

Kent Rare Plant Register

Draft species accounts

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Compiled by Geoffrey Kitchener and the Kent Botanical Recording Group
Issue date: February 2021

Kent rare plant register

This section of the register covers:

Lactuca saligna

Laphangium luteoalbum

Lathyrus aphaca

Lathyrus hirsutus

Lathyrus japonicus

Lathyrus linifolius

Lepidium campestre

Lepidium heterophyllum

Lepidium latifolium

Leymus arenarius

Limbarda crithmoides

Linaria repens

Linum radiola

Lobelia urens

Logfia minima

Lotus angustissimus

Lysimachia foemina

Lysimachia minima

Lysimachia tenella

Lythrum hyssopifolia

It is issued in draft, pending further development. Records, photographs and information regarding the occurrences of these plants in Kent will be welcome.

The register accounts give priority to data from 2010 onwards, but some historic data are also included (however, in the data tables, generally no specific sites without post-1970 records) so as to indicate trends and where the plant may yet be discovered or rediscovered. Distribution maps for records from 2010 onwards show vice counties 15 and 16 with the mutual boundary given by a black line). See the Kent webpage of the BSBI website at <https://bsbi.org/kent> for the full Kent rare plant register list, the introduction to the register and a list of 'probably extinct' Kent plants.

Abbreviations used in the text:

Recorders' initials:

ADRH Tony Hare

ACH Andrew Henderson

AG Alfred Gay

AGS Trudy Side

AH Tony Howard

AW Anne Wilkes

Awa Ann Waite

AWi Tony Witts

AY Andrew Young

BBe Ben Benatt

BS Barry Stewart

BW Brian Woodhams

CAS Clive Stace

CB Caroline Bateman

CO Colin Osborne

CS Cath Shellswell

DC David Carder

DCh Danny Chesterman

DG Doug Grant

DM Daphne Mills

DMi David Mitchell

DS David Steere

DTS David Streeter

EGP Eric Philp

EW Elizabeth Winterbourne

FB Fred Booth

FR Francis Rose

GK Geoffrey Kitchener

GS Geoff Smith

HS Heather Silk

JAR Jacqueline Rose

JBe Jim Bevan

JH Jane Howard

JL Judith Lovelady

JP Joyce Pitt

JRP John Palmer

JS Judith Shorter

JVC Judy Clark

LBB L. Breda Burt

LR Liam Rooney

LS L. Simmons

MHD M.H. Dolling

MP M. Pickard

MT Mario Tortelli

OL Owen Leyshon

PBu Paul Buckley

PH Peter Heathcote

PHa Paul Harmes

RC Richard Carter

RG Bob Gomes

RoF Rosemary FitzGerald

SB Sue Buckingham

SC Steve Coates

SDP S.D. Prince

SL Stephen Lemon

SLP Sharon Pilkington

SP Sue Poyser

TI Tim Inskipp

Other abbreviations:

BM Natural History Museum

herbarium

E Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh

herbarium

KBRG Kent Botanical Recording Group

KFC Kent Field Club

KWT Kent Wildlife Trust

MNE Maidstone Museum herbarium

RNR Roadside Nature Reserve

SLBI South London Botanical Institute

herbarium

Lactuca saligna L. (Least Lettuce)

Draft account

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Lactuca saligna is a nationally rare plant, designated as an **Endangered** species in both England and Great Britain as a whole. It currently grows in coastal areas, especially sea wall embankments, and was thought in the 1990s to be restricted to two populations, one in Rye harbour in East Sussex and the other at Fobbing in Essex. It transpires, however, that there are two colonies in Kent as well, perhaps best interpreted as three, which qualify it to be regarded as **rare** in the county.

Sheppey. Photo by Lliam Rooney, 27 August 2013

Account

The first Kent record was given by John Ray in the second edition of his *Synopsis Methodica Stirpium Britannicarum* (1696), in which he refers to 'The least wild Lettuce or Dwarf-Gum-Succory' – 'By Mr. Dale it was found in Eriffe-Marshes in Kent'. Hanbury and Marshall (1899) identify a further record not far from Erith Marshes, at Plumstead Marshes (where abundant in 1873 and much collected at least from 1845 to 1884), together with others at Charlton (indicating a presence which probably extended through Woolwich Marshes to Plumstead Marshes); Cliffe; between Gravesend and Shornemead (and below the Fort); near Sheerness; between Herne Bay and Whitstable (it was much collected in the 1870s and 1880s at Whitstable); under Swalecliffe; at Seasalter; and Wouldham. Except for last record, for the tidal Medway valley, there is a clear pattern of distribution along the Thames valley, extending along the north coast. Hanbury and Marshall's assessment was that it was a rare species, a plant of marshes and shingly beaches.



This distribution subsequently thinned out, with still a range of occurrences by the 1940s, much fewer after the 1970s, and then diminishing to a point when it was thought to be gone. Records for the London area dropped off in the early 20th century, the last place being Stone Marshes (1903, 1925, 1935, 1955, 1967) where it is possible¹ that there was some recruitment from larger populations on the Essex side of the Thames. It was not recorded at Dartford Marshes after 1901. Further east, it survived longer and Francis Rose (in litt.) stated that "My notebooks make it clear that in the late 'forties and 'fifties *L. saligna* was plentiful in several years from about Shornemead fort to Higham Marshes, and again about Cliffe Creek and Cooling sea wall... then again plentiful both W of 'Sportsman' for some way, and east of the pub, *behind* the *chalets* along the road (about 070649 etc. to 1952)". He noted in his MS Flora of Kent that there had been some diminution after the floods of 1953; but there was continuity up to the 1971-80 survey of Philp (1982), with a spread in the Seasalter area and a series of records from Higham (where recorded 'in quantity' by Jim Bevan in 1976) along the Cliffe/Cooling coast (recorded by Tony Hare in 1978 as part of fieldwork for a paper, Prince & Hare (1981)², in which the colony size is given as about 100 plants, but there is reference to population fluctuations at Cliffe between 48 and 303 plants over a five year period). Sightings at Dungeness (1947) and Greatstone (1954) do not seem to have been followed by persistence in south east Kent.

¹ Per R.M. Burton, *Flora of the London Area* (1983).

² Prince, S.D. & Hare A.D.R., in (ed.) Synge, H. (1981). *The Biological Aspects of Rare Plant Conservation*, pp.379-388. BSBI.

After 1978, however, records dropped off generally. At least one site (Seasalter) was adversely affected by a storm, which had buried the *L. saligna* site on the sea wall in shells and sand³; subsequent unconfirmed records were discounted by Rosemary FitzGerald, when she reviewed the position in 1987⁴. It was her view that the losses after this time were attributable to major works in the 1980s on the sea walls which irrevocably changed the habitats in all the then known sites. The species was then considered extinct on the Kent shores of the Thames estuary although presciently Rosemary FitzGerald suggested the possibility of presence where not formerly recorded, and where habitat was less damaged, such as in parts of the Isle of Grain or at Elmley Marshes in Sheppey (where Francis Rose, *in litt.* 1986, had written “There are long stretches of very-suitable-looking sea walls there, and (at Elmley Hills and Harty) dry grassy slopes, ± natural, down to the saltings where *Lactuca* and *Trifolium squamosum* could occur still”).

This prediction was realised about 20 years later when (1999) Least Lettuce was found along the sea wall on the west side of Yantlet Creek, which marks the beginning of the Isle of Grain; and in 2000 a sea wall survey commissioned by the Environment Agency located the species on Sheppey, alongside the Swale, near The Dray, which marks the beginning of Elmley Island. A re-assessment was undertaken in 2013, and Least Lettuce was found present at both sites.

At Sheppey, *Lactuca saligna* appeared to require bare or semi-bare terrain for establishment and most plants were found on the sea wall centred at the junction of the London Clay upper slope with the lower concrete batter, and in cracks in the concrete. Some of the plants in the concrete descended well down the slope towards the area of marine influence. The species was also growing scattered on the upper clay slopes which were only lightly vegetated and where there was some cracking and crumbling – partly due to the angle of slope and the drying out of the clay, but also due to cattle-trampling. The upper level plants tended to be smaller and it looked as though most were of current year’s growth. The larger lower level plants were assumed to have over-wintered; and one specimen exhibited a thick woody stem base or upper tap root which suggested the possibility that it was behaving as a biennial. Associated plant species were very much as one might expect in such coastal grassland with some ruderality, but included rare plant register species *Bupleurum tenuissimum* (Slender Hare’s-ear) and *Hordeum marinum* (Sea Barley).



Sheppey, habitat. Photos by Bob Gomes, 27 August 2013.

There is a strong contrast between this section of coastline and its continuation around Dray Bay. The continuing section is not cattle-grazed, the grass is high and there is minimal open ground within which *Lactuca* might establish. This emphasises the apparent fragility of the habitat of the *Lactuca* section and the importance of an appropriate grazing regime.

³ Side, A.G. (1979). 26th August [1978] – Seasalter (meeting report). *Kent Field Club Bulletin* **24**: 23-24.

⁴ FitzGerald, R. *Lactuca saligna* L. Least Lettuce. Unpublished NCC report, December 1987.

At the Isle of Grain site in 2013, following the sea wall northwards along Yantlet Creek, *Lactuca saligna* was not seen at the first location where found in 2000, but was picked up 20m or so further northwards, when plants were found on the west (creek-) facing wall on the upper parts of the London Clay slope, which was heavily poached by cattle with much broken, semi-open ground. Associated species reflected disturbance in a sub-maritime context, including *Beta vulgaris* subsp. *maritima* (Sea Beet), *Hordeum marinum* (Sea Barley), *Rapistrum rugosum* (Bastard Cabbage), *Sonchus oleraceus* (Smooth Sow-thistle) and *Torilis nodosa* (Knotted Hedge-parsley). On the inland side of the seawall (east or south-east facing) were eight plants, the only *Lactuca saligna* find on the inland side of the Yantlet Creek seawall. As the seawall turned eastwards, away from the creek and facing northwards to the Thames estuary, *Lactuca saligna* ceased to be recorded on the coast-facing seawall slope, which now changed its character, became dominated by coarser vegetation and at times was more influenced by the proximity of the sea wall. The species instead appeared on the inland upper (south-facing) slopes of the seawall, again on cattle-poached clay. The extent of occurrence eastwards was investigated in 2017, and further plants were found.

In 2018 David Steere found plants on the west side of Yantlet Creek, i.e. on the mainland of the Hoo Peninsula. As they were not opposite the Isle of Grain plants and were in different monads/tetrads, a more southerly location altogether, this population is not obviously derivative from them; and, indeed, a further survey in 2020 showed that there were well over twice as many plants on the west side of the creek than had been found on the east side in 2013, extending along some 700m with a few outlying plants about 250m away.. The aspect of the seawall slopes (in this case mostly south or south-east) seems less relevant to the plant's distribution than their openness, maintained by cracking of the London Clay and often by cattle trampling as well. Associated species were, most constantly, *Bromus hordeaceus* (Soft-brome), *Helminthotheca echioides* (Bristly Oxtongue) and *Lolium perenne* (Perennial Rye-grass); but plants seen at other sites also featured, such as *Hordeum marinum*, *Sonchus oleraceus* and *Torilis nodosa*.



Grain, habitat. Photo by Geoffrey Kitchener, 3 September 2013.

From the alignment of colonies at both Sheppey and Grain, it is possible to conclude that the species will tolerate quite close proximity to tidal water, but on south-facing sea wall slopes (as at the relatively sheltered Dray Bay on Sheppey and the southern Yantlet Creek site) or west-facing (as at the northern Yantlet Creek site, also sheltered to a degree); not on north-facing sea walls fully exposed to the Thames estuary. An analysis by Prince & Hare (1981) in relation to populations at Fobbing, Essex, across the estuary also confirmed that the species occurred mostly on south-facing slopes. This may be related to more effective autumn germination on south-facing slopes providing larger and better established plants, and perhaps also to a competitive advantage in being able to survive in dry, exposed conditions in hot summers⁵. However, Prince & Hare also refer to Essex south-facing slopes having less vegetative cover and hence presumably more open ground for seedling establishment; in Kent, some of the south-facing slopes indeed appear as though competitive growth

⁵ Suggested by Adams, K.J. and Hare, A.D.R. (1999). *Lactuca saligna* L. (Asteraceae), in (ed.) Wiggington, M.J., *Vascular Red Data Books 1 Vascular Plants*, 3rd edition. J.N.C.C., Peterborough.

may be affected by scorching, but equally there were slopes with this aspect with unsuitably dense vegetation, particularly where *Elymus* spp. (Couch-grasses) may have taken hold and left no scope for *Lactuca saligna* regeneration.

Lactuca saligna is an over-wintering or spring-germinating annual, and accordingly dependent on the presence of open ground for establishment. By analogy with the short period of seed viability for (Prickly Lettuce), namely a half-life of between 1.5 and 3 years, Prince & Hare (1981) supposed that re-establishment from buried seeds of Least Lettuce would be unlikely even after one year. The removal of cattle grazing for a year could accordingly be damaging for the plant's survival. Additionally, the species is exposed to the potential for climate-related vulnerability by virtue of being at the northern limit of its European distribution. It may need the hot, dry summers obtaining in the core of its general distributional range, and extending to south east England; but severe or prolonged winters may kill off the large, autumn-germinating plants and early spring-germinating ones, the main germination period in Essex (and presumably, Kent) being November to January. This would leave the limited seed resource deriving from the small, later (up to May) spring-germinating plants. The species in Kent and its neighbouring counties therefore lacks resilience to catastrophe.

Sheppey. Photos by Liam Rooney, 27 August 2013



Identifying Least Lettuce is principally a matter of distinguishing it from *Lactuca serriola* (Prickly Lettuce) and divided-leaved forms of *Sonchus oleraceus* (Smooth Sow-thistle). Least Lettuce has a narrower inflorescence than Prickly Lettuce, is more vertical in appearance, and its leaves are narrower, with a sagittate base, and the midrib below lacks the strong prickles of Prickly Lettuce; Smooth Sow-thistle has a totally different panicle (tending to a cymose umbel) and even its most divided-leaved forms do not have such long narrow leaves as those of Least Lettuce. Often just as difficult as seeing Least Lettuce where these other species may distract, is separating sight of it generally from surrounding vegetation, especially when very small. This is compounded when the flowers close up, which takes place from about 11 a.m. – it is perhaps not surprising that the species is self-pollinating.

Site	Grid reference	Site status	Last record date	Recorder	Comments
Higham Marshes	TQ77C		After 1970, before 1981	GS, MHD & EGP, in Philp (1982)	
Cliffe Pools	TQ77D		(1) 1978 (2) 1977 (3) After 1970, before 1981	(1) ADRH (2) SDP (3) AGS & EGP in Philp (1982)	(1) TQ 712 778. (2) TQ 710 778. on landward side of sea wall over c.100 yd stretch immediately east [north?] of where the track meets the sea wall...with <i>Bupleurum tenuissimum</i> and <i>Torilis nodosa</i> .

