



**KENT BOTANICAL
RECORDING GROUP
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NEWSLETTER No. 10**

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Front cover: *Anthyllis vulneraria*, at The Gallops, Longfield. Photo by David Steere, August 2017

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2017 field meeting reports

WHITE CHIMNEY WOOD, BENENDEN, Saturday 25 March



White Chimney Wood habitat.
Photo by Alfie Gay

This early meeting, the first of the year, was planned to get everyone outdoors and back together again after the winter. We were hoping to record some woodland ferns and to acquire general records in White Chimney Wood and, if time allowed, to explore nearby Parsonage Wood KWT site. An invitation was extended to Kent Field Club members and thirteen of us met up in a small parking area near the southern end of the wood on a warm sunny morning.

White Chimney Wood is part of a privately owned Local Wildlife Site on Tunbridge Wells Sand with a gill and stream. The moment we entered the wood we spotted our first Rare Plant, *Cardamine bulbifera* (Coralroot), typically on a steep bank above the stream and by a rather scary plank bridge. The spread of plants was

impressive and, although too early for flowers, they were easy to spot. It was here at the stream that the group split in two, with the wellington boot wearers opting to record along and in the stream and the remainder choosing higher ground but with a plan to meet up again later at the northern end of the wood.

The southern end of the stream had damp soils of Wadhurst Clay which encouraged dense carpets of *Allium ursinum* (Ramsons). The more typical trees here were *Corylus avellana* (Hazel) and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash). *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* (Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage) and *Oxalis acetosella* (Wood-sorrel) put on fine displays along the stream edges, with *O. acetosella* also flowering on fallen trees that straddled the stream. The leaves of *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* subsp. *montanum* (Yellow Archangel), *Orchis mascula* (Early-purple Orchid) and *Athyrium filix-femina* (Lady-fern) were all noted. Moving northwards, spring lines began to emerge along the eastern stream bank, where the Wadhurst Clay met the Tunbridge Wells Sand. Further north the sandy soils of the Tunbridge Wells Sand replaced the Wadhurst Clay. The more typical species here included *Luzula sylvatica* (Great Wood-rush), *Blechnum spicant* (Hard-fern), *Ilex aquifolium* (Holly) and *Fagus sylvatica* (Beech). A band of sandstone outcropped across the stream and produced a picturesque waterfall, although some attendees requested a more spectacular example! Damp sandstone rocks beside a spring, produced the bryophytes *Hookeria lucens* and *Scapania undulata*. The single plant of *Dryopteris aemula* (Hay-scented Buckler-fern) known from the upper reaches of the stream was not seen. John Burbage, the owner of White Chimney Wood, kindly permitted access for the meeting and confirmed that the *Dryopteris aemula* grew beside a large fallen *Taxus baccata* (Yew), so a useful marker for those wishing to re-find it.

Botanists at Parsonage Wood.
Photo by Alfie Gay



Anemone nemorosa (Wood Anemone) flowers were well

out, because of a spell of fine weather we'd had prior to the meeting, along with *Ficaria verna* (Lesser Celandine) and *Cardamine pratensis* (Cuckooflower) and some leaf rosettes of *Orchis mascula* (Early-purple Orchid). *Asplenium scolopendrium* (Hart's-tongue), *Blechnum spicant* (Hard-fern), *Dryopteris borreii* (Scaly Male-fern), *Dryopteris dilatata* (Broad Buckler-fern), *Polystichum setiferum* (Soft Shield-fern) and *Pteridium aquilinum* (Bracken) were found on the dry west-facing slopes of the wood and on the plateau a patch of *Convallaria majalis* (Lily-of-the-Valley). At the woodland edge a few patches of *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* (Wild Daffodil) were entirely convincing just as we crossed the line into the next monad, but a little on from there some garden cultivars had crept in and interbred with the wild ones, resulting in a whole array of forms and colours. The two groups met up again at the very northern tip of White Chimney Wood at a good time for lunch which we had on a bank among the bluebell leaves. Afterwards most of the party opted to head along the lanes to Parsonage Wood. The banks were interesting with some *Betonica officinalis* (Betony) and *Lathyrus linifolius* (Bitter-vetch). A footpath led past Skullsgate House and some outcrops of Tunbridge Wells sandstone; and we found good examples of *Dryopteris affinis* (Scaly Male-fern).

Parsonage Wood is much wetter than White Chimney Wood, with *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge) alongside the footpath and young plants of *Silene flos-cuculi* (Ragged-Robin). There were two ponds which we investigated, though Alfie Gay did so a little too closely and unfortunately slipped in, luckily coming to no more harm than getting his boots full of water. The stream in Parsonage Wood runs through a very deep gill which is a known site for *Dryopteris aemula* (Hay-scented Buckler-fern). Some of the group climbed down into it and were able to admire 10 plants clinging to the vertical slopes.

Dryopteris aemula at Parsonage Wood.
Photo by Alfie Gay

Customary tea and Welsh cakes back at the cars were most welcome after our day out in the sunshine.



SB & SL

HONOR OAK, LEWISHAM, Saturday 22 April

Nineteen Kent and Surrey botanists gathered at Honor Oak station for a joint meeting exploring both sides of the vice county border, taking in Camberwell new and old cemeteries. The boundary corresponds to no obvious physical features although the original Oak of Honor, under which Elizabeth I was supposed to have picnicked, was apparently a boundary mark, albeit replaced in 1905 by another oak, not quite in the same spot. We began on the Kent side of the notional boundary and botanised along the streets. The absence of any recent weed-killing had permitted quite a luxuriant and varied flora along the roadside gutters and the intersection of pavements with garden boundaries. Many plants were such that gardeners would describe as weeds, but if the definition of a weed is a plant in the 'wrong' place, then we saw many garden plants which, having strayed out onto the pavements, were also in the 'wrong' place. There were the usual debates over distinguishing *Campanula portenschlagiana* (Adria Bellflower) from *Campanula poscharskyana* (Trailing Bellflower), the latter having hairy flower buds which develop into a more open, star-shaped flower. But there were more exotic escapes than these, and we saw *Cordyline australis* (Cabbage-palm) seedlings on pavements in two places, one outside a garden spectacularly stocked with the palm and other architectural plants. *Passiflora caerulea* (Blue Passionflower) was also found – a seedling growing out of the tarmac of a public alleyway.



Cabbage-palm habitat. Photo by Geoffrey Kitchener

Crossing over a railway bridge, we noted that the damp cutting slopes held much *Equisetum telmateia* (Great Horsetail) and *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed), their aggression penned back by the railway fencing. This brought us to the crematorium grounds

and thence to Camberwell new cemetery. The floral interest here increased with the age of the graves, but it was not long before the Kent graves became Surrey graves, across an indiscernible boundary. Lunch time beckoned after a while and traversing Brenchley Road, we found an elevated area with picnic tables and view of many prominent London landmarks. We also overlooked an extensive green open space laid out as a golf course, but covering a 55 million gallon water reservoir which, on construction in 1909, was Europe's largest underground structure of this nature.

A matter of grave concern. Photo by Daphne Mills

We then, still in Surrey, moved on to Camberwell old cemetery, which has been the subject of proposals by Southwark Council to clear and re-use. Much of the cemetery was occupied by dense, spontaneous tree and ivy cover, amidst which Victorian memorial statues, crosses and other gravestones could be seen, overwhelmed by the growth around. Stephen Lemon found a pear tree (*Pyrus communis* sens. lat.) of truly enormous dimensions and Daphne Mills added to



the Surrey records a new discovery of *Orobanche hederæ* (Ivy Broomrape). From the cemetery, we worked back up Forest Hill Road into West Kent, passing along One Tree Hill. It looks as though it is some considerable time since there was only one tree (presumably the Honor Oak), and we found *Quercus x rosacea* (the hybrid between Pedunculate and Sessile Oaks) in various sizes, evidently spreading. After having come across some rather weak *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell) here, and hoping they might be native flora remnants in spite of the historic lack of woodland continuity, we were told by a notice board that they were planted. At least this meant that we were able to qualify properly our record. The meeting finished not far from our start point, with refreshments kindly supplied by Sarah Kitchener.

GK

COWDEN / HOLTYE, Wednesday 10 May

Our joint meeting with Sussex Botanical Recording Society attracted nineteen botanists in total, although our numbers fluctuated during the day. We began by finding on the streets a garden escape then supposed to be *Nemesia strumosa* (Cape-jewels), but which subsequently looks as though it might be better named as *Nemesia denticulata* 'Confetti'.

The churchyard was then explored, where *Erophila verna* (Common Whitlowgrass) was still in flower, and we digressed somewhat to admire the massive 15th century timberwork of the bell turret. Thence we worked down, via some allotments, to the Kent/Sussex recording boundary, the Kent Water, which passes along a golf course. Here Joyce Pitt showed us *Salix caprea x cinerea* (the hybrid between Goat and Grey Willows) before we crossed over into Sussex.

The Cowden Nemesia. Photo by Geoffrey Kitchener



Lunch was taken in the woodland of Holtye Common, after which our original plan to explore a Wealden gill west of Cowden was abandoned in the light of the success of Priscilla Nobbs in gaining us access to the surrounds of Furnace Pond. (The Furnace name relates to ironworks which operated between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries; it now seems a very remote area in contrast to its busy industrial past.) The vice county boundary runs through this lake, where we found on the Sussex side *Cardamine amara* (Large Bitter-cress) and on the Kent side *Carex paniculata x remota* (the hybrid between Greater Tussock-sedge and Remote Sedge), apparently only the twelfth Kent record since 1855. Returning along Furnace Lane, in Sussex, we reached the boundary yet again, at Kitford Bridge over the Kent Water. *Tellima grandiflora* (Fringecups) was naturalised in a wet copse and by scrambling through this and down the stream bank – the Kent Water being shallow and stony at this point – we saw much *Polystichum aculeatum* (Hard Shield-fern) and a very good candidate for the cross between Hard and Soft Shield-ferns (*Polystichum x bicknellii*) on the Kent bank. It displayed intermediate



characters, in particular the frond length and texture, but it was not possible to obtain spores for confirmation of sterility (a later visit failed in this also). Normally, it is easier to see ferns on the opposite bank to that on which one is walking – hence the Kent botanists would succeed best on the Surrey side. But in this case, the inaccessibility of the Surrey bank meant that the best access was from the stream bed.

