conservation Path, where a fine stand of *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks Buttercup) and some *Lathraea squamaria* (Toothwort) were the prizes. It is fair to say that by the time of departure areas of everyone's brain felt as if they had had a good work-out and, with excuses for changing the metaphor, this first outing of the year proved to be far from a gentle dip in the shallow end of the botanical pool and much more of a cross-Channel swim.

June 2nd: Ditchling Common

(Leaders: Ruth and Esmebelle Eastwood)

Achillea ptarmica (Sneezewort), *Carex panicea* (Carnation Sedge), *Cirsium dissectum* (Meadow Thistle), *Dactylorhiza maculata* ssp. *ericetorum* (Heath Spotted-orchid), *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath-grass), *Genista tinctoria* (Dyer's Greenweed): these were some of the highlights of the morning spent wandering in the meadow immediately south of the Country Park, where the ground falls away on a gentle slope to a rivulet and the view is commanded by the almost naked ridge of the Downs. At one point I stood taking in this vista with the field before me dotted with the twenty members gathered, all engrossed in the task. So entranced was I that by the time I had thought to record it on camera most had drifted out of sight. There were familiar faces but also new recruits such as George and Wolfgang; and I could see Ruth and Esme botanically engaged – happily, the joint leaders of a lovely day's botany. In a way it was a tale of two Commons, however, for in the afternoon the decision was to survey the fields west of the Ditchling road, which several of us remembered as of possibly equal interest. Scrub and trees had since gained a foothold and the second half of the day was rather different as the party processed northwards beside a narrow stream and investigated clearings where some good plants lingered on. The situation was not beyond remedy and indeed cattle were already employed munching their way through the ranker vegetation. At one point Esme took her customary siesta and she slept soundly as her push-chair bumped along muddy paths and was hoisted over the winding stream. We emerged parallel with the St George's entrance to look out over a field that seemed to promise as much as that of the morning,

but by now thoughts were turning towards tea. Any wavering ideas of setting about it were banished by Esme who, clearly refreshed by her nap, chirped 'Let's go!' The party duly crossed the road and began the trek back through the Country Park. Here too, of course, there was interest, even if a large area of bracken was noted and the bog that used to support *Carex hostiana* (Tawny Sedge) is long gone. We did enjoy some more *Danthonia* and also *Conopodium majus* (Pignut) and *Lathyrus linifolius* (Bitter Vetch) and by the time we had reached our parked cars we were somewhat surprised to find we had amassed in excess of 160 species. Ruth and Esme were thanked by all for what had been a splendid day out and a very muddy push-chair was stowed in a boot.

June 16th: Fulking Escarpment

(Leader: Nick Sturt)

(This meeting will go down in the annals of Sussex botanical history for the discovery of a plant new to Sussex but the report details the day as it occurred: the identification and confirmation of *Bunium bulbocastanum* (Great Pignut) were not made until some weeks later.)

An overcast sky and a bracing wind may have discouraged the many butterflies which are a feature of this site but there was no such lack of enthusiasm among the group of fourteen who set about a day of pleasurable study on the prime chalk slopes. Some of the work involved pairs of plants - *Leontodon hispidus* and *L. saxatilis* (Rough Hawkbit and Lesser Hawkbit), *Thymus polytrichus* and *T. pulegioides* (Common Thyme and Large Thyme), *Reseda luteola* and *R. lutea* (Weld and Wild Mignonette). Roses were on Elisabeth's mind but the overwhelming majority were, not altogether unexpectedly, good examples of *R. micrantha* (Small-flowered Sweet-briar). Meanwhile an eye was kept on species missing from TQ21K, with Gareth and Richard winning the prizes by re-finding respectively a good patch of *Gymnadenia conopsea* (Fragrant Orchid) on a steep bank near the top of the hill and *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) as the party descended homewards. No prize could be awarded to the leader, however: he failed to pay attention to a small umbellifer with tell-tale bracts and hurried the party into the next tetrad to the earthworks where the *Tephrosia integrifolia* (Field Fleawort) which had cheered an SBRS group in 2010 was not visible. Throughout the day grasses had been a theme: *Avenula pratensis* (Meadow Oat-grass) had been re-found, *Trisetum flavescens* (Yellow Oat-grass) had been examined in all its stages of flowering, dark red *Catapodium rigidum* (Fern-grass) stood out against the white of bare chalk; *Bromoposis erecta* (Upright Brome) and *Arrhenatherum elatius* (False Oat-grass),

Brachypodium rupestre and *B. sylvaticum* (Tor-grass and False Brome) made another two useful comparisons. Sue D. was, naturally, in the thick of this work. Near the end Lis from Kent somehow intuited a longing in the leader and delighted him with a few spikes of *Carex caryophylla* (Spring Sedge). I have already mentioned that everyone on an SBRS field meeting learns something new, but this event where education was the main purpose proved very popular and enormously enjoyable. As a postscript I should mention that patrons of Priscilla's mobile library will be excited to learn that at lunch time on this day a greengrocery department was launched with complimentary broad beans and watercress.