					(3) Recorded as TQ77D.
Cliffe Marshes	TQ77E		After 1970, before 1981	AGS, in Philp (1982)	Lower Hope Point.
Cliffe/Cooling Marshes	TQ7479		(1) 1978 (2) After 1970, before 1981	(1) ADRH (2) AGS & EGP in Philp (1982)	(1) TQ 747 792. (2) Recorded as TQ77P.
Allhallows Marshes	TQ8676		(1) 15 July 2020 (2) 19 August 2018	(1) GK (2) DS	<p>(1) Total 346 plants in open habitat maintained by clay cracking and cattle trampling:</p> <p>(a) south-facing upper slope of clay embankment (Yantlet Creek sea wall) at (i) TQ 85987 76673 (1 plant); (ii) TQ 86017 76678 (3); (iii) TQ 86260 76675 and westwards for 9m (175); (iv) TQ 86286 76673 (4); (v) TQ 86312 76674 (19); (vi) TQ 86319 76676 (1); (vii) TQ 86324 76676 (3); (viii) TQ 86361 76682 (6); (ix) TQ 86410 76690 (2); (x) TQ 86449 76698 and for 8m westwards (27); (xi) TQ 86451 76700 (16 plants). Associated spp for (a) included <i>Hordeum marinum</i>, <i>Plantago coronopus</i>.</p> <p>(b) south-east-facing (or SSE) upper slope of clay embankment (Yantlet Creek sea wall) at (i) TQ 86468 76705 (5 plants); (ii) TQ 86474 76704 (5); (iii) TQ 86477 76706 (9); (iv) TQ 86483 76709 (33); (v) TQ 86495 76714 (13); (vi) TQ 86522 76726 (10); TQ 86537 76734 (1 plant). Associated spp for (b) included <i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>, <i>Catapodium rigidum</i>, <i>Helminthotheca echioides</i>, <i>Lolium perenne</i>, <i>Hordeum marinum</i>, <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>, <i>Hordeum secalinum</i>, <i>Torilis nodosa</i>, <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>, <i>Elytrigia repens</i>, <i>Phleum bertolonii</i>.</p> <p>(c) east-facing upper slope of clay embankment (Yantlet Creek sea wall) at (i) TQ 86740 76933 (10 plants); (ii) TQ 86740 76939 (1); (iii) TQ 86744 76960 (1 plant). Associated spp for (c) included <i>Hordeum marinum</i>, <i>Lolium perenne</i>, <i>Lepidium draba</i>, <i>Helminthotheca echioides</i>, , <i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>.</p> <p>(2) TQ 86516 76722. At least 20 non-flowering plants, recorder is fairly sure of having passed these in other nearby monads as well but without realising, until these were found.</p>
Grain Marshes	TQ87P,U		(1) 17 August 2017 (2) 28 July 2017 (3) 3 September 2013 (4) 2000 (5) 9 September 1999	(1)& (2) BBe (3) GK (4) Carter Ecological (5) EGP & DG	<p>(1) TQ 87558 78286, three plants.</p> <p>(2) TQ 86355 78446, one patch found with c.20 plants just in front of sea wall.</p> <p>(3)(a) 107 plants spread along about 85m of the Yantlet creek seawall, nearly all on the coastal slope. Fifteen plants were found on the west (creek-) facing wall from TQ 8584 7802 to TQ 8585 7802, on</p>

					<p>the upper parts of the clay slope, which was heavily poached by cattle with much broken, semi-open ground. 12 more plants were recorded in a similar habitat between TQ 85845 78027 and TQ 85848 78032. On the inland side of the seawall (east or south-east facing) were a further 8 plants at TQ 85897 78201. One plant each was noted on the west (creek-facing) side at TQ 85837 78052 and TQ 85836 78059. Between TQ 85833 78078 and TQ 85830 78092, there were 70 plants.</p> <p>(b) A total of 34 plants. At TQ 86440 78480 there was one plant, between TQ 86500 78512 and TQ 86508 78514, 16 plants, and between TQ 86567 78527 and TQ 86580 78528 there were 7, and at TQ 86602 78520 there were 10. All on the inland upper (south facing) slopes of the Thames estuary seawall, on cattle-poached clay.</p> <p>(4) Sea wall survey for Environment Agency. Two populations, one large and one small, in sites over a kilometre apart on the Isle of Grain. Grid references noted were TQ 8651 7851, TQ 8583 7813, TQ 8583 7803, TQ 8587 7794, TQ 9234 6910 and TQ 9242 6910.</p> <p>(5) Sea wall, TQ87P. There is also a record by FR for 1999 on Grain at TQ87, which may be the same.</p>
The Dray, Kingsferry, Sheppey	TQ9269		<p>(1) 1 June & 3 August 2019</p> <p>(2) 2 August 2016</p> <p>(3) 27 August 2013</p> <p>(4) August-September 2000</p>	<p>(1) & (2) AWi</p> <p>(3) GK, LR & RG</p> <p>(4) ACH & RC</p>	<p>(1) TQ9269.</p> <p>(2) TQ 923 691, 136 plants counted on Ferry Marshes seawall, Elmley NNR.</p> <p>(3) 1028 plants were counted, with individuals ranging from 3cm to 70cm high. The colony extended along about 190m of shoreline, scattered from TQ 92229 69095 to TQ 92434 69116. Plants were growing on the coastal (Swale) side of the sea wall, facing south and south-west. None was seen on the landward side, where vegetation was probably too dense. The lower parts of the seawall slope were stone, covered with concrete; the upper parts were vegetated London Clay. Most plants were centred at the junction of the clay upper slope with the lower concrete batter, and in cracks in the concrete. Some of the plants in the concrete descended well down the slope towards the area of marine influence. The species was also growing scattered on the upper clay slopes which were only lightly vegetated and where there was some cracking and crumbling - partly due to the angle of slope and the drying out of the clay, but also due to cattle-trampling. Associated</p>

					<p>species included: <i>Beta vulgaris</i> subsp. <i>maritima</i>, <i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>, <i>Bupleurum tenuissimum</i>, <i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>, <i>Dactylis glomerata</i>, <i>Helminthotheca echioides</i>, <i>Hordeum marinum</i>, <i>Lathyrus nissolia</i>, <i>Lolium perenne</i>, <i>Phleum bertolonii</i>, <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>, <i>Poa humilis</i>, <i>Potentilla reptans</i>, <i>Scorzoneroides autumnalis</i>, <i>Senecio erucifolius</i>, <i>Torilis nodosa</i>.</p> <p>(4) Part of an Environment Agency sea wall survey. North of the Swale along a rather dry and small/old section of bank at Dray Bay. In very sparse vegetation, dotted along quite a length (100m+ possibly) and including some 'patches' of more than isolated plants.</p>
Cleve Marshes	TR0464		1979	EGP	<p>Record is given as Seasalter, but with Cleve Marshes gridreference. It is probably the same as TR06M, 'Seasalter area' in Philp (1982), and is likely to be west of the Sportsman, where known to FR (possibly the same as FR's record at Graveney beach, 1945, although this may instead relate to the following TR0664 site).</p>
Graveney Marshes	TR0664		19 September 1965	BW	<p>Landward side of sea wall, including in its cracks, plus some plants on level below.</p>
Seasalter	TR06X		1979	EGP	<p>TR 090 640 and TR 090 649. Also known to FR on the seawall, 1944.</p>

***Laphangium luteoalbum* (L.) Tzelev (*Gnaphalium luteoalbum* L.) (Jersey Cudweed)**

Draft account.

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Jersey Cudweed is regarded as native in the Channel Islands, where it was first recorded in 1690. Its mainland occurrences are much later, and most are casual introductions; but a history of East Anglian occurrences has led to a surviving population in Norfolk also being treated as native. Although the *British Red Data Books 1 Vascular Plants* (1999) treated the species as a Critically Endangered native, *The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain* (2005) does not give any assessment of conservation status, but places it in the 'parking list', apparently through uncertainties regarding the species' native/introduced standing generally. A *Vascular Plant Red List for England* (2014) ignores it. Indeed, there is a case for saying that, although it may have arrived naturally so as to be capable of being treated as a native, it 'is categorically unworthy of special protection'.⁶

In Kent, there are two localities where the species has been seen since 1996 and where it may be supposed to have arrived probably without introduction by man, and hence would enjoy native status. It is accordingly regarded as **rare** in Kent, although there are many more locations where, as an urban casual, its status is more equivocal.

Dungeness. Photo by Sue Buckingham, 25 July 2102

Account

The first Kent record for *Laphangium luteoalbum* is at Dungeness on 19 September 1996, and there is an account of the species at that site by Mark Gurney (2004⁷), from which many of the following details are drawn. When first found, by Eric Philp, the colony amounted to several hundred plants growing on an area of pumped silt at TR0618 which had been deposited in a shingle excavation between 1993 and 1994. In 1997 it was found in several scattered locations on the margins of flooded gravel pits, one of them over 1km from the 'original' site. By 1999 it had established itself on the margins of most pits in the area known as the New Excavations, together with the western shores of Burrowes Pit and parts of the ARC Pit, with an estimated total of 100,000 plants. In 2001, there were over 20,000 plants by one of the pits in the New Excavations; and south east of the ARC pit, about 350,000 plants turned the ground grey. The number of plants and their flowering time, however, appear to be influenced by fluctuations in water levels affecting the damp margins, and the ARC pit site numbers dropped in 2002 to 3,000 (in September, none having been visible in May). The species has been recorded in TR0518, TR0618, TR0619, TR0620, TR0718, and TR0719, and the data presented



⁶ Pearman, D.A. (2007). 'Far from any house' – assessing the status of doubtfully native species in the flora of the British Isles. *Watsonia* **26**: 271-290.

⁷ M. Gurney (2004). Jersey Cudweed *Gnaphalium luteoalbum* L. at Dungeness RSPB Reserve, East Kent. *Watsonia* **25**: 107-113.

below becomes patchier after systematic recording in 2007-08 although there is no reason to suppose that the species has not remained present in quantity since

Gurney (2004) canvassed the possibility that seed may have arrived at Dungeness as contamination with the silt pumping equipment, some of which probably came from Germany, where the species is local but widespread. There is also the possibility of wind-dispersal from the Continental side of the English Channel, where it grows. However, the discovery of the plant on an RSPB reserve emphasises the potential for a natural introduction by birds. Thus Wiggington (1999)⁸ mentions in this connection that terns, at least, are known to 'commute' between their colonies at Dungeness and those on the coast near Calais.



Sevenoaks. Photo by Sue Buckingham, 2 October 2012

On 8 September 2008, the species was also found by Geoff Joyce at Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, TQ 5247.5697, where it was abundant on the sandy edge of the east lake. It has since been seen on sandy man-made islands at the lakes, as well as on the shore. This reserve is over 70km from the Dungeness reserve, but is also very much orientated towards observation and encouragement of birds. It is possible that seed may have travelled with a birdwatcher, but

relatively unlikely that the birdwatcher will have reached a part of the reserve where the seed may have germinated on the shoreline. Accordingly, there is a case for regarding the species as having reached this location also by non-anthropogenic means.

By contrast, where Jersey Cudweed occurs as an urban street weed, the potential for this having arisen as an introduction by man is a great deal higher and creates a parallel with the species' occurrence elsewhere in the world as a fairly cosmopolitan urban (and frequently agricultural) weed. Mark Spencer (2010)⁹ points out a recent increase in appearances, which include metropolitan vc16 finds at Hither Green in 2007 and Deptford in 2008; and since then it has been seen at Charlton (2012), Northumberland Heath (2014), Barnehurst (2016), Eltham (2016), West Heath (2016), Bexleyheath (2016) and other localities thereafter.



Chatham, as pavement weed. Photo by Sue Poyser, 2017

The habitat preferences of Jersey Cudweed at Dungeness and Sevenoaks are for damp sandy ground, subject to changing water levels. A degree of bare ground, encouraged by seasonal flooding, appears to be required

⁸ M.J. Wiggington (1999). *Grnaphalium luteoalbum* L. (Asteraceae). In (ed. M.J. Wiggington) *British Red Data Books 1 Vascular Plants*.

⁹ M. Spencer (2010). Botany report for 2008 and 2009. *The London Naturalist* 89: 117-131.

for establishment, the species generally behaving as an annual. Its germination behaviour is variable, so that it may behave as a winter annual, germinating in autumn, overwintering as a rosette and flowering in summer; or it may germinate in early summer, flowering in autumn or even as late as December. Both patterns of behaviour have been exhibited at Dungeness and the large quantities of plants found near the ARC Pit in 2001 appears to have been correlated with exceptionally high water levels in the winter of 2000-2001 inundating sand which had been dry for some years and stimulating spring germination.

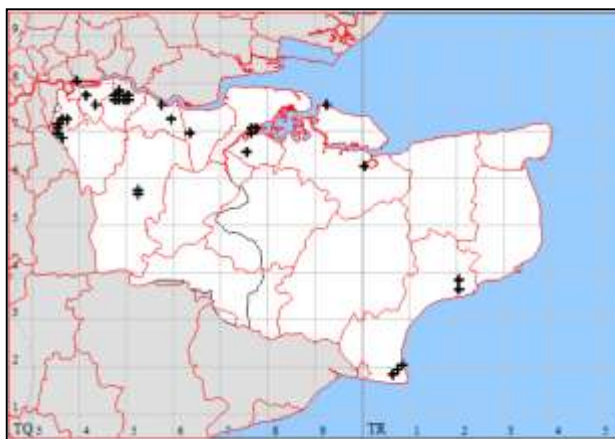


Dungeness. Photo by Sue Buckingham, 25 July 2012

The metropolitan occurrences have some parallels in terms of habitat characteristics in that their appearance on pavements and between brick paviors of driveways is in open habitats with limited competition (although there may be an issue of the effectiveness of different species in coping with weedkiller regimes) and often with access to a sandy substrate in which paving-stones or paviors may have been bedded. Whilst the occurrence of the species in Becontree, Essex has been correlated with the laying of brick paviors in front gardens at a time, neither recent nor old, when laying contractors may have

used bedding-in sand with a seed-bank of Jersey Cudweed¹⁰, we do not have data enough for evidence of similar origins in vc16.

The following table was maintained for records up to, and including, 2019. The increasing number of urban occurrences is such that there is minimal value in adding to them. The distribution on a monad basis is shown on the accompanying distribution plan.



Laphangium luteoalbum (Jersey Cudweed) 2010-20

Site	Grid reference	Site status	Last record date	Recorder	Comments
Penge metropolitan (vc16)	TQ3569		1 September 2019	GK	Birkbeck Road pavement, also forecourt at junction of Mackenzie Road and Pelham Road, and forecourt near junction of Pelham Road and Birkbeck Road.
Penge metropolitan (vc16)	TQ3571		1 September 2019	GK	Tannsfeld Road, pavement.
Beckenham (metropolitan vc16)	TQ3668		24 April 2019	RMB	Very large plant by way to garage of 1 Groveland Road TQ 3658 6875
Bell Green, Bellingham (metropolitan vc16)	TQ3672		2 August 2019	GK	Pavement, at junction of Datchet and Aldremoor Roads, also at Burford Road.
Deptford (metropolitan vc16)	TQ3772		(1) 2 August 2019 (2) 2008	(1) GK (2) NB	(1) Abundant at frontages of 84/86 Randlesdown Road, and occasional on nearby pavements.

¹⁰ M.J. Crawley (2016). *Urban botanising I and II: Welwyn Garden City 6th September (v.c.20); and Becontree 13th September (v.c.18)*. Field meeting reports 2015. *BSBI Yearbook* 2016.