Fern overhanging the Kent Water. Photo by Geoffrey Kitchener

By this time some of our party had become detached, but the remainder crossed over to a footpath which led us up to Spode Lane, where a KWT roadside nature reserve had flourishing *Betonica officinalis* (Betony) and *Lathyrus linifolius* (Bitter-vetch). A young *Sorbus torminalis* (Wild Service-tree) was also growing nearby. Arriving at the village hall car park, from where we had started, the main party re-united with most of the rest, who had found a shorter way back, and all enjoyed drinks and cakes, provided by Sarah Kitchener. Over the day, we had secured 143 records for the Kent part of TQ4640, covering Cowden down to the Kent Water, and 69 records for the north margin of Furnace Pond and the adjoining part of Furnace Lane.

GK

BETHERSDEN, Tuesday 23 May

As we gathered in the car park of The Mumbai Gate restaurant for this meeting we were serenaded by a Turtle Dove which thrilled us with a brief appearance on a telegraph wire. Turtle Doves are very rare and endangered breeders in Kent and the UK, so this was most exciting. The meeting had been planned for general botanical recording in an area of the Low Weald with an incredible number of ponds and which hadn't been visited by a botanist since before 2010.

Pond with Water-violet. Photo by Stephen Lemon

Eleven members attended and we planned to walk a circuit on public footpaths across sheep pasture where we had permission from the farmer to stray and inspect the ponds. Our approach was via Green Lane which had damp verges with *Pulicaria dysenterica* (Common



Fleabane), *Oenanthe crocata* (Hemlock Water-dropwort), *Lysimachia nummularia* (Creeping-Jenny), *Carex otrubae* (False Fox-sedge), *C. remota* (Remote Sedge), *C. hirta* (Hairy Sedge) and *C. divulsa* (Grey Sedge) with *Schedonorus pratensis* (Meadow Fescue).

The sheep pasture was very species-poor so we headed for the ponds and ditches alongside. Stephen Lemon found an interesting *Glyceria* from the margin of a shaded pool which appeared to be *Glyceria x pedicellata*, the hybrid between *Glyceria fluitans* (Floating Sweet-grass) and *G. notata* (Plicate Sweet-grass). He took home a specimen and was able to confirm this later. The florets were consistently open with variable lemmas, some notched, sharply-toothed paleas and anthers containing pollen grains but consistently indehiscent. Anthers were also measured and they fell into the range for *Glyceria x pedicellata* (no more than 1.9 mm).

The first well-lit pond we visited turned out to be by far the most interesting of the day. It was filled with a flowering Water-crowfoot which was quickly identified as *Ranunculus tripartitus* (Three-lobed Water-crowfoot). This is a Rare Plant Register (RPR) species which is regarded as nationally Endangered and we now have records for it from three locations, all in the Low Weald. Three more RPR species were in the same pond: *Hottonia palustris* (Water-violet) flowering and in abundance with *Veronica scutellata* (Marsh Speedwell) and *Ranunculus flammula* (Lesser Spearwort). Other notable species present were *Equisetum fluviatile* (Water Horsetail) and *Potamogeton polygonifolius* (Bog Pondweed).

***Ranunculus tripartitus* (Three-lobed Water-crowfoot). Photo by Stephen Lemon**



The Water-crowfoot was also in a neighbouring pond but the variously-shaded remaining ponds on our route were less exciting and we visited many

(eleven in all) in order to add species to the list such as *Carex pseudocyperus* (Cyperus Sedge), *Oenanthe aquatica* (Fine-leaved Water-dropwort), *Lycopus europaeus* (Gypsywort), *Alisma plantago-aquatica* (Water-plantain) and *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort). One very large pool, new enough not to be marked on the OS Explorer Map, had a great deal of a narrow-leaved pondweed which was later confirmed as *Potamogeton berchtoldii* (Small Pondweed) from its closed stipules. *Rorippa amphibia* (Great Yellow-cress) was on the bank.



Our circuit took us back to Green Lane where we recorded a number of woodland plants including RPR species *Silene flos-cuculi* (Ragged-Robin); also *Sorbus torminalis* (Wild Service-tree), *Rosa tomentosa* (Harsh Downy-rose), *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks Buttercup), and *Orchis mascula* (Early-purple Orchid).

Yet another pond...
Photo by Sue Poyser

Our route took us into four monads from which we collected some 250 records and recorded four species for the Rare Plant Register. At the end of the day, thanks to Owen, we enjoyed tea and Welsh cakes in the car park.

SB

Longbeech Wood, Challock, Thursday 8 June

Nine KBRG members met up as planned in the car park of the Wagon and Horses pub and then drove a short distance to a lay-by in Monkery Lane on the edge of Longbeech Wood. The purpose of the meeting was to record in this newly acquired Woodland Trust site which was previously private and so where few botanists have walked in recent years. We were met by Clive Steward, site manager for Woodland Trust, and he gave us a brief history of the site and handed out new hot-off-the-press trail guides.

The site, now known as Longbeech North, covers 250 acres on the north side of Monkery Lane. Clive explained that it is a site of planted ancient woodland (PAWS) which appears to be contradictory but refers to its history of continued woodland cover which, although much planted, has been used continuously from mediaeval times to the present day. During that time sweet chestnut coppice and conifers (Larch, Douglas Fir and Norway Spruce) have been planted over much of the area. In 2012 a fungus *Phytophthora ramorum* attacked the larches with the result that 25% of the woodland had to be clear-felled under a statutory plant health notice. Since the Woodland Trust acquired Longbeech in 2015, it has carried out planting of broad-leaves and conifers and intends to maintain the area in a way that is sympathetic both to commercial needs and to ancient semi-natural woodland habitat. Although Longbeech North is classed as ancient woodland, there are no surviving ancient trees.

A very healthy Dryopteris affinis.
Photo by Sue Buckingham

We set off along a ride which demonstrated the acidic nature of the clay-with-flints and gave us species such as *Galium saxatile* (Heath Bedstraw), *Teucrium scorodonia* (Wood Sage), *Hypericum pulchrum* (Slender St. John's-wort), and both subspecies of *Luzula multiflora* (Heath Wood-rush). Rare Plant Register (RPR) species *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather), *Veronica officinalis* (Heath Speedwell) *Potentilla erecta*



(Tormentil) and *Potentilla anglica* (Trailing Tormentil) were recorded along the same ride. *Dryopteris carthusiana* (Narrow Buckler-fern) and *Carex pallescens* (Pale Sedge) were further good discoveries and where the path was wet we found *Mentha arvensis* (Corn Mint) and *Stellaria alsine* (Bog Stitchwort). *Ceratocarpus claviculata* (Climbing Corydalis) was much admired, especially one very large expanse flowering among the Bracken. An old dark plantation of *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas Fir) held little interest apart from a few established seedling offspring but both Kent Scaly Male-ferns were recognised: *Dryopteris affinis* and *D. borrieri*. The presence of Firecrest was a bonus for the birders, who had already had the pleasure of seeing Tree Pipit and Marsh Tit. A very large Bramble caught Owen Leyshon's attention and Liam Rooney collected a piece with the ambition of determining it at home. It keyed out, apparently without too much trouble, to *Rubus angloserpens*, which was recorded in Eric's *New Atlas of the Kent Flora* (2010) in 1998 only for Longbeech Wood.

As we neared the north eastern part of the wood we dropped down onto deeper, richer soil with a more general woodland flora, *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel), *Primula vulgaris* (Primrose), *Ajuga reptans* (Bugle) and a large colony of *Orchis mascula* (Early-purple Orchid) in an old quarry. There a sunken footpath with high banks took us out of the wood and onto a grassy field for a change of habitat and lunch.

After lunch we looked for *Paris quadrifolia* (Herb Paris) which had been reported from the hornbeams at the very eastern tip of the wood. We didn't find Paris but instead two plants of *Cephalanthera damasonium* (White Helleborine), *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks Buttercup) and a great deal of *Neottia ovata* (Common Twayblade).



Our return route took us back up to the acidic areas and a large clearing with RPR species *Pedicularis sylvatica* (Lousewort), *Polygala serpyllifolia* (Heath Milkwort), more Heather, a few plants of *Senecio sylvatica* (Heath Groundsel) and a couple of Green Tiger-beetles.

Tea time. Photo by Sue Buckingham

Turning west along Monckery Lane we arrived back at the parking area for much needed tea and Welsh cakes. Our RPR total for the day was eight species.

SB

SEABROOK VALLEY, SANDGATE, Friday 23 June

Seven botanists met on the corner of Sandy Lane by Shorncliffe Military Cemetery for this meeting to explore the Seabrook Valley to the west of Folkestone. This moderately steep valley carved by the Seabrook Stream supports a variety of habitats and has long attracted the attention of botanists, notably G.E. Smith, who gives an enthusiastic description of part of the valley and its flora in his 1829 publication *A Catalogue of Rare and Remarkable Phaenogamous Plants, Collected in South Kent*. An area of alder carr and fen is designated a SSSI and several interesting plants have been recorded here and in the surrounding grassland including *Carex paniculata* (Greater Tussock-sedge), *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Wood Club-rush), *Galium uliginosum* (Fen Bedstraw), *Juncus subnodulosus* (Blunt-flowered Rush), *Valeriana officinalis* (Common Valerian) and *Caltha palustris* (Marsh Marigold). In G.E. Smith's day he added *Epipactis palustris* (Marsh Helleborine) to this list.