June 28th: Waltham Brooks

(Leader and report: Frances Abraham)

There was a good turnout for this scorching meeting to survey the damp grassland, ditches and other wet habitats of the Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve at Coldwaltham in the Arun Valley. The weather had been extraordinarily hot and dry for some weeks with the result that many of the expected species were not on show, and the consequent wails of the leader went on and on and on. Nevertheless, we saw quite a good range of species. Grassland produced *Ranunculus sardous* (Hairy Buttercup), much *Senecio aquaticus* (Marsh Ragwort) and a number of sedges. The damp bed of the disused canal which crosses the Reserve can usually be relied upon for some interesting species although the *Cardamine amara* (Large-leaved Bittercress) seen there a few weeks earlier had gone. We were pleased to find *Veronica scutellata* (Marsh Speedwell), *V. catenata* (Pink Water-speedwell), *Myosotis laxa* (Tufted Forget-me-not), *Ranunculus peltatus* (Pond Water-crowfoot), *Scutellaria galericulata* (Greater Skullcap) and a little *Oenanthe fistulosa* (Tubular Water-dropwort). The latter has decreased in recent years in the UK as well as in Sussex. There was a large population of the uncommon *Catabrosa aquatica* (Whorl-grass) in a wet ditch east of the canal. We walked back along the bank of the Arun, admiring a little *Butomus umbellatus* (Flowering-rush). We were detained by a patch of willows, eventually deciding that one shrub was indeed the hoped-for *Salix triandra* (Almond Willow) with the distinctive rosewater taste of the well-chewed twigs.

July 18th: Widewater Lagoon

(Leader: Sue Denness)

It was a hot summer's day when fourteen SBRS members met up with four members of the WOW group in Widewater Lagoon carpark. WOW (World of Widewater) helps to promote, care for and protect the site, which has Local Nature Reserve status.

Widewater is a man-made, landlocked, brackish lagoon approximately 1200m long. The site extends into three tetrads and Nick duly stepped in to take charge of the recording cards. We started along the side of the car park where the bank of the lagoon was dominated by shrubs, including *Tamarix gallica* (Tamarisk). Here we found a hybrid bindweed, *Calystegia x lucana*. Moving down to the saltmarsh, the first part was dominated by *Juncus gerardii* (Saltmarsh Rush) with *Suaeda maritima* (Annual Sea-blite), *Aster tripolium* (Sea Aster) and *Triglochin maritima* (Sea Arrowgrass). On a rocky bank we saw *Crithmum maritimum* (Rock Samphire) before crossing a raised footpath that bisects the lagoon. *Frankenia laevis* (Sea-heath) was abundant in the next area. This usually forms impressive purple swathes across the saltmarsh but unfortunately it had become rather dried up in the summer heat and was past its best. After lunch, we continued west along the edge of the lagoon. This was an open sandy area where a diverse range of plants was recorded including *Catapodium marinum* (Sea Fern-grass), *Anthyllis vulneraria* ssp. *vulneraria* (Kidney Vetch), *Orobancha minor* (Common Broomrape) and *Puccinellia maritima* (Common Saltmarsh-grass). As the group scrambled up on to the promenade at the westerly end of the lagoon, Mike took a sample of an *Aster* for determination and later reported it to be *Aster novi-belgii* (Confused Michaelmas-daisy). A self-seeded shrub on the same bank was thought to be *Cotoneaster hjelmqvistii* (Hjelmqvist's Cotoneaster). Thanks to the BSBI referee, Richard was later able to confirm this. We returned along the promenade spotting *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp. *maritimus* (Sea Radish) on the shingle and then *Medicago polymorpha* (Toothed Medick) in fruit on the side of the path. Finally, a hunt on the shingle around the beach huts was rewarded by finding *Polygonum oxyspermum* ssp. *raii* (Ray's Knotgrass). The group then headed for the kiosk to enjoy ice cream and cold drinks.