					(2) TQ375772, a single plant outside the Creekside Centre.
Hither Green (metropolitan vc16)	TQ37		2007	NB	
Greenwich peninsula (metropolitan vc16)	TQ3980		17 July 2019	CB	TQ 3910 8034, a small scrappy plant.
Charlton (metropolitan vc16)	TQ4177		(1) 22 July 2015 (2) 26 April, 16 May, 28 May 2012	(1) & (2) JC	(1) Over 300 plants along Canberra Road. (2) TQ414775 to TQ417775. On pavements at Canberra Road, outside nos. 25-33 and 42 (26 April) and on brick paviers of front gardens at nos. 39, 42 and 53 (16 May). Pavement plants weed-killed by Council and in part concreted over.
Eltham Park	TQ4375		27 July 2016	RMB	Paving blocks in front of 180 Glenesk Road, Eltham NE.
Bexleyheath	TQ4776		(1) 14 August 2017 (2) 27 April 2107 (3) 16 July 2016	(1) MR (2) MR (2) RMB	(1) Gipsy Road (Front Gardens of 332 and 334, c. TQ 47716 77092 . (2) TQ 47267 76940, Okehampton Crescent, mostly growing in paved front gardens although there were a few on the pavement and a singleton in an alleyway. Present in the garden of No. 97, then (west to east), scattered about up to No. 121, which may be a point of origin, then from No.145 to No. 149 inclusive, No. 157, No. 165 and No. 211. (3) TQ 4759 7613 - many on brick paving at 133 Gipsy Road and crazy paving at no.135, 1 at no.157.
Bexleyheath	TQ4777		(1) 15 May 2018 (2) 1 May 2018 (3) 16 July 2016	(1) MR (2) MR (3) RMB	(1) Footpath between The Quadrant and Long Lane c. TQ 47855 77134. (2) Lessness Avenue (Front Garden of No. 38, TQ 47815 77508. (3) Crazy paving of 197 Axminster Crescent TQ 4768 7710.
Bexleyheath	TQ4876		(1) 15 August 2017 (2) 8 August 2017	(1) & (2) MR	(1) TQ 4844 7634, paved front garden of 7 Stanhope Rd. (2) TQ 48445 76894, three plants on central island of roundabout connecting Long Lane, Hythe Avenue and Pickford Lane.
Bexleyheath	TQ4877		(1) 7 May 2018 (2) various dates, July 2017 (3) 17 May 2016	(1), (2) & (3) MR	(1) Footpath between Bedonwell Road and Edwin Close c.TQ 48700 77643. (2) a singleton, Stapleton Rd; a singleton, Clovelly Rd; a few scattered along Pembury Rd;a singleton, Chessington Avenue; a singleton, Westbourne Rd; a few at Cumberland Drive. (3) TQ 48229 77391, a handful of plants beside residential road, north side of Barry Avenue near junction with Cumberland Drive.
Bexleyheath	TQ4976		3 September 2016	CR	TQ 49719 76001, Silverdale Road, Bexleyheath, street weed.
Barnehurst	TQ5076		25 October 2016	CR	One plant near the junction of Parkside Avenue and Old Manor Way, Barnehurst, at TQ 50651 76087. Also, c.12 in front garden paving at No. 27 Parkside Avenue at c. TQ 50731 76099

Northumberland Heath (metropolitan vc16)	TQ5077		26 July 2014	LNHS meeting	Residential frontage in Hind Crescent, TQ 5051 7741.
Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve	TQ5256, TQ5257	KWT managed reserve	(1) 29 September 2016 (2) 2 October 2012 (3) 8 September 2008	(1) DCh (2) SB (3) GJ	(1) TQ 568 520, all over sandy areas next to lake. (2) Prolific on sandy man-made islands in the lake at TQ 5206 5684 and also on the shore at TQ 5245 5698 and TQ 52448 57001. (3) Abundant on the sandy edge of the east lake, TQ 5247.5697.
Stone Marshes	TQ5775		25 July 2015	RMB	TQ 5776 7520, between paving blocks of unused vehicle holding area at east end of freightliner terminal.
Istead Rise	TQ6369		18 August 2016	RMB	Pavement, 25-31 Castlefields. Istead Rise.
Chatham - Horsted	TQ7565		4 June 2018	SP & DG	TQ 7578 6584, growing between block paving on a garage forecourt
Chatham Maritime	TQ7669		8 June 2019	DS & EW	Five plants seen c. TQ 7612 6983 at base of a wall as a pavement plant, one about to flower.
Chatham marina	TQ7670		17 September 2019	DS & EW	Single large flowering plant on pavement, TQ 7635 7015
St Mary's Island	TQ7770		7 September 2017	SP & DG	50+ plants growing among block paving at TQ 7706 7084 over c. 20sq m; 1 plant at TQ 7716 7024; and 1 plant at TQ 7717 7061
Dungeness	TR0518, TR0618, TR0619, TR0620, TR0718, TR0719	RSPB reserve	(1) 1 August 2019 (2) 13 October 2016 (3) 25 July 2012 (4) 28 August 2010 (5) 19 July 2010 (6) 5 November 2008 (7) 30 October 2008 (8) 7 October 2008 (9) September 2007 (10) September 2007	(1) AWi (2) SLP (3) SB (4) TI (5) JA and LR (6) PA (7) PA (8) PA (9) DR (10) RG	There are numerous records from 1996 onwards of which the following are the more recent, data for earlier surveys being given in the account text above, based on Gurney (2004) and deriving ultimately from RSPB surveys. (1) TR0618, TR0719 (2) (a) TR 07244 19276, hundreds of young plants (leaf rosettes only) in possibly scraped area at edge of flooded pit; also about 15 strong flowering plants nearby at TR 0729 19270. (b) TR 06450 18347, about 10 flowering and seeding plants on the shingle 'beach' of a spit, western side. (c) TR 06154 18460, several plants in wet sand area, struggling to compete with <i>Crassula helmsii</i> . (2) Present, TR 065 184. (3) TR0719. (4) 150 plants coming up not yet in flower TR 06753 18118. (5) TR 059181, 1500 plants growing on top of three islands at east end of excavation area. (6) TR 064180, 150 plants at south end of lake on pumped silt. (7) TR 075193, 6210 plants; TR 0666 2008, 10 plants at water tower pits; TR 064183, 50 plants at new excavations; TR 065195 (centroid), Pete Akers, 50 plants on sandy land near pools beside road near ARC hide; TR 0666 1982, Pete Akers, 500 plants scattered on sandy areas at base of peninsula. (8) TR 070185, 4,300 plants at Burrowes Pit; TR 067197, 23,065

					plants at west end of ARC pit. (9) TR 075193 (centroid), 25,000 plants at east end of ARC pit.
Lade	TR0820		(1) 27 August 2016 (2) 29 July 2015 (3) 5 September 2013	(1) & (2) DS (3) TI	(1) Only 3 plants seen, appears to have been sprayed with weedkillers recently on the RH&DR railway tracks. TR 08446 20655. (2) TR 08448 20651, three plants flowering by railway tracks. (3) Alongside railway line at Lade – a potentially significant extension from the gravel pit-related sites at Dungeness.
Folkestone	TR2306		25 August 2018	HS	Several plants in the gutter of Ilex Road at TR205 367

Lathyrus aphaca L. (Yellow Vetchling)

Draft account.

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Lathyrus aphaca occurs locally in southern England, especially the south east, and occurrences further north tend to be casual introductions. It is considered to be possibly native where there are persistent populations on calcareous ground, especially by coasts; but it may not be easy to differentiate from introduced origins, such as a contaminant of legume crops, as suggested in *The New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora* (2002), or possibly amenity sowings with seed mixes including legumes. The species is nationally **scarce** and is considered to be **Vulnerable** to the risk of extinction, both in England and Great Britain as a whole; in England its area of occupancy is taken to have declined by 31% in comparing records for the periods 1930-69 and 1987-99. In Kent, there appears to have been a decline of 40% between the surveys in Philp (1982) and Philp (2010), but not to a level which would give rise to any ranking of local rarity or scarcity.



Springhead, near Ebbsfleet.

Photo by Geoffrey Kitchener, 4 June 2015

Account

The first Kent record for *Lathyrus aphaca* is by Thomas Johnson, who mentioned it as seen on the return leg of his second Kent journey, *Descriptio Itineris* (1632), from Faversham to Gravesend via Sittingbourne and Rochester. It is quite possible that he had seen it before then, but not mentioned it in either of his journey accounts, as Johnson was responsible for a 1633 revision of John Gerard's *Herball*, and there refers to the species as being 'in the corne fields about Dartford in Kent and some other places'. Whilst John Parkinson's *Theatrum Botanicum* (1640) has a higher reputation than Johnson's revision, its reference to *Lathyrus aphaca*, that 'It groweth in divers corne fields in Kent' adds nothing more, and may be derivative. The arable association may well be indicative of introduction through seed contamination. Hanbury and Marshall (1899) gave relatively few records and regarded the species as a colonist or casual of fields, banks and roadsides, rare and seldom permanent. There are a few Victorian herbarium specimens from the Folkestone area, but not the range of finds that might be expected if the species were other than rare. The *Woolwich Surveys* (1909), which covered north west Kent, took the view that there were only very old and more than doubtful records. So, whilst the earliness of the seventeenth century citations would normally offer some support to a case for native occurrence, their references to cornfields do not suggest native habitat, and the other evidence is not particularly helpful to such a case.

Springhead, near Ebbsfleet. Photo by Liam Rooney, 4 June 2015



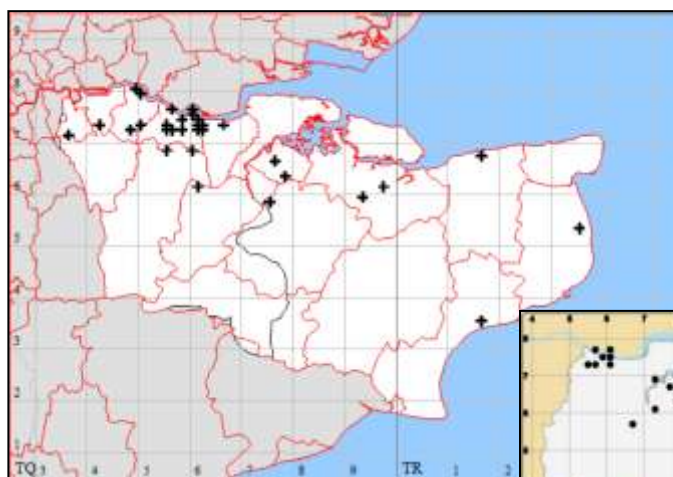
There are specimens in **MNE** which include some from the 1950s and 1960s, but not suggesting any discernible distribution pattern. Philp (1982) recorded presence in 20 tetrads, mostly in the Dartford/Swanscombe area, but also from Sandwich to St Margaret's-at-Cliffe – on dry banks, sea walls and waste ground. Yellow Vetchling was given as native (which is what the standard Floras then stated), 'although perhaps introduced in some locations'. During the 1991-2005 survey (Philp, 2010), however, the species was not recorded at all in far eastern Kent, there was a thin scattering from the Medway Towns towards Maidstone, and a residual clump of

records continuing in the Dartford/Swanscombe area. The total had then reduced to 12 tetrads, and the species was described as native without qualification, present usually on the chalk or near the coast. It is unclear whether this description represents a change of mind about the plant's status. Even in the species' core north west Kent area, the judgment is not easy to make. Roadside records may represent the continuance of old grassland; but equally, it is a habitat where sowing after roadworks may have been undertaken. There are (2015) enormous quantities of Yellow Vetchling on the Swanscombe peninsula, with an air of wildness, but they are accompanied by much *Medicago sativa* (Lucerne) which may be indicative of general legume sowing; this area was historically saltmarsh, with levels changed by tipping and the operation of cement factories, so that the habitat is not indicative of historic continuity for the species. Equally, the large quantities around the HS1 rail link near the A2 south of Northfleet, accompanied by other legumes, may be indicative of sowing, given the major landscape changes in this area, although recognizing that some of these changes have been relatively recent. However, Rodney Burton remarked in the *Flora of the London Area* (1983) that 'it is very abundant and persistent around Northfleet station, but it was not there at all 30 years ago'.

Springhead, near Ebbsfleet. Photo by Lliam Rooney, 4 June 2015



Recording from 2010 to 2020 has affirmed the 1991-2005 distribution, with records made in 27 tetrads (the equivalent of 31 monads), mostly clustered near the Thames in north west Kent, as shown in the accompanying 2010-20 distribution map, but with a scattering in East Kent, which Philp (2010) did not have. The data match the 1971-80 records better than the 1991-2005 survey, which may represent under-recording. As *Lathyrus aphaca* is not uncommon, at least in West Kent, the distributional data maintained in this register will be, as shown, at 1km square (monad) level. This will entail recording at a finer scale than the tetrads given in Philp (2010), from which the following 1991-2005 map is taken (with kind permission of the late Eric Philp and the Kent Field Club), which also differs by omitting metropolitan vc16 as being outside the administrative county.



Lathyrus aphaca (Yellow Vetchling) 2010-20

Lathyrus aphaca (Yellow Vetchling)
1991-2005



Lathyrus aphaca is an autumn-germinating annual, flowering from May to August. Whilst it is widespread in Europe, north Africa and Asia, its presence in Belgium, The Netherlands and Germany at least is believed to be as an introduced species¹¹. It is a distinctive plant by virtue of its yellow flowers, and the large, hastate stipules which function as leaves paired up the stem (the true leaves have been reduced to a tendril).

¹¹ Rumsey, F.J. (1994). *Lathyrus aphaca* L., in (eds.) Stewart, A., Pearman, D.A. & Preston, C.D., *Scarce Plants in Britain*. JNCC.

Lathyrus hirsutus L. (Hairy Vetchling)

Draft account.

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Lathyrus hirsutus grows very scattered in England, the Channel Islands, east Ireland and southern Scotland as a casual introduction, but populations close to the Thames estuary in Essex and Kent were assigned a more permanent status in Rumsey (2019)¹², which has resulted in the species being brought onto the Red Plant List for Great Britain, with a status of **Vulnerable** to the risk of extinction, so far as concerns that limited putative native range. It is **scarce** in Kent.



Account

The first Kent record is in 1875, when found by William Fawcett growing in a wood along a Southborough roadside for about 40 yards and for about 10 yards into the wood (*Journal of Botany* (1878) **16**: 247), in company with other legumes, namely *Vicia gracilis* (*Ervum gracile* = *Vicia parviflora*, Slender Tare), *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling) and *Vicia hirsuta* (*Ervilia hirsuta*, Hairy Tare) and increasing in extent over the next three years. Hanbury and Marshall (1899) cite the view of E.M. Holmes that it was truly wild here, but give the status of the species as 'Native?'. It is an intriguing record, partly because of the extension into woodland, which is not an expected habitat, and must have been very open; but also partly because of the association with other legumes, in particular the rare *Ervum gracile*, if correctly identified. The presence of two such rare legumes would suggest either a very special habitat, not replicated elsewhere in the county, or an introduction; the latter is more likely.

Warden. Photo by Lliam Rooney, 18 June 2013

It was the only record cited by Hanbury and Marshall (1899); and the next one appears to be in 1903, by F. Hewett at Ramsgate (specimen in **SLBI**). The same day, Hewett also collected at Ramsgate the rare casual *Vicia hybrida* (specimen also in **SLBI**), so that it is at least possible that these were found together. The latter's herbarium label gives no more detail, but George Pittock noted¹³ that Hewett found it earlier in the year on waste ground near the South Eastern Railway Company's Ramsgate Station. The likelihood is that both species were casual introductions. Intriguingly, *Lathyrus hirsutus* was also at railway goods sidings, at Richborough Port, in 1936 (collected by J.E. Lousley, specimen in **SLBI**) where it continued to be seen at least until 1987; it is likely that it was introduced with goods traffic use. There is a further early record, in 1913 at Markbeech, by Mr Justice G.J. Talbot of Falconhurst, backed by a specimen at **E** and likely to have been found on his estate. Nothing more is known of this; an introduction seems likely.

¹² Rumsey, F. (2019). *Lathyrus hirsutus* L. Native or not... and should it really matter? *BSBI News* **140**: 16-20.

¹³ In his copy of Hanbury and Marshall (1899), now in the possession of John Badmin.