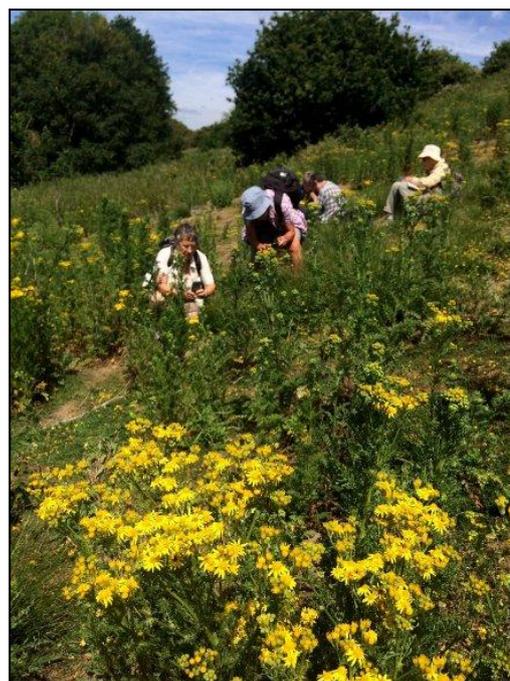
*The Sandgate expedition under way.
Photo by Sue Buckingham*

Our principal objective was to record the flora on the eastern slopes of the valley, part of which is planned to be brought into conservation management as mitigation for the development of the nearby MOD barracks at Shorncliffe Camp. From our meeting point we headed northwards along West Road which follows the edge of the Camp. We recorded a variety of common plants along the grass verges and pavement edges together with a scattering of more local species: *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid), *Rumex pulcher* (Fiddle Dock), *Torilis nodosa* (Knotted Hedge-parsley), and *Malva neglecta* (Dwarf Mallow).

At Risborough Barracks we left the road for a footpath that took us onto the eastern slopes of the Seabrook Valley and we proceeded to botanise the patches of dry sandy grassland. The bedrock of the upper slopes of the Seabrook Valley here is the Folkestone Formation which usually gives rise to acidic grassland and heathland in East Kent (as at Hothfield and Mersham Hatch). However, the flora we recorded was not particularly indicative of acidic soils and included many patches of *Lotus corniculatus* (Bird's-foot-trefoil) and *Senecio jacobaea* (Common Ragwort), though *Rumex acetosella* (Sheep's Sorrel) was present to suggest an acid influence. *Rumex pulcher* (Fiddle Dock) was especially abundant here. Unfortunately, the grassland had become very parched due to the dry weather, making a search for some of the rarer annuals that favour this type of habitat rather futile (G.E. Smith mentioned *Scleranthus annuus* (Annual Knawel) and *Trifolium glomeratum* (Clustered Clover) occurring in the sandy grassland above the Seabrook). Numerous patches of a rabbit-nibbled sedge stood out amongst the closely cropped sward and prompted discussion. We were able to recognise these as belonging to the *Carex divulsa/muricata* group and specimens collected were later determined by Stephen Lemon as *Carex divulsa* subsp. *leersii* (Many-leaved Sedge).

Ragwort heaven. Photo by Owen Leyshon

We doubled back a short distance and followed a footpath heading down the slope towards St Martin's Church. In a narrow passageway that entered out onto a small housing estate we found *Polycarpon tetraphyllum* (Four-leaved Allseed) and *Polypogon viridis* (Water Bent). We proceeded along Horn Street where on the edge of a small field we recorded the hybrid between *Hypericum androsaemum* (Tutsan) and *H. hircinum* (Stinking Tutsan), *H. x inodorum*. Turning westward along the lane to Casebourne Farm we found *Allium vineale* (Wild Onion), on the grass verge (a species that G.E. Smith recorded at Shorncliffe). Here we entered the part of Seabrook Valley below St Martin's Plain owned by the MOD from whom we had been granted permission to access their land. We had lunch by the Seabrook Stream before heading upstream towards some damp flushes at the base of the sandy slopes. Here we recorded many typical species of damp ground including *Carex remota* (Remote Sedge), *Alopecurus geniculatus* (Marsh Foxtail), *Galium palustre* (Marsh Bedstraw), *Scrophularia auriculata* (Water Figwort), *Lotus pedunculatus* (Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil), *Silene flos-cuculi* (Ragged-robin) and *Equisetum palustre* (Marsh Horsetail).



We continued northward towards St Martin's Plain, to where we had a view over Dibgate Quarry and the alder carr that forms the SSSI. The very dry sandy banks here supported *Carex muricata* subsp. *pairae* (Prickly Sedge), *Pilosella officinarum* (Mouse-ear Hawkweed), *Stellaria graminea* (Lesser Stitchwort), *Luzula campestris* (Field Wood-rush) and *Hypochaeris radicata* (Cat's-ear). With the afternoon advancing we realised we did not have time to explore further and decided to head back, following the same route back to Casebourne Farm and then walking south along Horn Street. Climbing up the wooded public footpath back to Shorncliffe Cemetery we added a few new species for the day, including *Polystichum setiferum* (Soft Shield-fern), *Athyrium filix-femina*

(Lady Fern), *Pteridium aquilinum* (Bracken), *Typha latifolia* (Bulrush) and *Stellaria alsine* (Bog Stitchwort). Although we did not find any rarities, it was a very satisfying day and we gained plenty of very useful records for four separate monads. Tea and Welsh cakes, courtesy of Owen and Sue, were greatly enjoyed upon our return to our meeting point.

AG

MALMAINS FARM, WHITFIELD, Thursday 6 July

When a red kite flew above the eight KBRG members gathering in the farm yard at Malmain, someone remarked that the best birdwatching was to be had on botany meetings and that other members with an ornithological bent might wish to take note!

Each year we offer a recording meeting aimed at finding arable weeds at a farm suggested by Dan Tuson who is Natural England's Stewardship Advisor in the county. This year it was Malmain, an arable farm on the chalk just north of Whitfield (near Dover). It has a number of unsprayed plots, strips and margins which are managed in various ways under a stewardship scheme. Dan introduced us to the farmer and after a brief chat we began recording in the farm yard with both *Kickxia elatine* (Sharp-leaved Fluellen) and *Kickxia spuria* (Round-leaved Fluellen) present by a barn.

Just east of the buildings a kilometre-long margin, about 100 metres wide and on a very shallow chalk soil, had been thinly sown with a grass and *Brassica* mix and left unsprayed, with the purpose of encouraging arable weeds. There were thousands of flowering plants of *Fumaria parviflora* (Fine-leaved Fumitory), a Rare Plant Register (RPR) species, scattered all over this with abundant *Fumaria densiflora* (Dense-flowered Fumitory) and *Fumaria officinalis* (Common Fumitory). The margin continued into a second monad (also a new tetrad and hectad!) so we were kept busy for a while and in the process we disturbed a hare. Interestingly, *Geranium pusillum* (Small-flowered Crane's-bill) was very prolific, with *Fallopia convolvulus* (Black Bindweed), *Viola arvensis* (Field Pansy) *Papaver rhoeas* (Common Poppy), *Sinapis arvensis* (Charlock); and at the field margin we found a little *Legousia hybrida* (Venus's-looking-glass).

Fumaria parviflora. Photo by Daphne Mills

The approach road to the farm has a chalk bank with a good mix of typical species including *Knautia arvensis* (Field Scabious), *Briza media* (Quaking-grass) and *Fragaria vesca* (Wild Strawberry), all RPR species. We spotted flowering *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid) and then surprisingly a few fruiting spikes of *Orchis anthropophora* (Man Orchid). We counted fifteen in all but there were probably more. We didn't want to damage them in the dense vegetation, but we let the farmer know about his orchid bank which he has promised to cut at the end of the summer.



We explored a second unsprayed margin before lunch and added *Anthemis cotula* (Stinking Chamomile) to the RPR list and a little *Papaver hybridum* (Rough Poppy) and *Lamium amplexicaule* (Henbit Dead-nettle). We had lunch tucked just inside Malmain Wood to get out of the hot sun for a while before heading off for a third margin alongside the road to Eythorne village.



Legousia hybrida. Photo by Daphne Mills

This last unsprayed margin was on deeper soil and very overgrown but we still added some new species: *Euphorbia exigua* (Dwarf Spurge) for the RPR, and some very large plants of *Plantago major* subsp. *intermedia* (Greater Plantain). These were very distinctive with hairy leaves which were cuneate at base, with undulate toothed margins and very long fruiting spikes bearing between 20 and 25 seeds per capsule. Stace says 'plants of this subspecies are usually smaller with much shorter spikes' and that description certainly didn't agree with our plants. However, Sell and Murrell list a number of varieties including a large var *sinuata* with leaves up to 15 x 10 cm and inflorescence up to 27 cm. This variety can be found in waste places and cultivated ground and it seems to fit well with our plants. *Anisantha diandra*, (Great Brome) and *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax) were seen nearby.

Thanks to Owen, we finished the day with tea and Welsh cakes in the farmyard, having listed eight species for the RPR and a good list of general records both for us and the farmer. We were grateful to Dan for fixing the day for us and to Malmain for giving us free access to the farm.

SB

TUTT HILL, HOTHFIELD, Sunday 16 July

Seventeen people and two dogs met in a lay-by outside Hothfield car sales for this meeting which was planned to record in an area on an underlying geology of the Folkestone Formation (Folkestone Sands) with a history of notable arable weeds. In the 1960s *Filago lutescens* (Red-tipped Cudweed) and *Misopates orontium* (Weasel's-



snout) were seen there and in 2016 came the discovery of *Silene gallica* (Small-flowered Catchfly) and *Glebionis segetum* (Corn Marigold). As a potentially interesting exercise, Sue Buckingham handed out a list of all the species previously recorded in the tetrad in which we were to spend the day but which hadn't been found since 2000.