August 12th: Durleighmarsh Farm

(Leader: Dawn Nelson)

The forecast promised copious rain but to be fair it did not actually start at Durleighmarsh Farm until the moment the party of five set out. And so the fields of fruit and vegetables were duly surveyed for their tasty array of arable weeds in waterproofs, with *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax), *Erodium moschatum* (Musk Stork's-bill), *Spergula arvensis* (Corn Spurrey) perhaps the pick of the early part of the visit. Quite soon Elisabeth pronounced herself suffering from *Epilobium* fatigue but she rallied when some samples seemed to be candidates for hybrids of *E. ciliatum* (American Willowherb); sure enough, with Geoffrey Kitchener's excellent key in

due course they emerged as *E. ciliatum x obscurum* and *E. ciliatum x tetragonum*, two of the more frequently encountered combinations. Precipitation continued but it was never atrocious and the group cheerfully moved on out of the crop fields into a damp area which supported much *Senecio aquaticus* (Marsh Ragwort) and other pleasing inhabitants of soggy conditions. A bright green sedge which had declined to flower was the subject of some debate until closer inspection of the lower part of the stem revealed it to be *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Wood Club-rush), and this was confirmed towards the end of the proceedings when flowering material was found growing by a pond. Hedgerows yielded some alien plantings such as the variety *triloba* of *Viburnum opulus* (Guelder-rose) as well as roses of mixed parentage. And thus eventually we came to the aforementioned pond. There, while raindrops patterned the surface among the pads of *Nuphar lutea* (Yellow Water-lily) and a solitary fisherman looked out glumly from the back of his van, some fine examples of *Carex paniculata* (Tussock Sedge) were enjoyed and a craving began to arise for something edible and somewhere dry in which to eat it. In no time we found ourselves back outside the tea rooms – problem solved! Over tea and cake we reflected on a wet but extremely interesting three hours with a *Malva* and a collection of other scraps to puzzle over later on. The *Malva* growing as a weed in the cultivated fields proved to be *neglecta* (Dwarf Mallow); and there were two Amaranths, *A. hybridus* and *A. retroflexus*. It is some years since the Society has been to Durleighmarsh Farm. I well recall that occasion with the incomparable Alan Knapp relishing some unexpected finds in the sandy soil such as *Lotus subbiflorus* and Ernie Sears interpreting distant specks in the sky as interesting birds. Although the turnout for the 2018 visit was clearly reduced by the doom-laden warnings of meteorologists, nevertheless Dawn's arrangements and leadership were keenly appreciated by those who donned suitable clothing and helped to load with well over a hundred records the fast-biodegrading recording card. From time to time we wondered if the East Sussex members at Rye Harbour were suffering worse: generous-spirited inside our trusty waterproofs, we hoped not.

East Sussex VC14

May 16th: Park Wood, Hellingly

(Leader and report: Helen Proctor)

The first meeting of the year won the Guinness Book of Records for the lowest attendance. Just two members, one on her first field trip braved the mud to explore Park Wood at Hellingly. The object of the meeting was to provide up-to-date records for the Friends of Park Wood. This group was in negotiation with the Environment Agency who, at the time of

writing, was planning to sell the wood. The wood was previously recorded by Tony Whitbread, who carried out an ecological survey identifying the NVC types. It is a good example of ancient, semi-natural woodland. Plentiful *Lysimachia nemorum* (Wood Pimpernel), *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* (Yellow Archangel) and *Orchis mascula* (Early-purple Orchid) were seen. Other interest included very large bracket fungi on an ash stump, *Daldinia concentrica* on a fallen ash log, red beetles and a turquoise damselfly.

May 19th: Weights Wood, Great Dixter Estate

(Leaders: Jacqueline Rose, Judy Clark and Ellen Campbell. Report: Jacqueline Rose)

The aim of this survey and those in late summer was to show the Great Dixter managers how much of interest there is in the wider estate beyond the gardens. Martin Newcombe, ecologist and coordinator of the project, was involving people with different expertise to record in the area. Weights Wood, where we began, he thought had potential for surprises. We were blessed with a very warm, dry and sunny day. There was a nice turnout, including Brad who had been involved in a recent bryophyte survey in the wood.

It is acid woodland, mostly on clay with oak, birch, hazel, hornbeam and sweet chestnut coppice. On one side is a wide track with ancient boundary trees. We were delighted to find scattered *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks Buttercup) near here. Deep in the wood were two or three typically slender trees of *Crataegus laevigata* (Midland Hawthorn). There are damp and very dry areas, and a stream running along the north. Near the stream Martin pointed out a tree where Woodpecker chicks could be heard. We found *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine) and *Orchis mascula* (Early-purple Orchid) and, near the end of our woodland tour, patches of *Dactylorhiza fuschii* (Common Spotted-orchid): none of them rare, but good to find.