It is not until Philp (1982) that north Kent coastal or estuarial occurrences began to be noted, with one or two plants at the edge of saltmarsh at Leysdown, Sheppey, described as 'probably introduced'. In Philp (2005), reflecting a record from 1994, the species is given as introduced but well established, in rough grassland at Warden Bay; at least 1,000 plants were present in 2007, and its presence has continued, at least until 2018. Other north Kent coastal or estuarial occurrences have been at Botany Marshes, Swanscombe (in 2012, by what was a sea defence wall against tidal saltmarsh at least until the 1940s, before land levels were raised to the north); at Church Marshes, Sittingbourne (in 2014 and 2017, in separate monads by a sea wall along Milton Creek); and at Kingsferry (in 2018, on the sea defence bank along the Swale). All these coastal/estuarial



occurrences share in common, as well as geography, an association with London Clay grassland in (semi-) natural situations.

Swanscombe. Photo by David Steere, 23 August 2019

The Kent occurrences may be considered with the case made in Rumsey (2019) for the species having long-term status by the Thames estuary, possibly native (and at any rate, behaving as a native) or possibly appearing as a seed contaminant in the course of marshland reclamation in the mid-11th to 14th centuries.

That case is based on the unique climate in the region: the most continental area of Britain; the driest part of the country with frequent soil-water deficit from May to August; one of the warmest parts of the country in summer; a mild climate through the influence of the Thames. These factors help naturally maintain an open habitat, allowing the persistence of annual species. The south Essex sites are in fairly coarse natural grassland in transition to scrub on roughly neutral London Clay soils that dry out and crack in summer, not far from the coast. They have a historical background, in that Christopher Merrett (in his *Pinax rerum naturalium Britannicarum*, 1666) first recorded it at 'Hadley Castle', presumably the south-facing slopes of the Benfleet-Hadleigh Downs overlooking marshlands by the Thames. Equivalent Kent records have nothing like this antiquity, so any case for very long term presence on the Kent side Thames estuary would have to proceed on the basis of being overlooked.

Kemsley, Sittingbourne. Photo by Danny Chesterman, 22 June 2017

Lathyrus hirsutus (Hairy Vetchling) 2010-20



The Thames-related distribution, however, is the only coherent geographical and habitat-related distribution in Kent. The remaining records, mentioned above, are likely to have an introduced origin, to which may be added a sighting at Ditton Quarry (2005), a location which seems to have acquired a number of introductions in the course of becoming a local nature reserve.



Lathyrus hirsutus is a scrambling annual, native in central and northern Europe, as also north Africa and Asia, and introduced elsewhere. The main sources of introduction in the British Isles appear to be as a seed contaminant and a bird seed alien. It has paired leaflets and a winged stem: the flowers are notable as having a bluish-red standard petal, fading through blue to greenish blue, and pale blue wing petals, fading to greenish blue. In spite of the name '*hirsutus*', the plant is more or less glabrous; but the fruits are densely hairy.

Site	Grid reference	Site status	Last record date	Recorder	Comments
Swanscombe	TQ6075		(1) 23 August 2019 (2) 21 August 2015 (3) 27 August 2012	(1) DS (2) & (3) GK	(1) Hundreds of gone to seed plants c. TQ 608 759 with a few still in flower sufficient to confirm identity. Also c. TQ 609 758. (2) TQ 6085 7583, a large patch in coarse grassland. (3) TQ 60927 75810, four plants in turf between wheel ruts on track between embankment and Botany Marshes, in flower and fruit. Some saline influence from estuary.
Swanscombe	TQ6076		23 August 2019	DS	Hundreds of gone to seed plants with a few still in flower sufficient to confirm identity c. TQ 609 761 to TQ 608 760.
Swanscombe	TQ6176		23 August 2019	DS	Hundreds of gone to seed plants c. TQ 610 761 with a few still in flower sufficient to confirm identity.
Ditton Quarry	TQ7157		20 June 2005	JL	A single plant in grassland at base of former ragstone quarry.
Sittingbourne, Milton Creek	TQ9164, TQ9165		(1) 22 June 2017 (2) 25 June 2014	(1) DC (2) CO	(1) TQ 919 656, for 200 yards along sea wall towards Paper Mill. (2) TQ9164, Along creek embankment near sewage works, locally abundant.
Kingsferry	TQ9168, TQ9169		(1) 28 August 2020 (2) July 2018	(1) DCh (2) AY	(1) TQ 918 687, one plant in flower and fruit below sea wall. (2) TQ 910 695 approx, in the middle of the footpath on the estuary defence embankment a few hundred yards from the Sheppey crossing, two small clumps with a few plants in each.
Sandwich, north west	TR3258		11 July 2020	DCh	TR 324 588, Monks Wall, large patches along 100 yd stretch of old seawall.
Richborough	TR3362		(1) 15 July 1987 (2) 11 July 1986	(1) EGP, RoF (2) RoF	(1) TR 335 620. (2) TR 334 620.
Warden/ Leysdown	TR07F		(1) 19 August 2018 (2) 13 August 2018 (3) 18 June 2013 (4) 24 July 2007 (5) 1991-98	(1) BS, MP (2) KBRG meeting (3) JA, LR (4) EGP, GK (5) EGP	(1) (a) TR 0244 7160, a couple of flowering plants. (b) TR 022 719, locally frequent. (2) TR 0244 7161, grassy area sloping from sea wall down to dyke. (3) TR 02294 71905, grassy area above Warden Bay. (4) TR0271, at least a thousand plants widespread in coastal grassland. (5) TR07F

Habitat, Swanscombe. Photo by David Steere, 23 August 2019



Lathyrus japonicus Willd. (Sea Pea)

Draft account.

vc 15

Rarity / scarcity status

Sea Pea is not infrequent on shingle beaches in the south and east of England and also has a presence on the south coast of Ireland, being very scattered and local elsewhere in the British Isles. Its restricted habitat and range means that it is nationally **scarce**, but as its populations are generally stable, its conservation risk status is regarded as of 'Least Concern', both in England and Great Britain as a whole. It is not known in West Kent, and in East Kent it is **scarce**.



Dungeness. Photo by Heather Silk,
8 May 2011

Account

The first printed Kent record for Sea Pea is in John Parkinson's *Theatrum botanicum* (1640) as growing 'neere Rumney'. He also mentions another sort of Sea-pea (which does not seem separable) 'at Gilford, in Kent, over against the Comber', which is more likely to be in East Sussex. Gilford is the pronunciation for Guldeford, and Comber would have been equivalent to the Camber, a large bay which became reclaimed and silted-up behind present-day

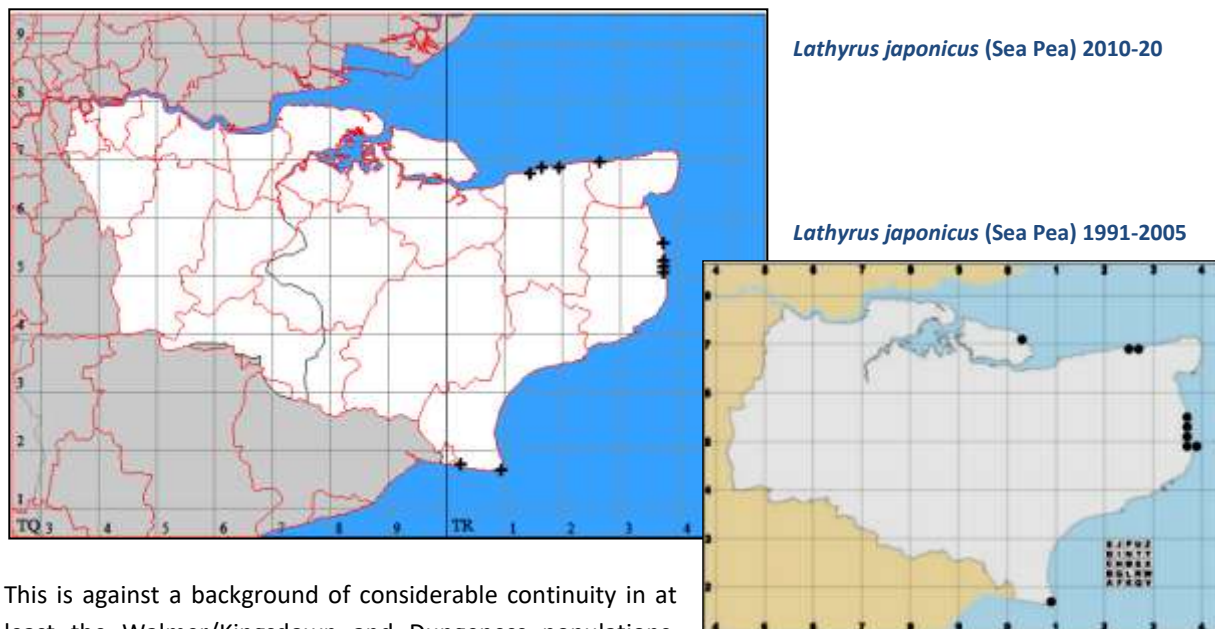
Camber village. Early records run from Sandwich to Kingsdown, and then New Romney, Lydd and Dungeness; but Hanbury and Marshall (1899) considered that it was very rare, seemingly extinct at some of the old stations, although it might perhaps be found at Dungeness and Kingsdown in small quantity. Records have indeed continued to be made from those locations.

Lathyrus japonicus was first found on the north Kent coast by Francis Rose, who collected material in 1949 from a shingle beach at Plumpudding island, west of Birchington, and from a beach north east of Shuart (these may be the same location, as also on a shingle beach, St Nicholas at Wade, 1962). It was thought that, from being 'in local plenty' in the 1960s, it had been eliminated due to inroads by the sea and the erection of a new sea wall (Randall, 1977)¹⁴. However, there have been sporadic finds to follow, and Philp (1982) gave two north coast records, as well as at Kingsdown, Hythe and Dungeness, to produce a total of eight tetrad records in the county for the 1971-80 survey.

The total of nine records for the 1991-2005 survey (Philp, 2010) suggests stability, but only five of those were for identical tetrads, and of the others, Sea-pea had now been found on Sheppey, at Leysdown-on-Sea. Similarly, the records for 2010-20 (comprising nine tetrads, equivalent to ten monads) are not fully

¹⁴ Randall, R.E. (1977). The past and present status and distribution of Sea Pea. *Lathyrus japonicus* Willd., in the British Isles. *Watsonia* 11: 247-251.

coincidental with those for 1971-80 or 1991-2005: they include three tetrads which feature in neither of the previous surveys. The implication seems to be, subject to the relative completeness of each survey, that within the limits imposed by suitable habitat, Sea Pea is fairly mobile in its occurrences within parts of east Kent.



This is against a background of considerable continuity in at least the Walmer/Kingsdown and Dungeness populations.

The former was present at least by 1801, when Lewis Dillwyn read to the Linnean Society his *Catalogue of the more rare Plants found in the Environs of Dover, with occasional Remarks*¹⁵, with a reference to Sea Pea 'On the beach between Walmer Castle and Kingsdown'. The Dungeness population was recognized in the 1695



and subsequent editions of Camden's *Britannia*; and that of 1701 states 'From hence the Shore turning, goes directly Westward, and has a sort of Pease which grows in great Plenty, and naturally amongst the Pebbles, in large Bunches like Grapes, in Taste, differing very little from Field-Pease'. Randall (1977) mentions that 'East of Dungeness power station, E. Kent, there is a colony which has increased considerably between 1946 and 1973, though two other colonies nearby known in the 1940s have now apparently disappeared'.

Deal. Photo by Sue Buckingham, 2011

There are still large quantities present at Dungeness – see table below. The series of Dungeness patches present in 2015 have been there, more or less as they are, for the previous 20 years or so without getting any bigger and, if anything, they are becoming weaker and more straggly, with discoloured leaves (pers. comm., Owen Leyshon). The easternmost of this grouping is a patch behind the new lighthouse, c. TR 096 168, and there have been no recent records for the 6km stretch of shingle coastline running northwards towards Greatstone, which seems surprising, particularly in view of the considerable accretion of shingle in recent winters in the lifeboat station

¹⁵ L.W. Dillwyn, in (1802) *The Transactions of the Linnean Society of London* 6: 177-184.

area and the absence of sea defence works here. Further north, at Hythe Ranges, there have been significant sea defence works in the last 20 years which have severely reduced the ability for strandline vegetation to expand here.

Dungeness. Photo by Daphne Mills, 9 July 2015

It is a perennial of bare or semi-vegetated shingle beaches. Small populations may be susceptible to trampling where there is pressure of beach visitors¹⁶. It is said that the species is capable of growing on sand, but our Kent observations have been in relation to plants in the usual bare shingle habitat, sometimes where plentiful extending in a zone along a shingle bank or ridge, always above high tide mark. Zoned bands, 50m long (at Walmer) and 100m long (near Birchington) have been noted. The plants are often unaccompanied, being the first colonists of the shingle, penetrating it with their deep tap root, which may grow to 2m; but the decay of its foliage can result in organic matter accumulating with a Sea Pea patch, so as open the way for colonisation by other shingle plants.¹⁷ Although growing above high tide mark, plants need to be within reach of storm surges to enable sea dispersal, although it may be that wind dispersal accounts for some local spread.



It is not a species which is readily capable of confusion with any other.

Site	Grid reference	Site status	Last record date	Recorder	Comments
Dungeness	TR01Y		(1) 30 August 2018 (2) 3 July 2011 (3) 4 June 2011 (4) 30 September 2010 (5) 27 June 1996 (5) After 1990, before 2006 (6) After 1970, before 1981	(1) OL (2) & (3) TI (4) SB (5) EGP (Philp, 2010) (6) Philp (1982)	(1) TR 09424 16760. New plant out on the storm ridge driftline vegetation zone. Multiple small patches dotted around near the Boardwalk which are known. (2) TR 09017 16677. An isolated population of 120 plants west of others, by old coastguard tower. (3) TR 09195 16744 to TR 09480 16884 (E-W, each side of boardwalk). 2490 plants, most on bare shingle. Plants furthest from sea very sparse and leaves discoloured. (4) TR 09284 16818, Plants spread over area of shingle, 7m x 2m. (5) & (6) Recorded as TR01Y.
Lydd Ranges	TR0217		(1) 3 September 2017 (2) 7 August 2012	(1) BBe (2) TI	(1) TR 02575 17388, 10 x 6m patch. (2) -
Leysdown-on-Sea	TR07F		1991-1999	EGP (Philp, 2010)	
Seasalter	TR0965		21 April 1995	AW	Sherrins Alley, TR 097 657.
Hythe	TR13G		After 1970, before	Philp (1982)	

¹⁶ Akeroyd, J.R. (1994). *Lathyrus japonicus* Willd., in (eds. Stewart, A., Pearman, D.A. & Preston, C.D.) *Scarce Plants in Britain*, JNCC.

¹⁷ Brightmore, D & White, P.H.F. (1963). *Lathyrus japonicus* Willd. Biological Flora of the British Isles, *Journal of Ecology* **51**:795-801.