Field studies. Photo by Owen Leyshon

With Owen Leyshon as leader we set off optimistically in a northerly direction collecting some good records of well-established garden escapes on the sandy banks and walls along Westwell Lane. These included *Centaurea montana* (Perennial Cornflower) and *Geranium versicolor* (Pencilled Crane's-bill)

with *Lavandula angustifolia* (Garden Lavender) which had obviously self-seeded on a low wall.

Just before the road crosses the High Speed Railway line (HS1), we stopped to ponder *Briza media* (Quaking-grass) in what seemed an odd habitat on a sandy roadside verge and then headed off eastwards along the margin of a sown grass ley. This had until recently been arable with a margin on which the target species had been seen. We weren't feeling very optimistic as a result but it wasn't long before we found *Silene gallica* (Small-flowered Catchfly), although the early season and very dry weather meant there were few flowers remaining. We had a total of sixteen plants. A few plants of *Spergula arvensis* (Corn Spurrey) were spotted, though we were to come across a massive population later in the day. Other additions were *Anisantha diandra* (Great Brome) and *Gnaphalium uliginosum* (Marsh Cudweed).

Danthonia decumbens (Heath-grass) was seen by Joyce Pitt but was frustratingly out of reach behind the fencing of HS1; however, nearby and on a bank of loose gravel and sand we spotted a good number of plants of *Galium parisiense* (Wall Bedstraw) well within our reach with more *Briza media* and *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling).

Stephen Lemon found *Carex muricata* subsp. *pairae* (Prickly Sedge) and nearby Ripple Wood with a lake and a stream gave us both woodland and wetland species including *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* (Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage) and *Dryopteris affinis* (Scaly Male-fern). We had lunch between woodland and some arable where *Veronica agrestis* (Green Field-speedwell) was spotted. For the afternoon David Steere and Danny Chesterman opted to extend the intended circuit and take in some extra monads. We all planned to meet up later.

Silene gallica (arrowed) guarded by Danny Chesterman's dog. Photo by Stephen Lemon

The larger part of the group headed back westwards to explore sandy fields to the west of Westwell Lane and discovered a very large population of *Spergula arvensis* in a broad bean crop. *Rumex acetosella* (Sheep's-sorrel) was also in abundance with *Echinochloa crus-galli* (Cockspur grass), *Chenopodium polyspermum* (Many-seeded Goosefoot) and *Anchusa arvensis* (Bugloss). *Filago vulgaris* (Common Cudweed) was abundant on a sandy verge.



When we met up with David he reported having seen *Euphrasia exigua* (Dwarf Spurge) and collected a good number of general records. These were later sent to Sue and together he and Danny added a further 140 records in three extra monads.

Silene gallica.
Photo by David Steere

Those who took a copy of the list of missing tetrad records enjoyed searching specifically for the missing species and a number of them were added after being passed on by Sue Poyser and Doug Grant, and by Richard Moyses, after the meeting.

Although we didn't find all of our target plants we recorded six RPR species and a very large number of general records. As usual we were all keen to get back to the roadside at the end of the day for very welcome tea, cakes and botanical chat, all thanks to Owen.

SB

SNOWDOWN WOODS near Dover, Tuesday 25 July

Sue Buckingham and Owen Leyshon planned and led this meeting with the purpose of searching for Rare Plant Register species *Hypericum montanum* (Pale St John's-wort) which had been recorded in the area but not seen since before 2010. Twelve members met in Woolage village beside the green and set off along the lane in an easterly direction to explore Oxney and Ruberries Woods for which we had previously acquired permission from the landowner. The weather forecast was dry but the sky looked threatening and there was an all-pervading smell of sewage in the air coming from the fields nearby. Unfortunately that was to stay with us most of the day.

However, a remarkably productive margin of a weedy broad bean field distracted us for a while as carrying a large population of *Euphorbia exigua* (Dwarf Spurge), with some *Anthemis cotula* (Stinking Chamomile) and *Papaver hybridum* (Rough Poppy) along with a number of commoner species.

We reached Oxney Wood (part of a Local Wildlife Site), where Peter Gay remembered seeing the *Hypericum* in a well-lit opening. However, we found no suitable places within the wood, which was dark with the ground flora dominated by sheets of *Mercurialis perennis* (Dog's Mercury) and with uninteresting rides mown for pheasant-rearing. We saw *Cephalanthera damasonium* (White Helleborine) in fruit and on a grassy slope at the western edge of the wood found a few plants of *Valerianella dentata* (Narrow-fruited Cornsalad) – not on an arable margin, but around rabbit scrapings on a chalky bank along with *Veronica officinalis* (Heath Speedwell) and *Knautia arvensis* (Field Scabious).



Hypericum montanum habitat.
Photo by Alfie Gay

We returned to the lane via the outside margin of the wood and saw some *Bromus secalinus* (Rye Brome) and spent some time contemplating a burdock, finally taking some home and eventually keying it out to *Arctium nemorosum* (Wood Burdock). Attracted by a well-matured, non-smelling sewage mound, we entered a field beside the railway line to see a number of flowering *Solanum lycopersicum*

(Tomato) plants. However, the bank alongside held a very good chalk flora with *Helianthemum nummularium* (Common Rock-rose), *Lithospermum officinale* (Common Gromwell), *Centaurea scabiosa* (Greater Knapweed) and *Rosa micrantha* (Small-flowered Sweet-briar).

We had lunch, some of us perched on handy concrete tank traps, on the opposite site of the railway line and close to where the clay-with-flints over chalk gave us an interesting mix of species in an area which had been cleared for a pylon line. These included *Solidago virgaurea* (Golden-rod), *Teucrium scorodonia* (Wood-sage), *Inula conyzae* (Ploughman's Spikenard) and *Filipendula ulmaria* (Meadow-sweet)! Joyce Pitt had seen

Hypericum montanum in Ruberries Wood back in 2010 and we made our way to the spot. There was a massive population of *Hypericum hirsutum* (Hairy St John's-wort) and especially where ash dieback allowed plenty of light in – but no sign of our target species. The pylon ride was colourful with flowering *Campanula trachelium* (Nettle-leaved Bellflower) in profusion and *Pimpinella major* (Greater Burnet-saxifrage), and we caught sight of a couple of Silver-washed Fritillaries.

Hypericum montanum with black glands on leaves and sepals.
Photo by Alfie Gay



But that's not the whole story. While the rest of the group headed off after lunch to explore Ruberries Wood, Alfie had stayed behind to investigate further. His hunch paid off as a short while later he was phoning us to report having found 'something interesting'.

He led us back to the spot at the end of the day where we were indeed delighted to count nine plants of *Hypericum montanum* on sandy soil over chalk at the woodland edge. Sadly, there were no



flowers open. Most plants were in fruit and a few in bud. The range of associates included *Luzula forsteri* (Southern Wood-rush), *Inula conyzae* and *Viola reichenbachiana* (Early Dog-violet). We spent a good while there congratulating Alfie and ourselves and wondering what species we should target next year!

Alfie sets off to explore.
Photo by Owen Leyshon

A very satisfactory meeting ended up with tea and Welsh cakes on the picturesque village green at Woolage. The black sky came to nothing and even the nasty smell had faded.

SB

LANGDON CLIFFS, DOVER, Friday 4 August

This meeting was arranged to search for *Euphrasia tetraquetra* (Western Eyebright), which was last recorded in Kent before 1981 from the chalk cliff above Dover Harbour. Sue Buckingham and Owen Leyshon asked Dr Fred Rumsey if he would be kind enough to come across to East Kent and help us out with eyebright identification and he told us he was looking forward to it.

He comes to Dover every year in August to count *Orobanche picridis* (Oxtongue Broomrape) and in 2016 saw plants that he was fairly happy were *E. tetraquetra* above the harbour and some plants that he thought were probably the hybrid between this and *E. pseudokernerii* (Chalk Eyebright). Fred is a very eminent botanist and great teacher. He is Plant Enquiries Officer at the London Natural History Museum, BSBI referee for a number of plants groups including *Orobanche* and he is author of a number of books and scientific papers. We felt very honoured that he had agreed to come and help us out.

Eighteen of us met at the National Trust car park on a beautiful sunny morning and set off for the cliff edge below the information centre. A wonderful array of chalk plants was spread alongside the path down and included *Carlina vulgaris* (Carlina Thistle), *Origanum vulgare* (Marjoram,) *Scabiosa columbaria* (Small Scabious) and fruiting heads of *Silene nutans* (Nottingham Catchfly).

*Fred explains all about eyebrights.
Photo by Alfie Gay*

Stopping at a group of the most common species, *Euphrasia nemorosa* (Common Eyebright), Fred talked us through a very useful step-by-step process for attempting to identify species from this very difficult genus. Sue took notes of this, and an account was e-mailed to members after the meeting as a useful aid for anyone thinking of recording eyebrights before the season finished. The same account is included later in this newsletter for future reference.



After Fred finished his explanation we moved on to the cliff edge to search for plants that might have the congested appearance required for our target species. We soon found some but the flowers were too large. *E. tetraquetra* should have flowers 7mm long at maximum, but these were longer and the lowest flowering node



was higher than expected for that species. Eventually we found a "good" *Euphrasia tetraquetra* with flowers within the required 5-7 mm range. It was flowering low, that is below node 7, and there were a few glandular hairs which Fred and some of us could see, whilst others couldn't. Consequently everyone took turns to photograph this little plant which was perched on bare chalk at the cliff edge with all of Dover docks forming a glorious backdrop below.

*After the appropriate health and safety warnings had been given...
Photo by Sue Poyser*

Fred was happy with at least two more *E. tetraquetra* specimens nearby and we moved on a little into the next monad to look at a remarkably mixed eyebright population spread out on a cliff-top plateau on very shallow chalk soil. Amongst these was a single very fleshy *E. tetraquetra*. Fred collected a selection of the plants to pass



on to the *Euphrasia* referee. It was suspected that they were hybrids with *E. pseudokernerii* but that would need confirmation. Sue also collected some to send off.