We recorded 125 species in all, a satisfying diversity. At the end Martin asked us for suggestions about the future management of the wood.

June 9th: Woodvale Cemetery, Brighton

(Leader and report: Peter Smith)

Eight members explored the adjacent Woodvale and Extra-Mural Cemeteries as a needed contribution to the Churchyard Project. We applauded the policy of the Cemetery management, which involves leaving large areas of these very extensive cemetery grounds unmown, but with mown paths facilitating access.

We were greatly assisted by Tony Spiers' detailed knowledge of this site. Most notable among our finds was the vigorous population of the local Brighton speciality, *Crepis biennis* (Rough Hawk's-beard). Other finds included *Hieracium grandidens* (Grand-toothed Hawkweed), *Kickxia spuria* (Round-leaved Fluellen), *Diplotaxis muralis* (Annual Wall-rocket), *Geranium pusillum* (Small-flowered Crane's-bill), a naturalised population of *Lathyrus grandiflorus* (Two-flowered Everlasting-pea) and a Green Hairstreak butterfly. The spring flora of the site had already yielded more than 100 records, but we now faced the challenge of whether we could draw on the richness and diversity of the site to add sufficient records to surpass the impressive tally of 228 species seen in Seaford Cemetery in 2017. As we notched up the 120th record for the day, making 229 overall, we knew it was time to go home.

June 23rd: Berwick Common

(Leader and report: Helen Proctor)

Access to Berwick Common SSSI was through a cattle-grazed field. The potential hazards determined the signing of a risk assessment by our eight participants and the carrying of pipe lagging and matting to enable safe passage under the barbed wire fence and secateurs to cut low branches. Most of the site is covered by tall vegetation. However, there was evidence that a few of the livestock had found an easier way in than us and their trampling created paths for us.

In the centre of the site, tall rushes were interspersed with *Silene flos-cuculi* (Ragged-robin), *Hypericum tetrapterum* (Square-stalked St. John's-wort), *Mentha aquatica* (Water Mint), *Eriophorum angustifolium* (Common Cottongrass), *Eleocharis palustris* (Common Spike-rush), three sedge species and many other wetland plants. We were honoured with the presence of our President who gave us useful tuition on several taxa including comparison of the characters of *Berula erecta* (Lesser Water-parsnip) and *Apium nodiflorum* (Fool's-water-cress). Scattered through the site were 79 flower spikes of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid). The leader wished she had scheduled the meeting for the previous week when the orchids had been at their best. Lower down, standing water under willow trees was the habitat of 35 plants of *Menyanthes trifoliata* (Bogbean). A search was made for *Comarum palustre* (Marsh Cinquefoil) but it was not found. The three bryologists present recorded fourteen bryophytes, including the less common but increasing species *Ulota phyllantha* and lots of *Cololejeunea minutissima*. Some of the party continued to Berwick Pond where nineteen plants of

Rumex maritimus (Golden Dock) proved that this species was flourishing.

The afternoon was spent at Arlington Reservoir. Lunch was followed by 'President's Question Time' when our President was bombarded with ID queries ranging from British to Sardinian species! Following the top path, we photographed *Oenanthe pimpinelloides* (Corky-fruited Water-dropwort), which had extended its range considerably in recent years. Numerous flowering plants of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) and c.22 plants of *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid) were recorded. A scrape was covered in *Crassula helmsii* (New Zealand Pygmy-weed) but also hosted *Ranunculus lingua* (Greater Spearwort) and other wetland plants. Further on, the mown path at the top of the hill produced *Potentilla anglica* (Trailing Tormentil). A total of 91 species was recorded.

Acknowledgements are due to Alastaire Deighton, the Firle Estate Manager for access permission to Berwick Common, to Jacqueline and Peter for the recording, and Patrick and Peter for being equipment porters and the latter also a barbed wire fence monitor! The weather was pleasantly warm with a gentle breeze.

July 14th: Court Lodge Farm, Wartling

(Leaders: Jane Birch and Helen Proctor. Report: Helen Proctor)

Eight members were greeted by Marian and David Harding on their organic farm. They joined us for part of the meeting. We explored ditches and part of the Mark Dyke on Drover's Marsh. A 30 metre length of the roped-off banks of the Dyke hosted *Petroselinum segetum* (Corn Parsley). Two plants of *Scutellaria galericulata* (Skullcap) were seen. Rachel came equipped with waders and was the assistant grapnel operator, sometimes disappearing deep into the reeds to bring back interesting aquatics. One of these was the submerged leaves of *Sagittaria sagittifolia* (Arrowhead) which are undulate and much narrower than the upper leaves. *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit) flowered profusely in the ditches and *Stratiotes aloides* (Water-soldier) was noted. Jane showed us how to separate *Potamogeton obtusifolius* (Blunt-leaved Pondweed) from *P. acutifolius* (Sharp-leaved Pondweed). We learned from David that species in the *Oenanthe* genera have persistent sepals which enlarge and enclose the developing fruits. A stonewort was found and a bright green, fleshy alga was collected by Brad and subsequently named by Bryan Kennedy as *Chaetophora incrassata*. This was only the third record for the UK! Plentiful *Wolffia arrhiza* (Rootless Duckweed) growing amongst *Lemna*

trisulca (Ivy-leaved Duckweed) was a new plant for some of the group.