			1981		
Hythe Ranges	TR13L		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	
Whitstable	TR16D		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	
Swalecliffe	TR1467		(1) (2) 31 July 2014	(1) & (2) CO	(1) One patch still present as before. (2) One patch on middle beach at c. TR 145 677, about 2 sq. m.
West of Herne Bay	TR1668		(1) (2) 21 July 2014	(1) & (2) CO	(1) One patch still present as before. (2) One patch on middle beach at TR 1615 6825, about 1 sq. m.
North of Beltinge	TR1968		(1) 3 May 2014 (2) 31 August 2013 (3) 23 July 2012 (4) 19 August 2011 (5) 4 September 2009	(1) -(5), CO	(1) As below, six small plants. (2) As below, now covering over 1 sq.m. Very sparse and well eaten but spreading, no flowers this year, six plantlets present. (3) As below, now a small patch less than 1 sq.ft., but flowering (4) At c.TR 198 686, three plants in eastern rocky bay; one pod seen. (5) At c.TR 198 686 in eastern of three bays containing sea defence boulders. No flowers and possibly first year. 1-2 small plants.
Wade Marshes	TR26P		1991-98	EGP (Philp, 2010)	
West of Birchington	TR26U		(1) 1 July 2013 (2) 30 September 2010 (3) 1991-98 (4) After 1970, before 1981	(1) CO (2) SB (3) EGP (Philp, 2010) (4) Philp (1982)	(1) All over shingle between lagoon and sea. Also, spread west of lagoon along top of shingle beach. Abundant. (2) (a) TR 26559 69200 to TR 26667 69206, a 100 m long stretch of plants between these two grid references, all along top of a shingle bank which protects a small salt marsh. (b) TR26430 69205, 50 metre long stretch of plants at top of shingle beach - estimated 150 plants. (3) & (4) Recorded as TR26U.
Kingsdown	TR34U		(1) 1991-98 (2) After 1970, before 1981	(1) EGP (Philp, 2010) () Philp (1982)	
Kingsdown	TR34Z		(1) 24 September 1999 (2) After 1970, before 1981	(1) EGP (Philp, 2010) (2) Philp (1982)	
Walmer	TR35Q		(1) 2 May 2015 (2) 17 October 2011 (3) 16 August 2011 (4) 16 July 2011 (5) 23 July 2010 (6) 1991-98 (7) After 1970, before 1981	(1) KFC meeting (2) & (3) SB (4) KBRG meeting (5) SC (6)EGP (Philp, 2010) (7) Philp (1982)	(1) TQ3750. (2) (a) >10 large patches of plants on shingle ridge from TR 37904 50477 north to TR 37868 50761. (b) Patch of plants 12m x 6m, somewhat swamped by <i>Centranthus ruber</i> and <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i> . (3) 15 patches of plants on shingle beach from TR 37850 51899 to TR 37855 51997, the largest containing more than 100 plants. (4) (a) Large numbers of plants forming a band on top of shingle beach between TR 37924 50370 and TR 37914 50402. (b) Top of shingle beach at TR 37931 50302. (5) TR 379 503, extensive on beach,

					between castles. (6) & (7) Recorded as TR35Q.
Deal	TQ35R		(1) 29 October 2011 (2) 16 August 2011 (3) 12 June 1999	(1) & (2) SB (3)EGP & JBe (Philp, 2010)	(1) Patch about 1 sq. m. on high shingle ridge above sea, TR 37165 55539. Also three small plants at top of shingle beach, TR 37354 55032. (2) Patch covering 10m x 10m of shingle beach, TR 37852 52045. Also three patches of plants on shingle, TR 3785 5202. (3) Recorded as TR35R.
Deal	TQ35S		4 August 2000	EGP & PH (Philp, 2010)	

Deal. Photo by
Sue Buckingham,
2011



Lathyrus linifolius (Reichard) Bässler (Bitter-vetch)

Draft account.

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Lathyrus linifolius is widespread in the British Isles, in wood-borders and hedgerows, although absent from East Anglia and central Ireland. In Great Britain as a whole its conservation risk status is regarded as one of 'Least Concern', but in England the rate of its decline is such that it is considered to be **Near Threatened**. A comparison of its area of occupancy in England over the periods 1930-1969 and 1987-1999 produced a calculated decline of 29% in the likelihood of recording the species. A decline, albeit over a different period, is also shown by Kent data, the number of recorded tetrads having dropped by 63% between 1971-80 and 1991-2005. The species is still not sufficiently uncommon in Kent to merit being designated as rare or scarce, but the apparent rate of decline is concerning.



Account

The first Kent record for *Lathyrus linifolius* is by John Ray, in his *Catalogus Plantarum Angliae* (1670), where he writes of Wood-pease or Heath-pease 'In sylvis & dumetis Cantii'¹⁸ [in woods and thickets of Kent]. Other old records treat it as common, e.g. Edward Jacob's *Plantae Favershamienses*, 1777 (*In Jud's Wood – very common*); Thomas Forster's *Flora Tonbrigensis* 1816 ('In woods, common'); (Gerard Smith's manuscript notes 1830-33 ('Upon the clay cap of the chalk, at Stowting, etc. The variety of this plant with linear elongate leaves occurs in North Kent, and upon Seal heath, between Wrotham &



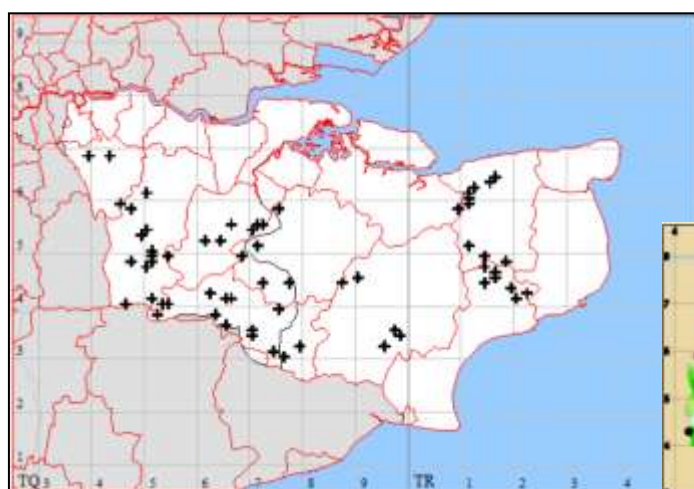
Riverhead'). Hanbury and Marshall (1899) assessed the species as very common, particularly in the Wealden districts, in woods, copses and bushy places.

Fishpond Wood near Dunkirk. All photos by Liam Rooney, 23 April 2011

Bitter-vetch remained locally frequent at woodland edges and rides, and in sheltered roadside banks, particularly on the more sandy soils, until the 1971-80 survey in Philp (1982), when it was found in 167 tetrads. However, the 1991-2005 survey (Philp, 2010) produced only 62 tetrads, still with a clear woodlands association but largely retreating to the area around Canterbury and Wealden south west Kent. The reasons for decline are not apparent, but the decline itself is shared with other species of fairly infertile soils. It is

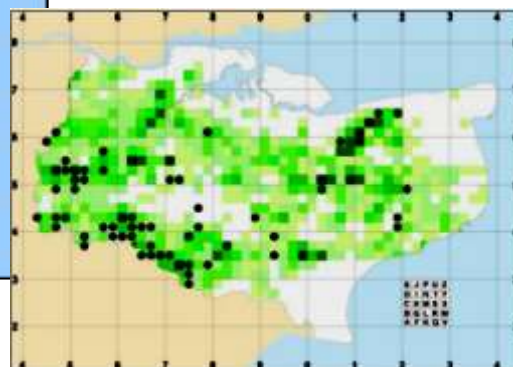
¹⁸ There seems to be some confusion in Hanbury and Marshall (1899), where they give the date of Ray's *Catalogus Plantarum*, first edition, as 1673, which is actually the date of Ray's *Catalogus Stirpium in Exteris Regionibus* instead. The Latin extract has also been mangled – 'spumetis' [foaming] instead of '& dumetis'.

possible that its habitat on low-nutrient lane-banks with limited competitive vegetation is affected by the pressures of increased traffic, and by competitive growth encouraged by nitrogen deposition.

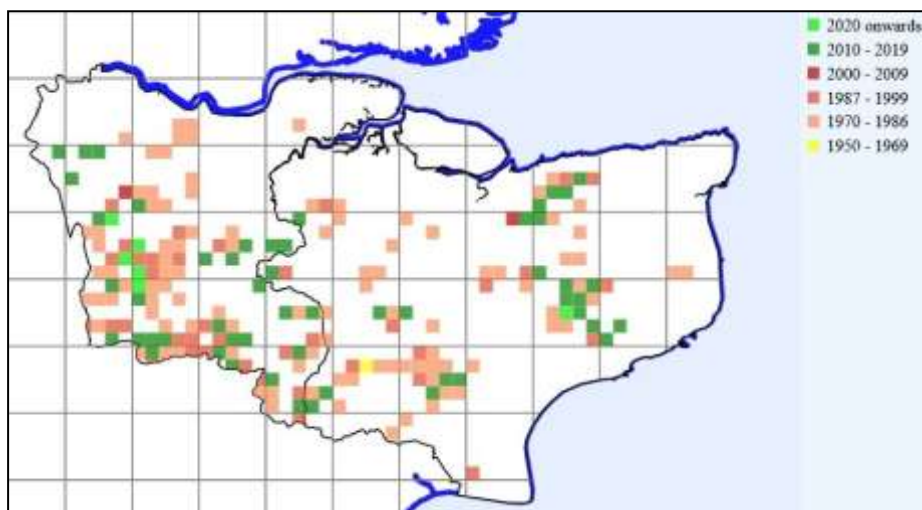


Lathyrus linifolius (Bitter-vetch) 2010-20

Lathyrus linifolius (Bitter-vetch) 1991-2005
(mapped against green for woodland)



The 1991-2005 distribution is given in the accompanying map reproduced with kind permission of the late Eric Philp and the Kent Field Club), in which records are correlated with green woodland density marking. In comparison, the 2010-20 distribution map, which differs in providing records at 1 km square (monad) level and in including metropolitan vc16, also shows an attenuated distribution in places, but more or less the same total of records (63 monad records, corresponding to 59 tetrads, although some are in metropolitan West Kent). It looks as though the decline from 1971-80 is very real, but may have levelled off. It is unclear whether weakening of concentrations on the West Kent Greensand and the High Weald border near Sussex are an artefact of recording, as also the recent finding in quantity along the back of the Downs across TR14.



Lathyrus linifolius tetrad
records (to 2021) from
BSBI database

The extent of losses after 1971-80, shown by pale pink squares on the accompanying map of BSBI database tetrad records is remarkable.

Recent records have mostly been on roadsides or banks

passing through woodland, but have also been in other marginal situations with woodland shading, but some exposure: by woodland rides or tracks or a woodland edge. The species is regarded as an ancient woodland indicator. There is insufficient heathland in the county to afford significant alternative habitat for it.

The species has been treated as giving rise to three varieties: var. *montanus* (our usual plant); var. *variifolius* (of which no Kent records have been traced); and var. *linifolius* (a narrow-leaved form, with a number of records in Hanbury and Marshall (1899) under *L. montanus* b. *tenuifolius*, including note of a herbarium

specimen gathered by Gerard Smith, which is likely to correspond with the latter's note of a variety at Seal, mentioned above).

Lathyrus linifolius may be recognized as having a winged stem (as distinct from merely angled) and 2-4 pairs of narrow leaflets with a small point at the end of the leaf stalk instead of a tendril. It often grows in similar habitats, but not so wide-ranging, as another purple pea-flower, *Vicia sepium* (Bush Vetch). The latter has more, wider and blunter leaflets, branching tendrils and smaller, half arrow-shaped stipules.

Lathyrus linifolius stipule. Photo by Liam Rooney, 23 April 2011



Lepidium campestre (L.) W.T. Aiton (Field Pepperwort)

Draft account.

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Field Pepperwort is an archaeophyte, or ancient introduction (although the evidence for this appears limited, except for its association with arable cultivation), scattered but locally common in the British Isles, less frequent in the north and west including Ireland. Whilst its conservation risk status is one of 'Least Concern' in Great Britain as a whole, in England the rate of its decline is such that it is considered to be **Near Threatened**. A comparison of its area of occupancy in England over the periods 1930-1969 and 1987-1999 produced a calculated decline of 21% in the likelihood of recording the species. In Kent, the decline between the two surveys of 1971-80 and 1991-2005 is in the order of 50%, which would more than support the English risk rating. The number of sites in the county, however, is such that would not normally qualify as rare or scarce, but clearly its status is such that records are worth monitoring.

Ranscombe. Photo by Liam Rooney, 9 June 2010.

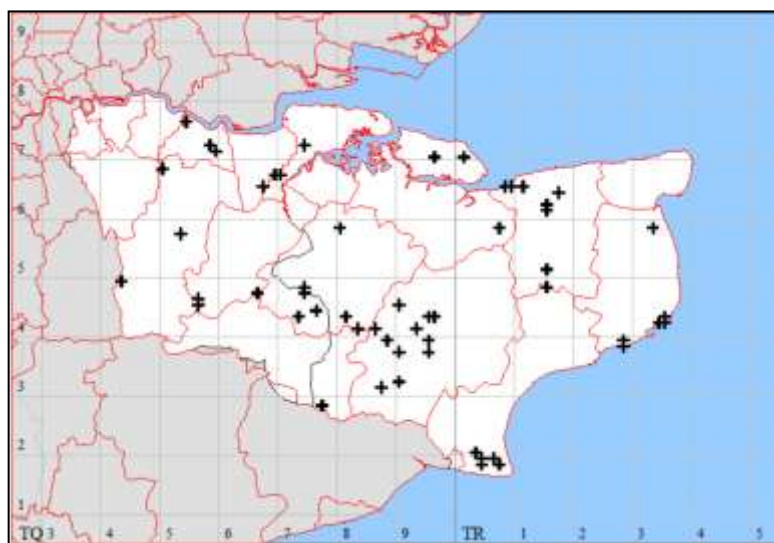
Account

In Kent, the first published record for *Lepidium campestre* was said by Hanbury and Marshall (1899) to be by Thomas Johnson in 1629. However, Francis Rose, in the 1972 edition of Johnson's *Iter Plantarum*, expressed the view that, from Johnson's other writings, *Thlapsi arvense* (Field Penny-cress) seems to have been intended. Both taxa were long included under *Thlapsi* (pre- and post- Linnaeus), and both were called Mithridate Mustard, which leaves some scope for confusion. The next earliest potential record traced is that of Thomas Forster in *Flora Tonbrigensis* (1816), who refers to it as 'Among corn, very common', but as his stations were 'Withyham, on the High Rocks, [both in Sussex] and elsewhere', it is ambiguous as to whether 'elsewhere' includes Kent, although this is likely, if very common.



Hanbury and Marshall (1899) regarded Field Pepperwort as so abundant that they gave virtually no specific records, referring to it as common in all the districts, especially on heavy soils, and found in fields and on banks, etc. Records in the first half of the 20th century are not abundant either, in spite of the frequency of the species, although there is in **SLBI** a specimen collected by Ted Lousley in 1933 from near Ranscombe, where it still grows. It was treated in Philp (1982) as rather local – there were clearly gaps in distribution, such as east of Ashford, and it was commonest in north Kent and, albeit scattered, the Weald. It was recorded in 120 tetrads, growing at roadsides, arable fields and waste places. In the 1991-2005 survey (Philp, 2010), however, it was only found in 60 tetrads, looking native (in spite of its archaeophyte status) in open grassland, roadside verges and arable fields. The accompanying distribution map for this period is provided with kind permission of the late Eric Philp and The Kent Field Club.

Bough Beech. Photo by David Steere, 10 June 2014.



Field Pepperwort records for this register will be maintained on a 1 km square (monad) basis, in view of the relative frequency of the taxon. The 2010-19 data are mapped here, and provide only 54 monad records, equivalent to 48 tetrads. This is suggestive of further decline.

Lepidium campestre (Field Pennywort)
2010-20

Lepidium campestre (Field Pennywort)
1991-2005

Lepidium campestre is an annual, sometimes perhaps biennial, with most seeds germinating in March and April. Some seedlings may continue to emerge until late autumn, and those plants which over-winter are often larger and more robust. The species differs from *Thlapsi arvense* (Field Penny-cress) in being hairy, having only one seed per valve and bearing swollen, pimple-like cells (vesicles) on the valves. The differences from *Lepidium heterophyllum* (Smith's Pepperwort) are dealt with under the account of that species.