Success! *Euphrasia tetraquetra*. Photo by Liam Rooney

Although it was dry and brown, we had *Orobanche picridis* to look at on the old tram way and Fred took the trouble to explain how it differs from the very similar *O. minor* (Common Broomrape). We enjoyed lunch with a wonderful view of the white cliffs and later moved a little further inland, still looking at eyebright populations. Sue made collections from two sites where plants were mostly small-flowered, well-branched and spaced-out but included some with a condensed appearance. These were also sent off later as possible hybrids for expert determination.

Only a few new general records were collected from two well-recorded monads and so there was no list for the day. Non-botanical highlights were an osprey and butterflies including Clouded Yellow. The day ended as usual with tea, thanks to Owen and cake to celebrate Judith Shorter's birthday. A few of us stayed on with Fred to find some more *Orobanche picridis* plants and some *Euphrasia pseudokernerii*; the latter had eluded us up until then. Our thanks go particularly to Fred for confirming our target species for us, for his expert tuition and his excellent company. We showed our appreciation to Fred with half a dozen bottles of Kentish ale.

Judith's cake (Euphrasia tetraquetra was not the only celebration).

Photo by Sue Poyser



The hybrids at the cliff top were confirmed later from pressed specimens by Dr Chris Metherell, BSBI referee for *Euphrasia*, as *E. pseudokernerii* x *tetraquetra*. He confirmed that the collections made after lunch included *E. nemorosa* x *tetraquetra* and straight *E. nemorosa*. He said that we probably had in the area a hybrid swarm involving three species and in the centre of the swarm were specimens showing a complete mix of characters produced by crossing and back-crossing. He added that the rarity of "good" *E. tetraquetra* might be due to it effectively having been hybridised out.

SB

BEDGEBURY FOREST, Thursday 10 August

The purpose of this meeting, led by Sue Buckingham and Owen Leyshon, was to acquire more general records for this vast area of Forestry Commission land and to search for *Illecebrum verticillatum* (Coral Necklace), last seen in the 1990s in areas near Louisa Lake. Four members from Sussex Botanical Recording Society who are also KBRG members had crossed the border to join in and we numbered thirteen in all. Our meeting place was at the offices of Bedgebury Pinetum and we had been given permission to drive a few cars a little further into the forest to be nearer our target area.

Doug Grant began the list-keeping with an avalanche of typical acid-loving species from the sides of the forest track. We had *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather); *Carex binervis* (Green-ribbed Sedge) and *C. pilulifera* (Pill Sedge); *Galium saxatile* (Heath Bedstraw); *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort) and *H. pulchrum* (Slender St John's-wort); *Mentha arvensis* (Corn Mint) and *Mentha x verticillata* (Whorled Mint), its hybrid with *M. aquatica*

(Water Mint); *Potentilla erecta* (Tormentil); *Polygala serpyllifolia* (Heath Milkwort); *Solidago virgaurea* (Goldenrod); *Succisa pratensis* (Devil's-bit Scabious) and *Veronica officinalis* (Heath Speedwell). We were surprised to find *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax) on a recently disturbed area and *Cyclamen hederifolium* (Sowbread) naturalised on the trackside. We admired patches of *Agrimonia procera* (Fragrant Agrimony) and *Hieracium sabaudum* (Autumn Hawkweed); and fruiting spikes of *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine) were frequent along various tracks throughout the day.

We checked many *Euphrasia* (Eyebright) plants hoping for a sight of long glandular hairs which would point to *E. officinalis* subsp. *anglica* (English Eyebright). That's quite frequent in the Pinetum, but today all proved to be just *E. nemorosa*. Just south of Louisa Lake we turned off the 'made-up' rides onto a wet grassy path and straightaway came across *Radiola linoides* (Allseed) with a little *Centunculus minimus* (Chaffweed) close by. A lot of time was spent photographing these very tiny plants which were to prove very frequent on all of the paths we came across which had not been surfaced for bikes and vehicles. Lots of baby toads were also enjoying the dampness along with *Scutellaria minor* (Lesser Skullcap).

More ground level scrutiny.
Photo by Daphne Mills

We managed to find a dry bank to perch on for lunch before reaching the grid reference for one of the old sightings of Coral Necklace. It looked promising, as did many more damp paths, but no *Illecebrum* was seen, although we had a patch of *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern), a species for the Rare Plant Register (RPR). We were pleased to find a good number of plants of *Pedicularis sylvatica* (Louse-wort) with yet more *Radiola* and



Centunculus, and later along the same path Stephen Lemon spotted and showed us all a liverwort which he tentatively identified as *Scapania nemorosa* but later confirmed it to be *Scapania irrigua* which is rare in Kent – the last Bedgebury record he could find was from 70 years ago.

Blackstonia perfoliata (Yellow-wort), *Kickxia elatine* (Sharp-leaved Fluellen) and *Trifolium medium* (Zig-zag Clover) were seen on a bank of soil which had probably been brought in for track building. *Erica cinerea* (Bell Heather), another RPR species, was also present.

Back at Louisa Lake we tried a final Coral Necklace search on its eastern margin. Sadly this area has become very overgrown and we struggled through to find just a few plants of *Stachys betonica* (Betony) and *Erica tetralix* (Cross-leaved Heath). Stephen ventured further and added *Carex echinata* (Star Sedge) and *Viola palustris* (Marsh Violet). So although we didn't find our target, we recorded a total of ten RPR species and a great number of general records.

Early on in the day we discussed some fallen tree foliage with fruit attached from an obviously planted specimen which Sue confirmed to be *Juglans nigra* (Black Walnut). We finished the day at our parking place deep in the forest with tea and Welsh cakes, thanks as always to Owen.

HAPPY VALLEY, MEOPHAM, Tuesday 22 August

Ten members met by Meopham Green to boost the records in two monads on the slopes of a dry chalk valley which includes a Local Wildlife Site well known for its orchid species. It was thought that the mix of chalk grassland, arable margins, scrub and woodland should come up with a good list for the day. The weather was fine and dry and we began our recording on a shady lane by houses and then out onto a grassy bank fringed with some characteristic chalk plants.

Cichorium intybus (Chicory) and *Cruciata laevipes* (Crosswort) were listed for the Rare Plant Register and we enjoyed *Campanula trachelium* (Nettle-leaved Bellflower), *Bryonia dioica* (White Bryony) and *Carduus crispus* (Wetted Thistle).

The footpath took us across an arable field and at the margin was *Euphorbia exigua* (Dwarf Spurge) which we were to see in abundance throughout the day. *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax) was equally prolific along with *Kickxia elatine* (Sharp-leaved Fluellen) and some *K. spuria* (Round-leaved Fluellen). For a while the party split and Joyce Pitt discovered a neighbouring broad bean field with an infestation of *Orobanche crenata* (Bean Broomrape).

Happy Valley, indeed.
Photo by Sue Poyser

Throughout the day we discussed certain features which could be used to identify plants when they are not in flower. For example, the leaves of *Chaerophyllum temulum* (Rough Chervil) and those of *Anthriscus sylvestris* (Cow Parsley) appear similar. However, the first has solid and the second hollow petioles (leaf stalks). *Ranunculus bulbosus* (Bulbous Buttercup) when not in flower could be mistaken for *R. repens* (Creeping



Buttercup) but the large swollen stem base, “the bulb”, of Bulbous buttercup is visible when you scrape away a little soil at the base of a leaf rosette. We tried it and saw some surprisingly large ones. Fruiting Red and White Campions were separated by the capsule teeth which are curved in the former and erect in the latter. It was suggested that we might consider holding an out of season meeting to concentrate on vegetative plant identification using Poland and Clement’s *Vegetative Key to the British Flora* and our own experience.

Our route took us for a kilometre or so alongside Haddocks Woods where we had both a productive chalk bank and an interesting arable margin, the crop having been cut earlier. *Veronica polita* (Grey Field-speedwell) was abundant in places with more *Euphorbia exigua*. *Knautia scabiosa* (Common Field Scabious) and *Scabiosa columbaria* (Small Scabious) were frequent on the chalk bank with *Clinopodium vulgare* (Wild Basil), *Origanum vulgare* (Wild Marjoram) and *Geranium columbinum* (Long-stalked Crane’s-bill). Further south the bank was more rabbit-nibbled with bare chalk visible, and *Hippocrepis comosa* (Horseshoe Vetch), *Poterium sanguisorba* (Salad Burnet), *Blackstonia perfoliata*, (Yellow-wort), *Lithospermum officinale* (Common Gromwell) and *Anthyllis vulneraria* (Kidney Vetch) were present. For the Rare Plant Register we had *Campanula rotundifolia* (Harebell), *Euphrasia pseudokernerii* (Chalk Eyebright), *Carlina vulgaris* (Carlina Thistle) *Briza media* (Quaking Grass),

Helianthemum nummularium (Common Rock-rose) and *Clinopodium acinos* (Basil Thyme) – just one plant on the arable margin.



Arable margin and chalk bank.

Photo by Sue Poyser

Lunch was taken amidst this array of chalk plants and later we made our way back along part of Heron Hill Lane where a number of *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine) plants were seen and a single fruiting spike of *Neottia nidus-avis* (Bird's-nest Orchid). A much less interesting bridleway led us back to the village green.

A total of twelve species were recorded for the Rare Plant Register and an impressive list of general records collected for the day.

SB

OAKEN WOOD, near TESTON, Wednesday 6 September

Oaken Wood is a designated Local Wildlife Site for which at least 26 ancient woodland indicator species are listed. It's a large area of ancient broadleaved woodland, mostly converted to pure chestnut coppice, and because we had very few recent records from its western side, it seemed a good option for a late summer meeting based on general recording.

Just six members arrived on the day and set off from near the North Pole pub to walk eastwards through the wood on North Pole Road. We began by recording the usual species of roadsides and woodland edge and added some arable weeds which were growing under the rows of trees in a nearby Bramley apple orchard. A short sortie up a public footpath into the chestnut coppice gave us *Acaena novae-zelandiae* (Pirri-pirri-bur) and we were to come across a couple more patches elsewhere in the wood later in the day.