The heatwave had continued with a temperature in the upper 20Cs, so Marian's return with a basket laden with bottles of ice-cold drinks was very welcome! Thanks are also due to Marian and David for help with transport to and from the site.

August 5th: the Medway valley

(Leaders: Brad Scott and Geoffrey Kitchener. Report: Brad Scott)

The annual joint meeting with the Kent Botanical Recording Group (KBRG) meandered along and over the rivers forming the border between the two counties. Starting off at Ashurst station in VC16 the group gradually made its way down towards the river, on the way noting several established plants of *Rhus typhina* (Stag's-Horn Sumach), a native of north-eastern America. Once in Sussex, it soon became clear that hybrids were going to be a feature of the first part of the day's recording; Geoffrey Kitchener patiently explained the features of various docks, including *Rumex x pratensis* and *Rumex x dufftii*. Nearby margins also harboured *Hypericum x desetangsii*. An arable field margin delayed us for some time as we examined many grasses, the most noteworthy being *Echinochloa crus-galli* (Cockspur), *Bromopsis ramosa* (Hairy-brome) and *Bromus secalinus* (Rye Brome). Re-crossing the Medway, Steve Lemon from the Kent group extracted various plants from the river, which provided us with fruiting specimens of *Callitriche brutia* ssp. *hamulata* (Intermediate Water-starwort) and *C. obtusangula* (Blunt-fruited Water-starwort). In parallel with all this activity Sue Rubinstein was busy recording the bryophytes and added several new tetrad records, especially from the wooden bridges, which harboured *Syntrichia latifolia* and *Bryoerythrophyllum recurvirostrum*.

Finally back at Ashurst station and the Kent group supplied their traditional cake moment, which had extra significance since it was also to celebrate Helen's birthday.

August 12th: Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

(Leaders: Barry Yates and Helen Proctor. Report: Helen Proctor)

A strong southerly breeze and mostly overcast sky kept the group of nine warm and dry all day. Barry Yates, the warden of this Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve gave us a brief introduction. The main objective of the meeting was to survey the newly established saltmarsh. The Environment Agency constructed a sluice gate and raised the bank, allowing seawater to flood this seventeen hectare site.

After seven growing seasons, the area is now becoming well vegetated with saltmarsh species. *Salicornia ramosissima* (Purple Glasswort) could be positively identified from early flowering plants and was much photographed. Both *Spergularia media* and *S. marina* (Greater Sea-spurrey and Lesser Sea-spurrey) were growing side by side for easy comparison. Other species which are becoming established include *Aster tripolium* (Sea Aster), *Atriplex portulacoides* (Sea Purslane), *Juncus gerardii* (Saltmarsh Rush), *Puccinellia maritima* (Common Saltmarsh-grass), *Parapholis strigosa* (Hard-grass) and *Suaeda maritima* (Annual Seablite). A few plants of *Spartina anglica* (Common Cord-grass) were seen. This grass will increase and eventually need controlling as it reduces the amount of bare mud. Barry told us that bare mud was needed for sea shrimps, the food of Redshanks.

Leaving the saltmarsh, we walked along the riverbank where *Elytrigia juncea* (Sand Couch) occurred where shingle hid the sand. Amongst the many maritime plants seen were *Euphorbia paralias* (Sea Spurge), mats of *Frankenya laevis* (Sea-heath), *Cakile maritima* (Sea Rocket) and *Atriplex littoralis* (Grass-leaved Orache). We were surprised to see *Lycopus europaeus* (Gypsywort) here. Further on, Barry showed us a few Rye Harbour specialities. *Crepis foetida* (Stinking Hawk's-beard) was seriously past its sell-by date. *Lathyrus japonicus* (Sea Pea) on the shingle ridge was much reduced, having suffered from the winter storms, *Lactuca saligna* (Least Lettuce) was visible in an enclosure where rabbits are excluded in the summer months.