Dover. Photo by David Steere, 29 April 2017

Lepidium heterophyllum Benth. (Smith's Pepperwort)

Draft account.

vc 15; apparently gone from vc 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Lepidium heterophyllum is widespread in the British Isles, but predominantly in western Britain and in the east and south of Ireland. Its conservation risk status in England and in Great Britain as a whole is one of 'Least Concern'. The position is very different in Kent and some parts of eastern England, where it is absent or very local. On the basis on the data in Philp (2010) the species would be treated as rare in East Kent, but its status is better regarded as **scarce**. It appears to be no longer present in West Kent.

Account

Lepidium heterophyllum was not, as pointed out by Hanbury and Marshall (1899), separated from *Lepidium campestre* (Field Pepperwort) by the older botanists, so that the first published record which they identified was a listing in H.C. Watson's *Topographical Botany* (given as 1873, although the listing seems not present in that edition, but appears for West Kent in that of 1883). However, they identify a Lydd beach specimen dated 1861 from the herbarium of John Stuart Mill as being this species. Contributors to Hanbury and Marshall's Flora produced a range of records across the county, and the species was assessed as being uncommon (but perhaps more common than reports suggested) on banks and open ground on dry, light soils. Those soils included sand (a sandy field near Sandwich), chalk (a bank near Lenham) and presumably shingle (Lydd beach).

Subsequent West Kent records were thin on the ground. It was regarded as common on Hayes Common in 1903 (W.H. Griffin in the *Woolwich Surveys*, 1909) and subsisted at Hayes at least until 1938, when seen by David McClintock, as also at West Wickham. It was reported by P.H. Cooke near Romney Street in 1933 and by John Palmer near Longfield in 1970..



Dungeness. Photo by David Steere, 15 June 2016

Smith's Pepperwort was found near the Bird Observatory at Dungeness by Francis Rose in 1956, on old shingle workings, and the Dungeness/Lydd area has provided the most consistent records in the county. Indeed, this was the only area where its presence was recorded in Philp (1982), given in three tetrads. In the 1991-2005 survey (Philp, 2010), the species continued to be recorded in just one of these tetrads. However, a further site was found, on fixed sand dunes at Pegwell Bay. Finds in the period 2010-19 have been limited to the Dungeness/Lydd area.



Dungeness, habitat. Photo by David Steere, 15 June 2016

The species is a biennial or more usually perennial, of dry, well-drained, open habitats – sand dunes, shingle, stony and gravelly ground. Because the national distribution is

primarily western, this suggests that it is favoured by higher rainfall than is experienced in Kent, even though precipitation drains rapidly through its substrate. It is not always easy to distinguish from *Lepidium campestre*, especially if fruits are not well developed. The latter is an annual, branched above; *L. heterophyllum* is generally perennial, branching at the base. The style of *L. heterophyllum* usually projects well beyond the notch at the top of the valve; that of *L. campestre* barely projects beyond, if at all. The valves of *L. heterophyllum* may have no swollen, pimple-like cells on the surface (vesicles), or relatively few; those of *L. campestre* are generally well covered with vesicles.



Dungeness. Photo by David Steere, 15 June 2016

Site	Grid reference	Site status	Last record date	Recorder	Comments
Pinden, Longfield	TQ5969		1970	JRP	TQ 598 697, chalk debris by railway.
Lydd south	TR01P		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	
Dungeness (Boulderwall Farm area)	TR01U		(1) 3 July 2011 (2) After 1970, before 1981	(1) TI (2) Philp (1982)	(1) TR0719. (2) Recorded as TR01U.
Dungeness (lighthouse area)	TR01Y		(1) 15 June 2016 (2) 2010 (3) 27 June 1996 (4) After 1970, before 1981	(1) DS (2) TI (3) EGP (Philp, 2010) (34 Philp (1982)	(1) TR0817, Long Ponds south west. (2) TR0817. (3) & (4) Recorded as TR01Y.
Lydd	TR0521		27 July 2012	OL	
South of Lydd-on-Sea	TR0819		30 May 2012	OL	
Pegwell Bay	TR36G		3 June 1999	EGP & DG (Philp, 2010)	Fixed sand dunes.

Lepidium latifolium L. (Dittander)

Draft account.

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Dittander is considered to be a native plant in coastal locations in Kent and East Anglia, the Severn and the odd spot on the south coast. Elsewhere it has a scattered casual distribution. In England and Great Britain as a whole, its conservation risk is regarded as one of 'Least Concern', although it is a **nationally scarce** plant (i.e. recorded in from 16 to 100 hectads - presumably this is on the basis of its assumed native distribution). In Kent it is neither rare nor scarce.

Account

The first record of Dittander in Kent appears to be a comment by Thomas Johnson in his *Mercurialis Botanicum* (1634) that 'I found it upon a banke between *Feversham towne* and the Haven'. It is still present on Faversham Creek (2012), although this does not necessarily represent the 1634 site. Christopher Merrett, in his *Pinax rerum naturalium Britannicarum* (1666) claimed that it was 'On most of the Ditches in the *Isle of Thanet*'. Thanet is not now notable for its ditches, other than where the ground descends to the Stour and Wantsum where there is still some Dittander, but it is possible that the terrain here was much more brackish and suitable for Dittander when the remains of the Wantsum Channel (which ceased to be navigable as a sea connection in 1672) continued in being.



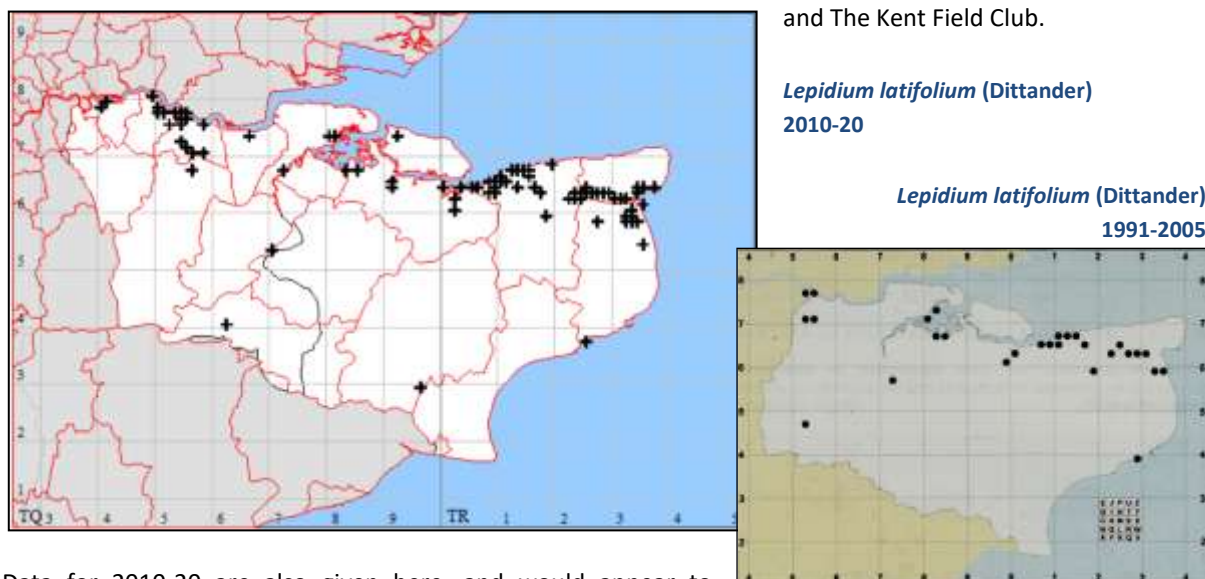
Seasalter. Photo by Liam Rooney, 2 August 2010

Hanbury and Marshall (1899) assessed it as a rare and local native, growing on banks near the sea and tidal waters, and they considered it evidently rarer then than it had been formerly. In one or two stations they considered that it might possibly be a relic of cultivation. This dual status was also apparent in the days of Thomas Parkinson who in his *Theatrum Botanicum* (1640) said that the species 'is found naturally growing in many places of this Land, as... upon *Rochester Common* in *Kent*... and in other places, but is usually kept in Gardens'. The early herbals attributed culinary and medical properties to the plant: the former because of the peppery taste of leaves and roots (hence Pepperwort was an alternative name), and the latter, for the supposed beneficial effects on, amongst other things, joint pains or skin marks or scars.

It is a moot point as to whether the former cultivated status of Dittander has had any effect on current distribution. Prompted by suggestions that a Chichester colony might be related to cultivation for the purposes of a mediaeval leper hospital, John Palmer¹⁹ pointed out the inland presence of Dittander in the grounds of three old hospitals in Kent, Bexley Hospital (opened, 1898), Joyce Green Hospital (opened, 1902); and Darenth Hospital (opened, 1902), although none of the sites themselves appeared to have been gardens. The coincidence was heightened by the absence at the time of Dittander from the area; but, given that the species had no place in the British pharmacopeia in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and that there have been a number of casual vc16 records since, this may well be no more than coincidence.

¹⁹ Palmer, J.R. (1994). Dittander near old hospitals. *BSBI News* 66: 17.

Philp (1982) treated the species as rare, just as had Hanbury and Marshall (1899), and noted presence in 12 tetrads. These included a couple of tetrads in the Whitstable/Swalecliffe area, but most were along the River Stour, with one unexpected appearance of the plant at the edge of the non-tidal Medway in Maidstone. Apart from this, all sightings were on the banks of tidal rivers and near the sea. There were no records for non-metropolitan West Kent. By the time of the 1991-2005 survey (Philp, 2010), the number of tetrad records had increased to 28. It was then treated as a scarce, rather than rare, plant of river banks, sea walls and brackish ditches, and occasionally on roadside verges. This last habitat provides saline conditions through the use of highway de-icing salt. There remained a stable population along the tidal River Stour. The accompanying 1991-2005 distribution map, taken from Philp (2010), is provided with kind permission of the late Eric Philp and The Kent Field Club.



Data for 2010-20 are also given here, and would appear to confirm a continued increase in Dittander across the county, although the earlier distribution map did not include all Dittander sites known to botanists at the time. Records for 84 monads are given (as the Dittander



records for this register are being maintained at 1 km square level, and hence finer resolution than as given for 1991-2005) and these are equivalent to 59 tetrads. Even making allowance that Philp (1982 and 2010) did not include metropolitan West Kent, it is likely that Dittander has never been as common in Kent as now. Some of the increase seems to be the consequence of transporting materials carrying the plant, whose creeping roots are very persistent and can re-generate from small fragments. This can even account for increase which seems to be within the area of natural habitat: in 2014 a large patch was noted by the beach near Beltinge, apparently associated with a deposit of rocks relating to sea defence works. Inland roadside occurrences may be related either to movement of contaminated materials or to transport of seed on tyres. Occurrences include the A2 south east of Faversham (2012), the A21 near Pembury (2019), the A299 west of Chestfield (2014), the A257 near Ash (2014) and the B2080 near Appledore (2011).

Seasalter. Photo by Liam Rooney, 2 August 2010

Lepidium latifolium is a robust and persistent patch-forming perennial, up to 2m high. It can hold its own amongst coarse vegetation, as on river banks; it is salt-tolerant and withstands inundation, but may be found in drier terrain such as gravel or rocky heaps; it can grow in such inhospitable terrain as the cracks in the concrete platform of the old Pegwell Bay hoverport. This competitive ability is related to its extensive root system, potentially more than 3m deep, according to data from North America (where it is an invasive alien). Apparently, root fragments are buoyant and seeds, after a period of immersion, likewise; so that this would assist its spread along river or ditch systems.

It is very distinct from other species of *Lepidium*, and should present no difficulties of identification.

Seasalter. Photo by Lliam Rooney, 2 August 2010



Near Ash, roadside habitat. Photo by Sue Buckingham, 9 July 2010



***Leymus arenarius* (L.) Hochst. (Lyme-grass)**

Draft account. Kent current records and photos needed.

vc 15

Rarity / scarcity status

Lyme-grass is frequent on coastal sand around the coasts of the British Isles, except for south and west Ireland and the English south coast. Populations generally seem stable and the conservation risk status of the species in England and in Great Britain as a whole is one of 'Least Concern'. In Kent, however, it has only one station, if this still subsists, and it is **rare**.

Account

Hanbury and Marshall (1899) were of the view that earlier Kent records of this species were in error. They dismissed a claim by Dr R.E. Hunter (whose observations were prone to error) at Margate, but were more respectful of a record ('Foot of the cliffs, Dover, sparingly') by Dr Eyre de Crespingy (died 1895), who was a competent botanist. The verdict here was 'There is no particular reason against the existence in Kent of this well-marked and handsome grass... but it must at present be excluded, pending further evidence'. There is, however, a BSBI database record from the Littlestone area, made by Lady Davy in June 1904 and her identification abilities are not in doubt (she was a first finder, and identifier, of *Carex microglochin* in the British Isles).

Hanbury and Marshall also commented on a taxon then called *Elymus geniculatus* Curtis which had a possible claim to be a variant of *Leymus arenarius*, but which at best would appear to have been a diseased or depauperate state²⁰. This was supposed to have been found in a saltmarsh near Gravesend, but had gone by the 1850s.

The first modern confirmed discovery appears to have been that of Francis Rose and C.A. Lester, in October 1962. A specimen is held at **MNE**, marked as from the foredunes at the foreshore of Prince's Links, Sandwich Bay. In June next year, a further collection was made, now at the National Museum of Wales, by R.A. Boniface, who described it as on the blown sand and stabilised dunes of Sandwich Sands, with several clumps towards Shell Ness. *Leymus arenarius* has continued in this locality, said in Philp (1982), to be increasing steadily on the upper shore of Sandwich Bay (TR36K). A survey in March 1983 by Andrew Henderson produced some fuller grid references: TR 351 620 for Shell Ness (this would appear to be outside Eric Philp's TQ36K); TR 354 605 for sand dunes between Prince's Golf Club and the sea; and a further grid reference not readily interpretable for sand dunes on the coast near Royal St George's. In Philp (2010), Lyme-grass is given as still persisting at Sandwich, but with the comment that its original appearance may have derived from deliberate planting. Evidence is not known for this, although the species is planted for dune stabilization. Further north, on some low sand dunes at Pegwell Bay, TR3264, it was also seen growing by Joyce Pitt on 5 July 2009.

It is a robust perennial occurring on coastal sand, especially loose sand, with which its root system copes well. It has deep vertical roots terminating in leafy shoots, which eventually become flowering; and also creeping horizontal roots, patch-forming and sand-binding. It is thought that spread from rhizome fragments is more frequent than from seed. It is frequently associated with *Ammophila arenaria* (Marram), although its Kent associates appear not to have been recorded. The bluish colour of the plant is very distinctive.

Somewhat surprisingly, we have no recent (post-2010) records for this taxon, but searches at Sandwich / Shell Ness have been unsuccessful and it may have gone from there.

²⁰ T.E.T. Bond (1952). *Elymus arenarius* L. Biological Flora of the British Isles. *Journal of Ecology* **40**: 217-227.

***Limbarda crithmoides* (L.) Dumort. (= *Inula crithmoides* L.) (Golden-samphire)**

Draft account.

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status:

Limbarda crithmoides is a local plant of coastal habitats in southern parts of the British Isles. Its conservation status is regarded as one of 'Least Concern', both in England and Great Britain as a whole; but it is a nationally scarce species. North Kent is one of the areas in which it is most abundant, and it warrants no particular rarity/scarcity designation in the county.