Orpine enthusiasts. Photo by Sue Poyser

We were surprised to spot *Campanula trachelium* (Nettle-leaved Bellflower) on the roadside in a wood described as having generally very acid soils. However, the southern part, where we were, has some sloping ground with deeper richer soils than the plateau above, and the roadside bank was quite well-lit. Throughout the day we continued to find plants typical of soils ranging from very acid to quite alkaline.

Some recently cut chestnut coppice kept us occupied for a long time with flowering *Senecio sylvaticum* (Heath Groundsel) in abundance, *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort) and *Galium saxatile* (Heath Bedstraw). Without doubt the star plant here was a patch of *Sedum telephium* (Orpine) with flowers of a very rich dark pink. All around, despite it being September, a carpet of *Viola riviniana* (Common Dog-violet) was flowering as if it

were spring again. Earlier Brian Woodhams had pointed out non-flowering *Viola reichenbachiana* (Early Dog-violet) and the hybrid between the two, *Viola x bavarica*. So now we had the set! We almost completely missed a species for the Rare Plant Register (RPR): *Gnaphalium sylvaticum* (Heath Cudweed), three plants and each with numerous flowering spikes. Both *Conyza floribunda* (Bilbao's Fleabane) and *C. sumatrensis* (Guernsey Fleabane) were in the coppice for us to compare.

Sanicula europaea (Sanicle), *Fragaria vesca* (Wild Strawberry) and *Oxalis acetosella* (Wood Sorrel) were further additions for the RPR and a good number of Hawkweed plants were flowering and fruiting along the roadside. They were of the type with an obvious basal rosette of leaves and very few cauline (stem) ones. Hawkweeds cannot be named so late in the season as September but Sue collected a little material in the hope that it might match up to one of the species that had been recorded for the tetrad in the past. The outcome was that it will need checking earlier in its flowering period next year for possible *Hieracium kentii* (Kent's Hawkweed).

We had lunch along the roadside under mixed broadleaved woodland with *Corylus avellana* (Hazel) and *Carpinus betulus* (Hornbeam) and a mix of woodland plants such as *Galium odoratum* (Woodruff) and *Sanicula europaea* (Sanicle). After this we headed off north into the chestnut and up onto the plateau. There the plants changed immediately to those typical of acid soils and we had *Potentilla erecta* (Tormentil), *Mentha arvensis*, (Corn Mint) and *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather) for the RPR together with *Pteridium aquilinum* (Bracken), *Hypericum humifusum* and *Luzula multiflora* subsp. *multiflora* (Heath Wood-rush). *Blechnum spicant* (Hard Fern) was good to see on dry banks under the coppice along with *Deschampsia flexuosa* (Wavy Hair-grass).



Sedum telephium. Photo by Sue Poyser

We had hoped to find *Erica cinerea* (Bell Heather) in the area around Five Wents, a junction of multiple tracks, but there had been a lot of heavy rain before our meeting and that had made the tracks through the coppice virtually impassable with deep water-filled ruts on either side. After two of our party lost their footing and got very muddy, we abandoned the attempt and made our way back to the cars via a drier but less interesting route. For anyone who was there and notices the addition of *Cruciata laevipes* (Crosswort) to the plant list circulated after the meeting, it was made

by the leader, right beside her car, as she drove off! In all we made a total of 277 records in four monads and that included six RPR species.

SB

I went to the North Pole – and nobody was there!

This is a gentle reminder to just double check the email reminders which Geoffrey Kitchener sends out to all KBRG members close to the field meeting dates with your diary.

The KBRG Field Meeting programme is expertly put together by Sue Buckingham during the late autumn and early winter and sent out in March for the year ahead...

So there is no excuse especially if you are involved in helping to put the Field Meeting programme together with Sue and all the other members to turn up at the North Pole pub for an Oaken Wood Field meeting a day early – which I did.....

As you would expect, nobody was there.

Owen Leyshon

HARTY FERRY, ISLE OF SHEPPEY, Friday 13 October

The final meeting for the year was held on the Isle of Sheppey close to the old Harty Ferry crossing with the focus of recording *Salicornia* (Glassworts) on the saltmarsh within the South Swale National Nature Reserve. Lliam Rooney and Sue Buckingham were meeting leaders and were joined by 15 other KBRG members at Sayes Court, where the farmer had kindly given permission for us to park our vehicles.

We began general recording around the farm buildings with a fruiting Amaranth, later determined as *Amaranthus hybridus* (Green Amaranth). On a great heap of rotting compost a few Nasturtiums had self-seeded and were flowering. Geoffrey Kitchener pointed out hairs under the leaves and said we should check before naming the plants as he remembered seeing a note by John Palmer in BSBI News saying that most escaped garden plants were hybrids with *Tropaeolum peltophorum*. After checking later, Geoffrey concluded that their origin as garden plants was probably more complicated than that and our plants should for convenience be recorded simply as *Tropaeolum majus* (Nasturtium).

On our way to the coast we passed some strips which had been sown with bird seed mix to feed game birds and shortly afterwards there were some flowering plants of *Phacelia tanacetifolia* (Phacelia) which had self-seeded from a previous year's sowing. We recorded the Phacelia but not the birdseed crop.



A Purple Glasswort landscape. Photo by Sue Buckingham

At the coast Doug Grant and Sue Poyser headed off to take on the landward monad recording while the rest of us walked straight onto the saltmarsh which was red with *Salicornia ramossissima* (Purple Glasswort). Lliam explained to us all the structure of the plants and the differences between species, explaining how the two aggregate groups could be separated by their flower structure and segment shapes. *Sarcocornia perennis* (Perennial Glasswort) came next and was surprisingly abundant, forming a beautiful mosaic of bronze-coloured patchwork with the contrasting *Atriplex portulacoides* (Sea-purslane), *Suaeda maritima* (Annual Sea-blight) and *Salicornia* species. We decided that the saltmarsh here was probably the site of old salt workings with the remnants of the straight low banks running across. We could also see that the area is periodically grazed by

cattle and assumed that the excellent spread of *Salicornia* and *Sarcocornia* which we continued to see all day was due to either or both factors.

We found *Salicornia fragilis* (Yellow Glasswort) looking characteristically yellow. Liam explained how this was in the tetraploid *S. procumbens* group with its equal to sub-equal flowers and more or less straight-sided segments. Another *Salicornia* from this group with longer and more pointed spikes was *S. dolichostachya* (Long-spiked Glasswort), preferring areas of bare mud and greater tidal coverage. By now we were at the seaward edge of the marsh and along the margin of a gully in the mud we saw the greener-coloured *S. europaea* (Common Glasswort), which is in the diploid *S. europaea* group with distinctly smaller lateral flowers and strongly beaded convex sides to the segments. Liam suggested that due to its closeness to *S. ramosissima* it would probably be best amalgamated with that species. He also explained that due to the promiscuous nature of Glassworts every saltmarsh has its own local eccentric 'characters', those plants that seem to exhibit features of both aggregate groups, often with a spectrum of variation making the plants unidentifiable.



A Perennial Glasswort landscape.
Photo by Sue Buckingham

Common Glasswort habitat.
Photo by Geoffrey Kitchener



Lunch was had by the dried-up margin of a dike where we admired a massive population of *Hippuris vulgaris* (Mare's-tail) and an equally impressive extent of fruiting *Bupleurum tenuissimum* (Slender Hare's-ear) showing how it truly is an umbellifer. A few plants of *Chenopodium chenopodioides* (Saltmarsh Goosefoot) and some *Puccinellia fasciculata* (Borrer's Saltmarsh-grass) were also found. So with the *Hordeum murinum* (Sea Barley) and *Carex divisa* (Divided Sedge) seen earlier, this meant we'd seen a total of six RPR species in a small area before lunch.



Daphne, as proxy for the rabbits, demonstrates how Hound's-tongue seeds spread. Photo by Geoffrey Kitchener

For the second half of the day we headed westwards on the saltmarsh and first found some *Salicornia disarticulata* (previously *S. pusilla*) (One-flowered Glasswort), yet another RPR species and with its single flowers the easiest of the glassworts to identify. Despite searching by Liam and Geoffrey the hybrid with *S. ramosissima*, *S. x marshallii*, couldn't be found. Some rough grassland on the landward side gave us *Juncus maritimus* (Sea Rush), *Elytrigia atherica* (Sea Couch),

Ononis spinosa (Spiny Restharrow) and a fruiting Water-dropwort, later confirmed from its fruits to be (as

suspected) *Oenanthe lachenalii* (Parsley Water-dropwort). Then three further RPR species: *Artemisia maritima* (Sea Wormwood), *Inula crithmoides* (Golden-samphire) and *Cynoglossum officinale* (Hound's-tongue) the latter in profusion amidst a mass of rabbit burrows on a tall mound presumed to be a relic of the salt workings.

Progressing westwards on the saltmarsh we continued recording most of the aforementioned glassworts in a total of three monads before climbing back up to the farm. Two pools by the footpath had some *Potamogeton pectinatus* (Fennel Pondweed) and *Ceratophyllum submersum* (Soft Hornwort). A surprise discovery was *Lamium hybridum* (Cut-leaved Deadnettle) beside the path with two alien grasses nearby *Phalaris paradoxa* (Awned Canary-grass) and *Echinochloa crus-galli* (Cockspur).

The day finished back at Sayes Court with welcome tea and Welsh cakes provided by Owen Leyshon. We were pleased to give Owen a small present to show how very much his kindness is appreciated by us all. We were also very grateful to Liam for his knowledge and his patient explanation throughout the day regarding the very complex glassworts.

SB, with contributions by LR

Identifying Eyebrights

After our 4 August meeting at Langdon Cliffs, Dover, a note on *Euphrasia* (Eyebright) identification was circulated. It is repeated here, for future accessibility. It draws heavily on the guidance which members were given by Dr Fred Rumsey at that meeting.