August 18th: Great Dixter

(Leaders: Jacqueline Rose, Judy Clark and Ellen Campbell. Report: Jacqueline Rose)

We were a group of nine, different members with different expertise. We were pleased that Martin was able to join us again. By now he is used to our slow recording pace! First we went down the track to what was the farm, now a plant nursery. Our route took us through three different habitats – the verge and hedge of the farm track, aquatics and waste ground in and around a small pond, and weeds of cultivation and escapes from the various beds and containers at the nursery. *Erigeron annuus* ssp. *strigosus* took some research. There was also an area of rough grassland where the remains of *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*

(Corky-fruited Water-dropwort) was a nice surprise among the coarse grasses and weedy species.

After lunch we went to the Horse Pond. There were many planted species, several becoming naturalised: *Gunnera*, *Pontederia cordata* (Pickerelweed) and *Menyanthes trifoliata* (Bogbean). Helen's grapnel was lost briefly but Rachel, made brave by the prospect of Helen's wrath, rolled up her trousers and waded after it. The only plant to be grapnelled out of the pond was *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort). Sue and Jacqueline explored the surrounds of the 'pond area', which was interesting and surprisingly varied, including a nice show of a flowering Hawkweed, probably *Hieracium sabaudum*, and some *Convallaria majalis* (Lily-of-the-valley) in the shade of a tree. Everyone else went to look at the gardens and compost heap for 'weeds'. *Atriplex hortensis* var. *rubra* (Red Orache) was a colourful find on the compost.

An enjoyable day – and three lists for Martin, which we hope will help show what interest there is besides the gardens themselves, as well as a few new records for the tetrads.

September 9th: Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

(Leader: Paul Harmes. Report: Helen Proctor)

The objective of this second meeting at Rye Harbour was principally to record late flowering *Salicornia* species in the new saltmarsh areas. In Barry Yates' absence, volunteer Jim Barrett accompanied us, allowing us access to gated areas. Sixteen members attended.

Paul explained the ID features of the five *Salicornia* species which we found. Stace and various illustrated keys also assisted our learning. Amongst the widespread *Salicornia ramosissima* (Purple Glasswort) were *S. europaea* (Common Glasswort) and, in places, *S. pusilla* (One-flowered Glasswort). Less common was *S. fragilis* (Yellow Glasswort). The fifth *Salicornia* was found along the riverbank and after some deliberation was pronounced to be *S. dolichostachya* (Long-spiked Glasswort). Other plants still in flower included *Lathyrus japonica* (Sea Pea) and *Galeopsis angustifolia* (Red Hemp-nettle). Least Lettuce (*Lactuca saligna*), of which the flowers were long gone over, could be identified by the narrow clasping leaves with their white midribs.

God's Acre across Sussex – an update on churchyard recording in 2018

by Helen Proctor

Many thanks are due to the 21 members who took part last year, recording 84 new sites and revisiting previously recorded churchyards and cemeteries. The data are summarised in the table below and include all records where two or more visits were made and records were received by September 2018.

East Sussex		
Number of new sites	49	
Total records	5015	
Lowest number of species per site	49	St Thomas, Groombridge
Highest number of species per site	246	Woodvale Cemetery, Brighton
Average number per site	102.3	
West Sussex		
Number of new sites	35	
Total records	3848	
Lowest number of species per site	51	Earnley
Highest number of species per site	200	Durrington Cemetery
Average number per site	109.9	

Gaps have been filled across the two vice-counties especially along the coast and in the far north. The number of species varies according to the size of the site, variety of habitats, the number and timing of recording visits and the management methods. While large sites such as cemeteries have had high numbers of species recorded, small churchyards can hold surprises so should not be ignored! Despite being fairly small, a total of 113 taxa were recorded at St George's Churchyard at Broad Oak, near Heathfield. The turf underneath planted shrubs concealed many plants of *Conopodium majus* (Pignut), an indicator of unimproved, semi-natural grassland. Less manicured areas allowed *Trifolium pratense* (Red Clover) to survive and unkempt shingle harboured several annual species. Woodland species occurred under two trees.

Habitats

Old walls can be valuable habitats. St. Nicholas Churchyard at Arundel has four *Asplenium* species on the walls. St. John the Baptist at Findon has plentiful *Umbilicus rupestris* (Wall Pennywort) as does St. Julian at Kingston Buci near Shoreham. Alien species have been discovered on shingle in churchyards, such as *Veronica peregrina* (American Speedwell) at St. Augustine, Scaynes Hill. Four species of *Chenopodium* (Goosefoot) occur on disturbed ground at Christchurch, Fairwarp.