Account:

Golden-samphire enjoys very early notice in the county, being recorded by John Gerard in his *Herball* (1597) as *Crithmum Chrysanthemum* or Golden Sampier which 'groweth in the mirie Marsh in the yle of Shepey, as you go from the Kings ferrie to Sherland house' (presumably Shurland Hall, Eastchurch). Except for orthography, this description of distribution remained unaltered in Thomas Johnson's 1633 edition of the *Herball*. Johnson had himself seen it at Sheppey, listing it in his *Iter Plantarum* (1629) amongst plants such as *Atriplex portulacoides* (Sea-purslane) and *Salicornia* sp. (Glasswort) around Sheerness, after his botanical party had survived interrogation by the Mayor of Queenborough, who was suspicious of the group's motives.

Oare. Photos by Lliam Rooney, 19 August 2010.



Hanbury and Marshall (1899) regarded *Limbarda crithmoides* as rare and very local on muddy coasts (so the position has changed since then), listing it (as well as at Sheppey) on the mainland coast in locations from Rainham to Faversham and Seasalter. Habitats included creeks and ditches, and it was reported by C.P. Hurst for the 1899 Flora as being abundant at Conyer's Creek. Abundance below Rainham can also be inferred from the Flora's listed records, although these do not include a collection by Joseph French in 1848 at the marshes there (specimen in the University of Birmingham herbarium).

Francis Rose considered it to be a native of well-drained upper parts of salt-marshes, both on firm alluvial mud and on sand, usually with *Atriplex portulacoides* (Sea-purslane), *Elymus athericus* (Sea Couch) and *Festuca rubra* (Red Fescue), and on stone-faced sea walls, common and abundant locally in the Thames-Medway-Swale estuarine system from High Halstow on the Thames and above Upnor on the

Medway, to Seasalter; also on chalk cliffs, very rare and only known at Minnis Bay and Folkestone warren.

In the 1971-80 county survey (Philp, 1982), Eric Philp described it as very local, but often frequent where it does occur. That survey gave records for 63 tetrads, and the 1991-2005 survey (Philp, 2010) evidenced a fairly

similar distribution, with 67 tetrads. The position is again broadly similar as regards 2010-20 records, with 80 tetrads (145 monads), so that the distributional status is fairly stable and, if anything, increasing.

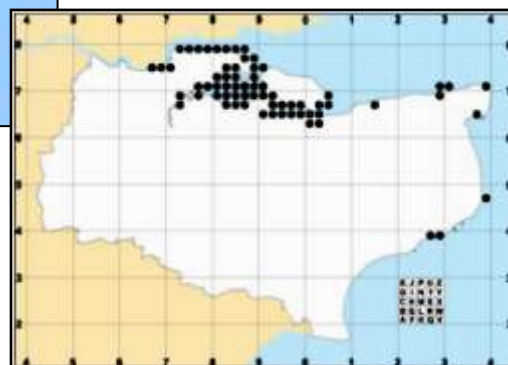
As Golden-samphire is not uncommon in Kent, the distributional data maintained in this register will be at 1km square (monad) level. This will entail recording at a finer scale than the tetrads given in Philp (2010), from

which the following 1991-2005 map is taken (with kind permission of the late Eric Philp and the Kent Field Club).

Limbarda crithmoides (Golden-samphire) 2010-20



Limbarda crithmoides (Golden-samphire) 1991-2005



It may be that the species has become more common in Kent since 1899 (or, indeed, 1930), since its presence was not then recognized along the Thames estuary on the north of the Hoo peninsula and towards Eastcourt Marshes; nor on Thanet and down the coast as far as Folkestone. It is possible that sea wall construction or improvement has provided suitable habitat for Golden-samphire, although the reverse might have been expected, and it does not provide an explanation for some of the newer locations.

Hoo, shoreline habitat. Photo by David Steere, 31 July 2015.

Limbarda crithmoides is frequently found in linear populations along the north Kent coast, particularly by the Thames, Medway and Swale estuaries just within reach of



high tides. These populations may be extensive: in 2010 it was recorded as an almost unbroken chain along the coastline between Hartly Ferry (Oare) and Conyer Creek. It may be found within the north Kent saltmarshes, amongst saltmarsh plants such as *Atriplex portulacoides* (Sea-purslane) *Limonium vulgare* (Common Sea-lavender) and it may line the channels there. More often, however, it is seen growing along the upper reaches of saltmarsh, merging into the spring high tidemark habitat where it also grows extensively in the absence of saltmarsh. It has been recorded at the base of sea walls (on the maritime side); within the sea wall sloping stone batter; and at the crest, where land vegetation begins. Occasionally, it appears alongside

saline ditches landward of the sea wall, and it has been recorded further inland near Faversham, by a sandy track over 400m inland from Oare Creek.

Unusually, it appears scattered on the East Kent chalk cliffs, a habitat which was not observed at all by the earlier botanists in Kent and which appears²¹ to be a habitat type found in Kent and westwards in Great Britain from Purbeck. The earliest such sighting appears to have been by Francis Rose, who collected material in 1947 from chalk cliffs by the sea at East Wear Bay, Folkestone; and this may have been the location within the more exposed cliff zone subject to spraydrift with halophyte vegetation mentioned in Rose & Gehu (1964)²². We now have records from 2010 onwards, not only for the base of chalk cliffs at East Wear Bay, but also at Samphire Hoe, Ramsgate, Cliftonville, Westgate, Birchington and at the base of cliffs on the edge of a small salt marsh created by a break in sea defences at Kingsdown. Rodwell (2000)²³ points to the possibility of there being distinct ecotypes of *Limbarda crithmoides* in view of the striking difference in distribution of the saltmarsh and maritime cliff vegetation communities.



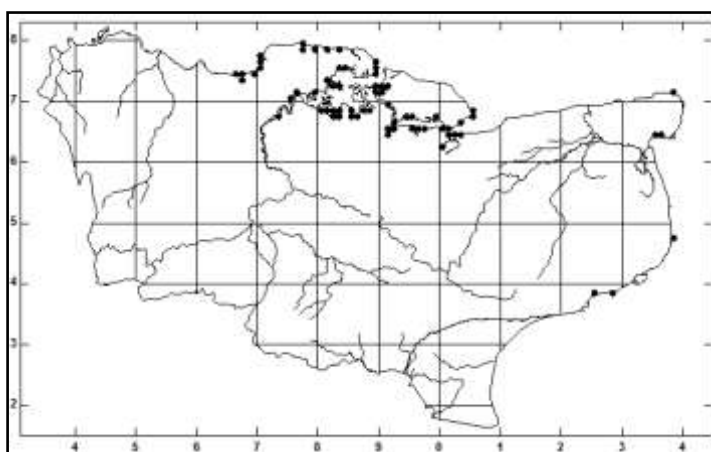
Grain, sea wall habitat. Photo by David Steere, 23 June 2015.

Limbarda crithmoides should not be capable of confusion with other species, but a non-flowering plant might resemble *Suaeda vera* (Shrubby Sea-blite), which is rare in Kent. Both have succulent leaves (as with many plants which need to store water in a saline environment), but those of *Inula crithmoides* are somewhat toothed.

A fly, *Myopites eximius* Séguy (sometimes given as *eximia*), known globally only from the coasts of northern France, including the Channel Islands, and the coasts of southern England and Wales, is associated exclusively with *Limbarda crithmoides*. Larvae form galls in the capitula, which become thickened and enlarged, with a hard woody texture, within which the larvae are cocooned. The first known Kent record was in 1939, and after 1950 there appears to have been a gap in sightings until 1982. The cumulative position to 2015 as regards Kent records is illustrated in the accompanying monad map which necessarily is also a record for the presence of *Limbarda crithmoides*.

Myopites eximius

This account has benefited greatly from the assistance of Laurence Clemons as regards the insect associations of the plant.



²¹ Malloch, A.J.C. (1994), *Inula crithmoides* L. in eds. Stewart, A., Pearman, D.A. & Preston, C.D., *Scarce Plants in Britain*, JNCC.

²² Rose, F. & Géhu, J.M. (1964), Essai de phytogéographie comparée. La végétation du Sud-Est de L'Angleterre et ses analogies avec celle du Nord de la France. *Bulletin de la société botanique de France 90ème session extraordinaire*: 38-70.

²³ Rodwell, J.S., ed., *British Plant Communities* vol.5, Maritime communities and vegetation of open habitats.

Linaria repens (L.) Mill. (Pale Toadflax)

Draft account.

vc 15; perhaps gone from vc 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Linaria repens is an archaeophyte, or ancient introduction, widespread but scattered in Great Britain, primarily in the west, but scarcely extending to Ireland. Its conservation risk status in both Great Britain as a whole and in England is one of 'Least Concern'. Its relative scarcity across eastern England is manifest particularly in Kent, where it is, and always appears to have been, **rare**.



Account

Pale Toadflax was first noted in Kent by William Hudson, in his *Flora Anglica*. The first edition gives a Cornish record for '*Antirrhinum repens*' and then mentions '*Antirrhinum monspessulanum*', 'Habitat in arvis prope Gad's-hill, in Cantio' [it grows in fields near Gad's-hill, in Kent']. However, from the second edition (1778) onwards, Hudson treated the two names together and in any event *Linaria* (*Antirrhinum*) *monspessulana* is now regarded a synonym for *L. repens*. Hanbury and Marshall (1899) mention this and five other records, nearly all for West Kent. They regarded it as a very rare plant of banks and waste ground, usually on chalk.



Barham. Photos by Lliam Rooney, 7 September 2011

Whilst there are subsequent records, most are unlocalised and there is little to suggest continuity, other than a period from 1936 to 1958 when it was known at a cindery former railway track at Richborough Port. Philp (1982) gave five tetrad records, describing the plant as native (as Floras did at the time), but that some of the records might refer to escapes from cultivation. Philp (2010) gave only one tetrad record, and that was for casual plants on waste ground. The only site for which there is evidence of continuity beyond short-term is that on a chalk bank comprising a roadside nature reserve at Barham. The reserve holds a good chalk grassland flora, which includes *Briza media* (Quaking-grass), *Centaurea scabiosa* (Greater Knapweed), *Helianthemum nummularium* (Common Rock-rose) *Inula conyzae* (Ploughman's-spikenard) and *Pimpinella saxifraga* (Burnet-saxifrage). This might suggest a near-native context for the species; but it is currently considered to be native in Europe only from north Spain and north west Italy to north west Germany.

Linaria repens is a perennial, preferring a well-drained substrate, which may be stony or provided by walls or (as with Barham) dry calcareous ground. The hybrid with *Linaria vulgaris* (Common Toadflax) – *Linaria x sepium* – is known from the shingle beach at Lade (TR 0862 2028), where first discovered in 2009. Here it grows as a large patch, with variable plants which appear to have segregated so as to show two main forms, one branched and with pale-coloured and unshowy flowers, the other less branched, earlier flowering, with bright yellow flowers, shorter spike and with its lower leaves somewhat incurved. *Linaria repens* has not been seen here, so the origin of the hybrid is somewhat mysterious. It is seldom cultivated these days; although there is still the possibility that it had been grown in this neighbourhood, where many garden plants escape on

the shingle and *Linaria vulgaris* is present. The hybrid was also found at Richborough Port by Francis Rose in 1946, but the *Linaria repens* parent had been there for some time.

Site	Grid reference	Site status	Last record date	Recorder	Comments
Chislehurst	TQ4469		1983	JRP	TQ 444 699, naturalised in church yard.
Halstead	TQ4862		26 September 2004	GK	TQ 488 625, casual, on soil heaps at Broke Hill golf course between the club house and Cadlocks.
Tunbridge Wells	TQ53Z		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	
Hildenborough	TQ54T		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	
Near Sevenoaks	TQ55D		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	
Magpie Bottom	TQ55K		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	
Rushenden	TQ97A		22 June 2000	EGP & DG (Philp, 2010)	Casual plants on disturbed waste ground.
Barham	TR2419	KWT RNR	(1) 1 August 2020 (2) 20 August 2013 (3) 28 August 2010 (4) 23 July 2009 (5) 1990	(1) SB (2) CO (3) FB, DM, JS (4) CO (5) JP	(1) Numerous plants spread over a square metre of KWT RNR TR 2127 4976. (2) Three groups of 2, 5 & 18 amongst many other plants on roadside bank just SE of crossroads at TR 213 497. No noticeable change in distribution. Total 25 flowering plants. (3) 40 plants at RNR, The Street, Barham TR 213 497. (4) 40 flowering plants counted on north roadside bank at TR213497 just SE of crossroads. (5) Road verge near junction with Gravel Castle Road.
St Margaret's	TR34S		(1) 14 October 2017 (2) After 1970, before 1981	(1) DCh (2) Philp (1982)	(1) TR 37113 44919, on steep chalky bank at end of garden dropping down to road. Considered unlikely to have been planted, but nonetheless within garden. (2)-

Linum radiola L. (*Radiola linoides* Roth) (Allseed)

Draft account: Kent photo of habitat needed

vc15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Linum radiola is a minute plant of open, acid ground, especially woodland rides, and it grows scattered across much of the British Isles, but especially in more coastal areas other than those of east England. It has been regarded as **Near Threatened** in Great Britain as a whole. In England, however, it is **Vulnerable** to the risk of extinction, as a comparison of the species' area of occupancy over the periods 1930-1969 and 1987-1999 produced a calculated decline of 41% in the likelihood of its being recorded. The losses have been largely of inland sites. In Kent, it is **scarce**.

From Gerard's Herball (1633), ed. Thomas Johnson.

Account

The first published Kent record for Allseed is by Thomas Johnson in his *Descriptio Itineris* (1632) en route from Canterbury to Sandwich, apparently when reaching the sandy soils of woodland east of Canterbury. Johnson was also responsible for the 1633 edition of Gerard's *Herball*, which showed that he already knew the plant: 'I found this in Kent on a Heath not farre from Chislehurst, being in company with M^r Bowles and divers others, in July, 1630'. He described it as follows: 'The whole plant seemeth as it were covered over with seeds or graines... I have not seene many plants of this, but all that I ever saw never attained to the height of two inches'. Other early records were also in sandy/gravelly locations: 'On sandy Banks between Ore and Luddenham – common' (Edward Jacob, *Plantae Favershamienses*, 1777)²⁴; 'Willesboro and Brabourne Leas' (Gerard Smith, *Catalogue*, 1829); Keston Mark or Common, *Substratum – Gravel*' (Daniel Cooper, *Flora Metropolitana*, 1836).



Chingley Wood Photo by Liam Rooney, 11 August 2018

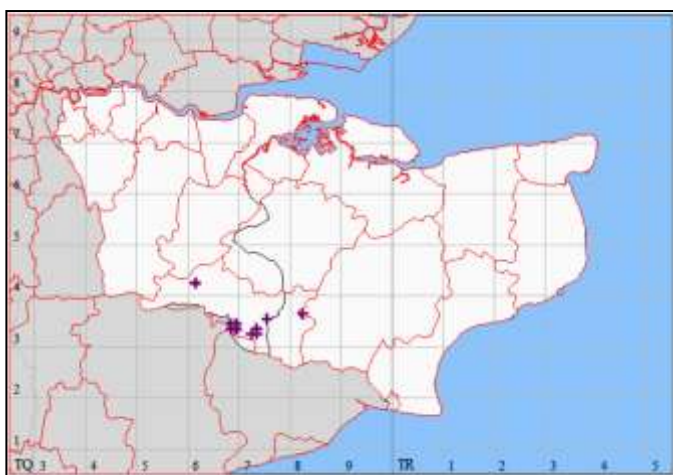
Hanbury and Marshall (1899) considered it to be a rather rare native of damp sandy ground. A much fuller account of its habitats and distribution was given by Francis Rose in his manuscript *Flora*: a native of damp open loamy soil in woodland rides, often with *Centunculus* (*Lysimachia minima*), almost confined now to the central High Weald, where it is still locally common: formerly possibly not infrequent on the Folkestone Sand and on the Eocene sands; outside the High Weald, it should occur in the Tonbridge-Penshurst-Cowden and the Hawkhurst-Rolvenden-Tenterden areas. The bulk of his records were in the High Weald, with sighting in the 1940s and 1950s in Angley Wood, Bayham, Bedgebury Forest, Brewers Wood, Chingley Wood, Chittenden Wood, Combwell Wood, Copden Wood (E. of Sissinghurst), Dandle Wood, Great Sandhurst Wood, Kilndown Wood, Oaks Wood (Cranbrook), Pembury Wood, Roundshill Park Wood, and Sissinghurst Park Wood.