Above: *Euphrasia officinalis* subsp. *anglica* (English Eyebright), *Euphrasia nemorosa* (Common Eyebright), *Euphrasia pseudokernerii* (Chalk Eyebright) and *Euphrasia confusa* (Confused Eyebright) – photos by Liam Rooney, taken from his Kent *Euphrasia* Key (see Newsletter no. 4, downloadable from <http://bsbi.org/kent>). *Euphrasia tetraquetra* (Western Eyebright)—**right**—is by Stephen Lemon, at Langdon Cliffs.

In identifying Eyebrights:

- Select a good sized population of plants to examine.
- Look at the entire plant, establish where the **lowest node** is and count upwards along the main stem until you reach the node at which the first flower or fruit appears. In all probability the leaves will have gone so that in locating a node you will be looking for just a bump on the main stem. Don't count the lowest or seedling leaf node. The number of the first flowering node will vary within a possible range, according to the species, although some of these



- ranges may overlap. Make sure it is the main stem which you are following when counting; do not treat low flowering branches as a flowering node; and a plant with a damaged main stem should be avoided.
- Measure the **length of a flower**. Do this by removing one from its calyx and measure from the base of its tube to the tip of the UPPER lip.
 - Look at the **overall shape of the plant** and consider if the branches appear flexuous or erect. Our demonstration plant at the August 2017 Dover meeting had numerous erect branches. *E. confusa* (Confused Eyebright) – not present at our site – is described as having flexuous branches and also has very small leaves at the base.
 - Look for **hairs** and particularly glandular ones. In Kent it is only *E. officinalis* subsp. *anglica* (English Eyebright) and hybrids with it that have long glandular hairs. *E. tetraquetra* may have some short glandular hairs but it doesn't have to! Don't be confused by the short stiff bristles that are present close to the leaf margins in many species, they are not important.
 - Look at leaves. There are two types of **leaf** which may be described, i.e. the cauline leaves which are those without a flower in their axil and the floral leaves which are those which do subtend a flower (and might best be termed 'bracts'). Look at the shape of the leaves, and particularly the direction in which the marginal teeth point, especially the lowest opposing pair and how pointed they are or aren't.
 - Consider **flowering time**. *E. tetraquetra* is the earliest Kent species to flower (as early as May) whilst *E. pseudokernerii* (Chalk Eyebright) is latest, being at its best in August/September.
 - Be aware that there is always an 'allowable amount' of variation within a species (one of the factors being that eyebrights are semi-parasitic and their host plant can play a part in their appearance and variability), and you will need to consider this sensibly when viewing a population.

**Minutes of the Kent Botanical Recording
Group
Annual General Meeting
2.00 p.m., Saturday 1 April 2017**

This meeting was held at Tyland Barn, headquarters of the Kent Wildlife Trust, Chatham Road, Sandling, Maidstone ME14 3BD. Thirty one members of the Group and guests attended the meeting including the Chairman and Vice County Recorder for Kent, Geoffrey Kitchener.

1 WELCOME

The Chairman began by thanking everyone for coming along to the meeting and Sue Buckingham for agreeing to take the minutes and for arranging the use of the room, courtesy of Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT). The AGM was to be illustrated with slides for the reports and Geoffrey thanked Liam Rooney, David Steere and Sue Buckingham for use of their photographs.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE had been received from Steve Coates, Chris Cook, John Puckett, Priscilla Nobbs, Jenny Gibb, Rosemary Pavis, Rosemary Roberts, Judy Clark, Ellen Campbell, Jacqueline Rose and Elizabeth Winterbourne.

3 MINUTES OF AGM held on 2 April 2016 were published in Newsletter no. 9 which was circulated to all

members and published on our webpage. The Chairman proposed that the minutes should be adopted as a true record of the proceedings which they were with no objections.

Matters arising. Sue Buckingham reported that Joyce Pitt's offer to suggest venues for the 2017 meetings programme had been followed up but none had materialised because of the difficulty of matching up a good location with sufficient car parking for the group. However, Joyce had suggested a possible venue for 2018 which Sue will investigate. **Action: Sue Buckingham** Geoffrey reported that as promised, he had circulated the recording map slides to members by e-mail shortly after the 2016 AGM.

4 REPORTS FOR THE YEAR

Membership. The Chairman reminded us that last spring we had reached 113 members having begun with 35 in March 2010. Since then we had lost members through resignation or death and he expressed our sadness at losing Mervyn Brown last year. Current membership stood at 116.

Meetings. Geoffrey continued, giving the report on meetings. He said that in addition to the 2016 AGM, the group held sixteen field meetings and also had arrangements with the Kent Field Club to attend eight of theirs which had a botanical flavour. Reports of KBRG meetings were included in the newsletter. Geoffrey offered thanks to all the meeting leaders and to those

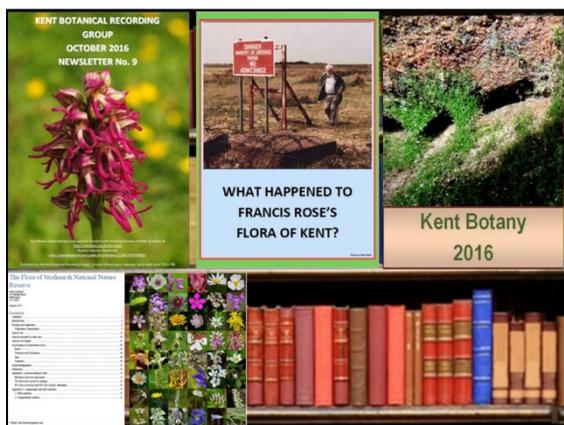
who attended the Kent Field Club meetings and passed on records.

The 2017 programme includes fifteen KBRG field meetings and the usual invitation to the Kent Field Club's meetings, eleven of which have potential botanical content. We also have invitations to bryophyte or lichen meetings: although these organisms are outside our recording remit, we do have some members with considerable expertise in them. The Chairman congratulated Sue Buckingham and Owen Leyshon for putting the field meeting programme together and thanked those who had agreed to lead or co-lead meetings.



[Green stars indicate KBRG 2017 meeting locations, yellow are for relevant Kent Field Club meetings, some of which are overlapped by the green stars.]

Publications. The Chairman reported as regards our publications since the previous AGM. These were as follows.



- Newsletter no.9, last October
- A reconstruction of Francis Rose's missing Flora of Kent
- Kent Botany 2016 with all the latest discoveries
- A January 2017 update of Alex Lockton's Flora of Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve. This is on our webpage

- Also on our webpage, a February 2017 update of all rare plant register documentation, plus new species accounts for the balance of Part M; and the whole of Part N issued to members as a consultation document plus, most recently, the beginning of Part O.

Joyce Pitt congratulated Geoffrey on his achievement with the reconstruction of Francis Rose's missing Flora and Geoffrey explained that he was hopeful of acquiring yet more material for this via another source. Doug Grant said that he had previously seen some of Francis Rose's records at the home of the late Eric Philp and with them Francis' annotated copy of Bentham and Hooker's *Handbook of the British Flora*, but these were no longer to be found there.

David Steere asked if there were plans to publish the Rare Plant Register accounts and Geoffrey replied that he would like to finish writing them before considering that possibility.

Finances

The Chairman reported our position with regard to finances as being unchanged. He thanked the BSBI for providing our website free of charge and Kent Wildlife Trust for allowing us to use Tyland Barn for our AGM without payment. He declared that he had incurred no material expenses for the group and had not been advised of anyone else having done so. Membership continued to be subscription-free and there was no reason to change that.

Recording

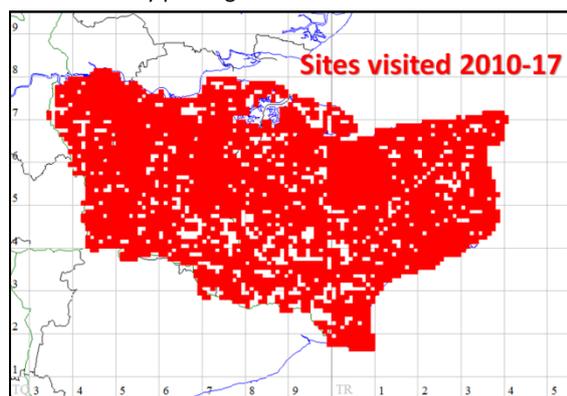
We added 50,000 records to the database for 2016 so that with other new records from earlier years our total from 2010 to the middle of January 2017 was 281,300, taking us over the quarter of a million milestone. Geoffrey said that our target to secure reasonable general coverage in county recording during the period 2010 to 2019 looked to have been broadly achieved in seven seasons. More, however, would be needed in terms of focused recording and that would be covered by our plans for the future.

As usual our records had been shared with the BSBI and Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre.

Geoffrey said that there had been so many contributions that it was difficult to list them without omitting recorders who had provided really helpful additions. He mentioned Rodney Burton's records from metropolitan West Kent and the adjoining part of Kent proper; Judy John, local co-ordinator of Flora of London project data recording; Sue Buckingham recording in East Kent; Sue Poyser and Doug Grant in Medway towns and the Medway gap; Stephen Lemon's sometimes remarkable (principally Wealden) records; Alex Lockton's Stodmarsh

data; Colin Osborne's north east Kent records over several years; provision of many recording cards from Joyce Pitt from across the county; David Steere's filling in of monad gaps mostly in West Kent; and Brian Woodham's searches, especially in the Maidstone area.

A slide of a county map with all of the 1km ordnance survey squares visited by a botanist during the 2010 – 2017 period coloured red showed the great extent of our recording coverage. There were over 3,600 red squares and Geoffrey said that most of the white, unvisited ones were likely to be difficult to access or without nearby parking.