Management

The quality of management varies greatly between sites. Well-managed sites have semi-natural habitats which reflect the geology and landscape history. Woodvale Cemetery displayed a good chalk downland flora. St. John the Evangelist at Burgess Hill is an example of ancient, semi-natural neutral grassland. Spring and summer flowering plants are allowed to flower and set seed. Cut herbage is raked up and removed from site (*pers.com*, J. Hutson). Removal of the arisings prevents a build-up of nitrates from composted grass cuttings, hence the survival of many of our rarer species such as *Silene silaus* (Pepper-saxifrage) and orchids.

Recording in 2019

Recording of churchyards in and around Bognor Regis and Littlehampton would be appreciated. A few sites inland still need to be recorded. Please see the list of sites still requiring survey below. In addition, some previously recorded churchyards would benefit from extra visits. Please register your interest in recording a churchyard or cemetery as this will avoid duplication of effort. Records should be entered on the Excel ver. 1.7 spreadsheets as before. Instructions are at:

<http://www.sussexflora.org.uk/get-involved/recording/>.

If you are still not sure how to do this, please ask!

Survey forms

If you have not already done so, please complete a survey form or send me a note to describe the habitats, the grass-cutting regime and other features of interest.

Spreading the word

I hope that the plant records can be distributed to the managers of churchyards and cemeteries, in order to initiate more interest in our flora and to encourage better management. The messages, in brief, are “**CUT THE GRASS LESS FREQUENTLY**” and “**ALWAYS REMOVE THE ARISINGS**”! Scientific names are being translated to English. Do ask for the list for your local site.

Members are invited to contact Helen to register an interest in surveying a churchyard or cemetery on this list (or any other which they think may not already have been recorded):

BROADWATER St Mary
BUNCTON All Saints
CHIDHAM St Mary
COMPTON St Mary
DONNINGTON St George
DUNCTON Holy Trinity
EAST GRINSTEAD St Swithun
EAST PRESTON St Mary
FERRING St Andrew
FORESTSIDE Christ Church
FUNTINGTON St Mary
GORING-BY-SEA St Mary

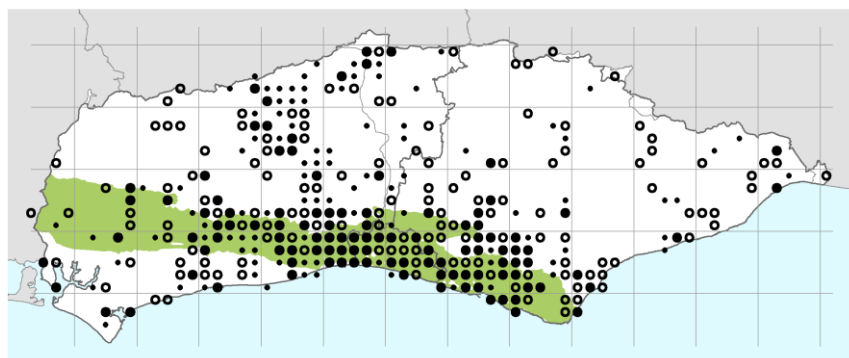
HAMPDEN PARK St Mary
HAYWARDS HEATH Ascension
HOVE St Andrew
KINGSTON BUCI St Giles
LANCING St James the Less
LANCING St Michael and All Angels
LITTLEHAMPTON St James
LITTLEHAMPTON St Mary
MIDDLETON St Nicholas
MOULSECOOMB St Andrew
PORTSLADE St Nicolas
RACTON St Peter

RUSTINGTON St Peter and St Paul
RYE St Mary the Virgin
SAYERS COMMON Christ Church
SELSEY St Peter
SENNICOTTS St Mary
SOMPTING St Mary the Virgin
WALBERTON St Mary
WEST GRINSTEAD St George
WEST STOKE St Andrew
WEST THORNEY St Nicholas
WESTBOURNE St John the Baptist
WINCHELSEA BEACH St Richard

The Flora of Sussex: corrections

Maddeningly but inevitably, one or two errors in the *Flora* have come to light. Please let us know if you find any more.