Rare plant register

We had just under 1500 rare plant records for 2016 contributing to building up the picture of their current status. Geoffrey observed that in encouraging further finds, the register could sometimes be too successful and in 2016 *Plantago major* subsp. *intermedia* was taken off the register because we had thirty records for it in the county and that meant that its presence on the register list was no longer warranted. Its earlier supposed rarity was based on lack of knowledge and possibly lack of recognition. More exciting was the finding of *Lotus angustissimus* (Slender Bird's-foot-trefoil) a species which had been excluded from the register on the supposition that it was extinct. This was at a meeting in 2016 set up to re-find it. We hope to do the same this year with *Blysmus compressus* (Flat Sedge).

Geoffrey had issued fifteen new rare plant register species accounts on a consultation basis to members and he had also updated all of the earlier register accounts and reissued those on-line to include all of our 2016 records. Geoffrey said that he found the consultation exercise for the new accounts very useful as members had come up with a number of improvements. He had found the drafting of the species accounts particularly interesting with the issues that they raised and he showed a slide of a 1857 painting in the Tate Gallery collection which depicted a sown field

of Sainfoin at Cobham. This was relevant to the question of how far *Onobrychis viciifolia* (Sainfoin) is native or introduced.

Sue Buckingham took the opportunity to thank Geoffrey on everyone's behalf for his work on the Rare Plant Register and for all other work that he gladly takes on as County Recorder.

Axiophytes

Sue Buckingham reported on her progress with the draft list of axiophytes which she had produced and explained to members in 2014. She had continued to trial the list at KBRG meetings and during the previous winter she had passed the list to Geoffrey, Alex Lockton, Stephen Lemon, Liam Rooney and Joyce Pitt for suggestions and comment on which species should be included. She thanked them all for their help and had incorporated their suggestions.

Paul Tinsley-Marshall, whose job it is to assess the effect of conservation work carried out on KWT sites, had shown interest in using the draft list and Alex Lockton had been helping with trialling it. Sue explained that as a result of input from others she now had two lists to work with and although it was likely that both would come up with a similar result regarding the conservation value of a site, she would continue with trialling both in order to find out. She extended an invitation to any interested members to help her. **Action: Sue Buckingham**

There followed a lively discussion from some members regarding axiophytes, the value of making lists of worthy plants and of managing sites for priority species.

Rare plant register conservation activities

Owen Leyshon reported that he had received numerous reports of works carried out in 2016 for the benefit of various rare plant register species from organisations such as Plantlife, KWT, RSPB, NE and CMPs for the Conservation Habitat Works 2016 report. His 2016 report of these accounts will be summarised and was in progress and that would follow as an e-mail to members later.

He made a last request to those present for any such outstanding reports in Kent in 2016 to be included and thanked everyone who had made a contribution.

Action: Owen Leyshon

5. LOOKING AHEAD

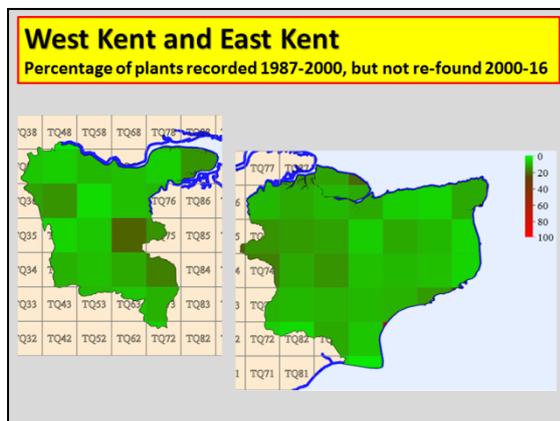
Botanical developments in 2017

Geoffrey said he was unaware of any special county botanical developments for 2017 other than any

continuation of those noted at the last AGM and when asked, no one present had any to mention.

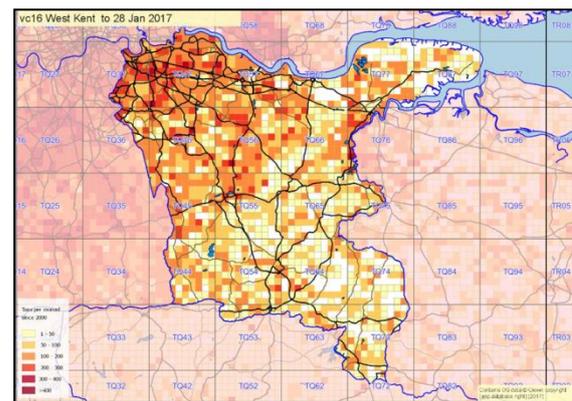
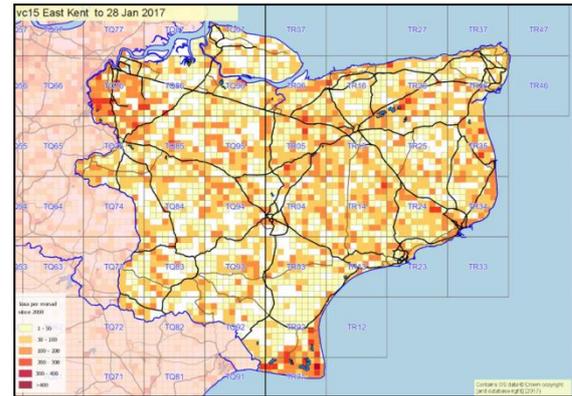
Recording plans for 2017 – 19

Geoffrey explained that his reference to these years was because they were the last three seasons of the BSBI's current date class of records, which runs from 2010 to 2019 and which enables comparison with earlier date classes in order to observe trends in plant distribution. They are also the last three seasons for gathering records for the next national plant atlas. Our strategy for recording in 2016 was to continue to seek good overall county coverage, whilst giving increased priority to meeting any needs for the national plant atlas. He proposed that we should continue in that manner and using slides he was able to show how this might be reflected in where we record.



First he showed a slide of the county split into vice counties 15 and 16 and showing the various 10km squares. He said that the national atlas may be expected to be on a scale where each dot represents a 10km square. On the slide, the darker the squares on the county map, the more records in the last national atlas still needed to be found for the new one. He said that there may be reasons for the dark colour other than insufficient surveying as plants may have gone, but the colour coding was an encouragement for us to look in the areas where there is the greatest proportion of plants which haven't been re-found. Another slide showed the comparison with last year and although the same squares were still in need of attention, we had managed to find enough records to lighten some of the colour and had therefore made some progress.

The next maps showed East and West Kent respectively and this time divided into its one kilometre squares and Geoffrey said in answer to where in a 10 km square would it be useful to go, we should head for the monads shown white on these maps because they were ones with the least records found for that square since 2000.



Geoffrey said that a further point on recording strategy was targeting species that hadn't been found recently in a 10km square and the most important of these were rare plant register species for which we had the register accounts to see if we do not have a recent 10km record. He explained that for commoner species, it was very easy to draw up a list of those seen before but not after 2000 in any 10km square using the BSBI database (to which only a few of us have access). He showed an example of a list of 172 from a 10km square at Sheppey which included plants like *Ficaria verna* (Lesser Celandine) and *Ranunculus acris* (Meadow Buttercup). Finally Geoffrey invited members to adopt a square and to ask him or Sue Buckingham for a list of species and then enjoy going out and looking for them. That, he said was the main message of our recording plans for the year.

There was obviously a great deal of interest from those present in the recording plans and Geoffrey promised to e-mail the maps to members shortly after the meeting.

Action: Chairman

6. HAWTHORNS (Ilse Hendriks-Beven)

Geoffrey introduced Ilse Hendriks-Beven who talked to us about her MSc dissertation on the status of hybrid hawthorn and its parents in Kent (*Crataegus monogyna*, Hawthorn, and *Crataegus laevigata*, Midland Hawthorn). This was to involve ascertaining whether distinctive populations of the parents may be found and

what habitat/management regimes may be associated; whether the hybrid is more frequent than records suggest, and how it and its parents may be distinguished on leaf characteristics. Ilse said that she would be glad of help and could supply a field guide and other details. Geoffrey agreed to pass on her request and contact details by e-mail to the membership shortly after the meeting. **Action: Chairman**

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Sue Buckingham said that she had been asked recently by Clive Steward, south east site manager for the Woodland Trust, if KBRG would consider being a stakeholder group for a piece of land which they hoped to acquire adjacent to their existing Hucking Estate near Hollingbourne. Sue had agreed to conduct a requested one-off species survey during the summer but didn't wish to be involved any further. She had provided maps of the location for members to see and asked if anyone was interested in becoming involved to contact her.

8. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT AGM

The next AGM (subject to availability) will be Saturday April 8th 2018 at Tyland Barn.

With no further business, the formal part of the meeting closed at 3.35 p.m. There followed a refreshment break with tea and cakes kindly provided and served by Sarah Kitchener. Alfie Gay then delivered a well-received presentation *Only in Kent – the Late Spider Orchid*.



Did you know that the printers' ornament above, included in Kent Botany 2016, is an 18th century fleurion? This has given its name to Fleurion, a database of 1.5 million 18th century printers ornaments, produced at the University of Cambridge. Fleurions have been used in printing since the late 15th century for embellishing page borders, chapter headings or tailpieces, not necessarily botanical publications, but apt enough for us!

Contributions and photographs for the next newsletter will be welcome!

- The editor will be glad of articles, letters, queries, comments and photographs, etc.
- Whilst KBRG does not produce a research journal as such, there may also be scope to put articles of a substantial nature and other papers onto the website by way of publication, as an alternative.
- If sending photographs for inclusion in the newsletter by email, please provide at reasonably high resolution.
- All contributions should be sent to Geoffrey Kitchener, contact details below.

Thanks to all who led meetings in 2017; to Alfie Gay, Stephen Lemon, Owen Leyshon, Lliam Rooney and Sue Buckingham for writing or contributing to meeting reports, and the latter also for the AGM minutes; to Sarah Kitchener for reviewing this newsletter; and to the photographers credited above.

The editor, Geoffrey Kitchener, wishes to draw attention to the fact that neither he, nor the Kent Botanical Recording Group, are answerable for opinions which contributors may express in their articles; each author is alone responsible for the contents and substance of their work.

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