1. ‘Bird’s-foot’ was omitted from the index. It is on page 95.
2. The wrong map was given for *Melilotus altissimus*. Here is the correct one:



Field Meetings 2019

Sunday 10 March Leader: Brad Scott	Henfield: bryophytes for beginners. William Borrer (1781-1862) is one of the most important Sussex botanists, and his vascular plant records and introductions in the Henfield area are well known. Though we have some of his bryophyte records in the county, there are none for Henfield, which has barely any moss and liverwort records at all. We will focus on TQ21C. Park in the car park (TQ215159) and then we will explore the south of the village.
Saturday 27 April Leader: Sue Denness	Widewater Lagoon (West Beach Road, Lancing BN43 5FU). Recording on the beach and around the landlocked, brackish lagoons. This is a return to add early season species to the list gathered in July 2018. Meet in the car park at TQ204042.
Tuesday 30 April Leaders: Trudy Jacob/Elaine Boot	Standen. A beginner-friendly meeting helping Standen's Ecology group to record the spring woodland flora. Meet in the car park: turn left just before the main entrance at TQ390357. Free admission will be arranged for non-NT members.
Saturday 11 May Leaders: Jacqueline Rose/ Judy Clark/ Ellen Campbell	Montague Farm, Hankham. A wildlife friendly livestock farm in the Pevensey Levels SSSI. Specialities include Adder's-tongue, Green-winged Orchid and Water-violet. From the A27, turn S. off the roundabout at TQ603048, then left off the next roundabout onto the B2247 to Stone Cross. At Stone Cross church turn left onto Hailsham Rd and take the first right to Hankham. Just past the primary school on your left, turn right onto Hankham Hall Rd. After c.250m the road bends right, but take the right hand of the two turnings to the left. This leads through a gate along the drive to Montague Farm (TQ623057; postcode BN24 5BB). There is ample parking.
Sunday 2 June Leader: Dawn Nelson	Leith Copse, South Harting. Survey of coppice on the downland scarp in SU71Z. The scarp is steep and can be slippery and uneven. Meet at Leith House: turn S. off B2146 W. of South Harting, onto Sussex Border Path lane; the drive entrance to Leith House is at SU77661963.
Saturday 8 June Leaders: Jacqueline Rose/ Judy Clark/ Ellen Campbell	Normans Bay. We expect to see coastal grassland, shingle and saltmarsh flora. Suitable for less experienced botanists. NB No toilets or café. Meet in the layby at TQ67550511. If there's no space, park in the larger car park at TQ688057 and walk back (1 mile) or phone for shuttle service: 07732-116882, 07724-045701 or 07709-048278.
Sunday 16 June Leader: Helen Proctor	Bates Green Farm, Arlington. We will help the farmer, John McCutchan, to note plants of interest for the visiting public to Beatons Wood and surrounding farmland. A beginner-friendly meeting. Park on verge in Tye Hill Lane at TQ552077.
Sunday 23 June Leader: Nick Sturt	Heyshott Common. Heathland plants: suitable for beginners but all welcome. Park by New Road at SU913195. Stout footwear advisable.
Saturday 29 June Leader: Peter Smith	West Firle Beacon. A walk along the top of the Downs. We will look for <i>Clinopodium ascendens</i> and other chalk downland flowers. Meet in the car park at TQ468059.
Sunday 7 July Leader: Brad Scott	Plaw Hatch Farm, Forest Row. One of two biodynamic farms in the parish, Plaw Hatch is a mixed farm which covers 200 acres on the edge of Ashdown Forest. Its sister farm has had plants such as <i>Erysimum cheiranthoides</i> , <i>Lamium hybridum</i> , <i>Spergula arvensis</i> and <i>Anthemis arvensis</i> , recorded on it, so there could be some surprises. If time permits we may explore part of the Forest around Legsheath Lane. Meet in the farm car park at TQ394324.

Saturday 13 July Leader: Dawn Nelson	Drovers Estate NT, nr Singleton. Meet in layby N. of Singleton on the W. side of A286 (from the S., entry is at SU876139; from the N. it is at SU875140). We shall drive on in fewer cars to Drovers.
Wed. 24 July Leader: Elisabeth Sturt	The Trundle, Goodwood. Meet in The Triangle car park at the top of the hill at SU879113. Chalk grassland and arable weeds, not to mention fine views over the coastal plain.
Saturday 10 August Leader: Nick Sturt	Beside the seaside. Coast nr Chichester. Full details will be given in the May Newsletter.
Thurs. 15 August Leaders: Helen Proctor/Geoffrey Kitchener (KBRG)	Bowl Water. Joint meeting with the Kent Botanical Recording Group. Meet in Rosemary Lane at TQ70013195. A circa three mile level walk near the reservoir on each side of the vice county boundaries. An interesting flora of the draw-down zone should be developing.

All meetings start at 10.45 am unless indicated otherwise

SBRS field meetings are arranged for members and their guests.

Please share cars whenever possible. If you have queries contact Helen Proctor 01323-844680 hm.proctor@btinternet.com (E Sx) or Nick Sturt 01243-551292 n.sturt@mypostoffice.co.uk (W Sx).

Those attending SBRS field meetings do so at their own risk