²⁴ If correctly named (Francis Rose had doubts about this; it is outside the normal distribution pattern, which is mainly north west Kent and Wealden).

This core area supplied the only records for Philp (1982), amounting to just six tetrads. Allseed was then described as very rare, along damp woodland rides, but easily overlooked and in any event rather uncertain in its appearance, disappearing from known sites when the surrounding trees produce too much shade, Philp (2010) expanded the number of records to nine tetrads, only two of these being the same as in Philp (1882), but all in the same general area. It is not possible to draw any conclusions about trends between the survey dates, given the small numbers and the uncertainties of the plant's behaviour.

Chingley Wood Photo by Lliam Rooney, 11 August 2018

Our 2010-20 records, although fewer with ten monads (equivalent to six monads) again should not be interpreted as showing significant change, except for a 2014 record at Pembury Walks which, although outside the area of records given by Philp (1982) and Philp (2010), is within the range of woodlands within which Allseed was known in the 1940s and 1950s. These records are shown in comparison with the 1991-2005 distribution, given in the accompanying map reproduced with kind permission of the late Eric Philp and the Kent Field Club)



Linum radiola (Allseed)
2010-19

Linum radiola (Allseed)
1991-2005



Allseed²⁵ is a tiny annual of damp, open, infertile, acid ground. Its habitat range in other parts of the British Isles (draw-down zones, grassy cliff slopes, pond edges, dune slacks, soil-filled rock crevices) appears wider than experienced in Kent, where it is largely a plant of acid forest rides. The places where it grows may only have ephemeral suitability, and become adversely affected by overshadowing by growing trees or by competition from establishing herbs. Seeds are apparently able to persist in the soil after conditions have become unsuitable, with the potential for recolonising if the site reverts to damp, open ground. Allseed can take advantage of ephemeral conditions through its low nutrient demand, the ability to flower without much leaf growth, and the capacity to set seed within a few weeks of germination (which tends to follow favourable temperatures and the receding of any water cover within the site).

²⁵ General information here is taken from Stroh, P.A. (2015). *Radiola linoides* Roth. Allseed. Species Account. Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland.

Lysimachia minima (Chaffweed) has similar habitat requirements and we have often recorded them together (see also the register account for that species).

Allseed, when mature, looks much as its name suggests: it appears to be all seed. It is unlikely to be confused with anything other than *Polycarpon tetraphyllum* (Four-leaved Allseed), but has two leaves, rather than *Polycarpon*'s four; and flowers with four petals and sepals, rather than *Polycarpon*'s five. Also, the latter's recent spread into Kent has been largely in urban habitats, often coastal; and although Allseed's national distribution is fairly coastal, this does not appear to be the case in Kent.

Site	Grid reference	Site status	Last record date	Recorder	Comments
Pembury Walks	TQ6142		16 August 2014	SB	Estimated 20 to 30 plants at TQ 6189 4229 with <i>Lysimachia minima</i> on a damp path through chestnut, alder and birch coppice. Associated plants: <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> , <i>Potentilla erecta</i> , <i>Plantago major</i> and <i>Ranunculus flammula</i> . (It was difficult to distinguish between groups of plants and individuals, without damaging them).
Chingley Wood	TQ6833, TQ6834		(1) 11 August 2018 (2) 10 August 2018 (3) 1991-99	(1) KBRG / KFC meeting (2) SL (3) EGP	(1) TQ6833; TQ6844, quite frequent on damp paths of Chingley Wood. (2) (a) TQ 6893 3417, open track through woodland. (b) TQ 691 340, a few plants on open damp sandy track bordered to west by Sweet Chestnut coppice cut this Spring. (3). Given as TQ63X, Scotney, and TQ63W, Chingley Wood; most likely TQ6834 and TQ6433.
Bedgebury / Combwell	TQ73B		(1) 26 July 1979 (2) After 1970, before 1981	(1) FR (2) Philp (1982)	(1) TQ7133, Combwell Wood. (2) Given as TQ73B.
West Wood, Flimwell	TQ7239		(1) 1996 (2) 20 August 1986	(1) PHa (2) RoF, LBB	(1). (2) TQ722 308, associated species with <i>Lobelia urens</i>
Bedgebury Forest	TQ7233, TQ7332, TQ7333		(1) 17 August 2017 (2) 18 July 2017 (3) 1991-99 (4) After 1970, before 1981	(1) KBRG meeting (2) DCh (3) EGP (4) Philp (1982)	(1) (a) Frequent on a damp grassy ride with a little <i>Lysimachia minima</i> from TQ 73182 32794 eastwards on that ride to the boundary of the monad and into TQ7232. (b) With <i>Lysimachia minima</i> on a damp ride at TQ 7285 3281, TQ 7280 3279. (2) TQ 73085 33075. (3)& (4) As TQ73G.
Bedgebury / Angley	TQ73M		1991-99	EGP	
Angley Wood	TQ7535		(1) 12 August 2014 (2) 1 September 2007 (3) 1991-99	(1) AG, JP, MT (2) JP (3) EGP	(1) Angley Wood, TQ 7584 3592, 15 plants in woodland ride with <i>Lysimachia minima</i> . (2) Hundreds of plants in wide bare sandy ride at western end of the wood. (3) Given as TQ73N, Iden Green, but assumed to be TQ7535.
[Angley Wood]	TQ73S		1991-99	EGP	Given just as TQ73S, but probably TQ7635, SE corner of Angley Wood.

Anglely Wood	TQ7636		(1) 1 August 2007 (2) 1991-99	(1) DMi, JP (2) EGP	(1) (2) Given just as TQ73T, but probably TQ7636, north Anglely Wood
Cranbrook Common	TQ73Z		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	Given just as TQ73Z; may be Brewers Wood.
[Hemsted Forest]	TQ83C		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	Given just as TQ83C; probably Hemsted Forest / Chittenden Wood.
Sissinghurst	TQ83D		After 1970, before 1981	Philp (1982)	Given just as TQ83C; may be Roundhill Park Wood.
Sissinghurst	TQ83E		1991-99	EGP	Given as TQ83E Sissinghurst Castle [NB there is a 1957 record within this tetrad, at TQ 801 388 (Saw Lodge Wood)].
Causton Wood	TQ8236		(1) 25 July 2013 (2) 1991-99	(1) BW (2) EGP	(1). (2) Given just as TQ83I, Causton Wood; but assumed to be TQ8236.

Lobelia urens L. (Heath Lobelia)

Draft account.

vc 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Heath Lobelia is very local in south England, by 2002 having declined from 19 historic populations to six, of which Kent provided the easternmost colony. It is regarded as **Vulnerable** to the risk of extinction in England (and Great Britain as a whole). Our population is at Flimwell, in the administrative county of East Sussex, but it lies within botanical vice county 16, West Kent²⁶, and for Kent purposes, it is very **rare**.



Account

The only fully documented claim to this species in the administrative county of Kent was a communication by W. Thomson in September 1850 to the *Phytologist*²⁷ that a single plant had been found by the wife of the Rev. J. Dix by a path in coppiced chestnut near Ashford, and that the latter considered that there was no apparent possibility of its having been placed there through man's instrumentality. The living plant was provided to Mr Thompson, who passed it to the editor of the *Phytologist* as proof of identity. So the credentials of the plant and finder seem beyond doubt and so, probably, was the demise of the species at that locality. But its apparent presence as a single plant is not persuasive, and the verdict of Hanbury and Marshall (1899) was 'Doubtless planted.' Dinsdale

(1996)²⁸ was more optimistic about native status, on the basis of similarity of the habitat to the Flimwell colony 'where damp ghyll woodlands create a locally oceanic climate'. The Flimwell colony, however, is not really focused on ghyll woodland, and the assumption that the wood near Ashford was of this character is a bold one, particularly if Mrs Dix's find was near her husband's parish (Charing, where he was curate, according to the 1851 *Clergy List*).

Flimwell Photos by Liam Rooney, 30 August 2011

There is also the possibility of a mystery site, whose status remains unresolved. Rosemary FitzGerald (1988)²⁹ refers to a 1976 letter which alludes to a record at or around Penshurst, unconfirmed, albeit that the plant was identified by Lady Hardinge of Penshurst (died 1979), who used to botanise with Dr. Druce. No more is known. Without any evidence to indicate this, one might consider it possible that it was introduced to the Redleaf estate.



Lobelia urens, however, was found in quantity in West Wood near Flimwell (West Kent vice county, albeit in East Sussex administrative county). A.H. Wolley-Dod in his *Flora of Sussex* (1937) refers to it as first noticed by

²⁶ This appears to have been a consequence of an error in the relevant Ordnance Survey map, 1813. See Bevan, J. (1980). Flimwell: East Sussex or West Kent? *Watsonia* **13**: 120-121.

²⁷ Vol. 3 (1848-1850), p.1051; and at p.ix of the preface.

²⁸ Dinsdale, J.M. (1996). The conservation and ecology of the heath lobelia, *Lobelia urens* L. Ph.D. thesis, University of Plymouth.

²⁹ FitzGerald, R. (1988). *Lobelia urens* L. Heath Lobelia. Unpublished N.C.C. report.

Mrs E.E. Johnson in 1922, with a specimen forwarded by E.J. Bedford to the Natural History Museum, where its identity was confirmed by A.J. Wilmott³⁰. Wolley-Dod referred to it as covering some acres, and increasing yearly, though varying with the season. He considered the chances of its being native were considerable, even though the late discovery and the fact of its increase might point against this (increase, of course, may be just a function of the coppicing cycle). Wilmott said he 'see no reason to doubt the natural origin'.

There are many records for this colony, the fortunes of which may be indicated by the following selection:

- 15 October 1928, E.E. Johnson: 'In a wood close by Flimwell Vicarage. This year it is scarce and poor, last year it grew in masses, apparently liking the damp, which is curious, as I believe it is described as preferring heaths. It always seems to be in one area of the wood. In good seasons it is about 18 inches high.'
- 1946. Few plants, thinly scattered on the edges of rides within chestnut coppice (Dinsdale, 1996).
- 1981. 70-80 plants, confined to rides, chestnuts 5-10 years old (Dinsdale, 1996).
- 3 September 1985. Rosemary FitzGerald and L. Breda Burt: none seen.
- 20 August 1986. Rosemary FitzGerald and L. Breda Burt: TQ 722 308, about 200 plants along a stream and a woodman's track, in a chestnut coppice that was felled the previous winter.
- 1993. About 2,500 plants, scattered throughout bird park (Dinsdale, 1996).
- 16 August 2006. Matthew Berry: TQ 721 308, c. 50 plants along track.
- 27 October 2009. A.G. & K.A. Knapp: Grounds of old bird park. Many gone-over plants at or near TQ 72109 30875. Also c.20 gone-over plants at TQ 72094 20882.
- 17 September 2010. M. Shaw: TQ 72106 30881, several hundred plants in brambly, rabbit-grazed clearing.
- 30 August 2011. KBRG meeting: TQ 72137 30952, a few plants in wooded shade of former path; TQ 72103 30878, hundreds of plants centred here in area c.25 x 25m of abandoned clearing, most where rabbit-grazed, some in encroaching brambles and developing scrub.
- 25 July 2014. Judy Clark and Jaqueline Rose: occasional to frequent in monad TQ7230, still growing in the old Bird Park area and also growing in more open areas in the woodland and on the track; woodland not coppiced recently.
- 10 September 2014. Stephanie Mills: TQ72114 30927, over 450 plants.



Flimwell, habitat. Photo by Sue Buckingham, 30 August 2011

From these records, it is evident that, whilst the species is capable of growing in woodland shade, it is responsive to disturbance and exposure to light as part of the coppicing cycle. The site was opened as Flimwell Bird Park in 1989-90 with lakes and bird breeding enclosures, had closed by 2009 and is being redeveloped

³⁰ Wilmott, A.J. (1925). *Lobelia urens* L. in Sussex (Notes on British Plants). *Journal of Botany* **63**: 26.

(2019-20). The initial clearance of woodland apparently boosted plant numbers from 200 to 2000³¹. Cleared ground occupied by the enclosures was probably helpful for the subsequent survival of the species – Dinsdale (1996) refers to the bird grazing and visitor trampling - and although following abandonment, these areas have been closing up with the spread of brambles, the remaining relatively clear ground has enabled Heath Lobelia to continue.

Results of site investigation during its operation as a bird park, using quadrat surveys, are given in Dinsdale (1996). A mature chestnut woodland community still existed, but it bore an impoverished ground flora, lacking *Lobelia urens*. The original community for the species, disturbed open areas in chestnut woodland, had been enlarged by the bird park development, and sampling from within and around this area indicated that this original community could be characterised as (National Vegetation Classification) M25 (*Molinia caerulea* – *Potentilla erecta* mire), dominated by *Juncus effusus* (Soft-rush), *Molinia caerulea* (Purple Moor-grass) and *Lobelia urens*. Two other community types were identified: species-poor areas heavily disturbed by birds at the edges of ponds, with only *Raphanus raphanistrum* (Radish), *Epilobium montanum* (Broad-leaved Willowherb) and *Lobelia urens* persisting; and grassy woodland edges dominated by *Anthoxanthum odoratum* (Sweet Vernal-grass), *Betula pubescens* (Downy Birch) and *Teucrium scorodonia* (Wood Sage).

Lobelia urens is a perennial of infertile acid soils, generally in rough pasture and grassy heath, but often (as in this case) in woodland marginal habitats. The Flimwell site shares similar soil conditions to Bedgebury, underlain by Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation, acid and nutrient-poor, often silty/clayey. The plant overwinters as a rosette or rosettes, produced from the rhizome, and it then develops a single flowering spike from spring onwards. A large plant may produce 3-4,000 viable seeds (Devon data), which are scattered in the immediate vicinity of the plant. The optimum germination temperature is fairly high, which reflects the more southerly European distribution, southern England being at the edge of its range; moisture also assists germination. Apparently, there are spring and autumn germination peaks, but there is high seedling mortality, and only spring germinating plants are likely to achieve sufficient maturity to withstand winter frosts. Open ground is required for establishment from seed, which will respond when the seed-bank is exposed to light. Disturbance from coppicing may achieve this, but the disturbance currently afforded at the Flimwell site appears to be largely from rabbits. The likelihood is that the seed-bank is enormous and long-lived, to over 25 years (there is an analogy with *Calluna vulgaris* here, another plant with a strategy of large seed production and seed dormancy to tide over periods of unfavourable habitat, emerging when woodland is opened up). The Flimwell site is a good example of resurgence from the seed-bank after coppicing or clearance.

Heath Lobelia is not readily confusable with any other species.

³¹ Dinsdale, J. *Lobelia urens* L. (Campanulaceae), in (ed.) Wigginton, M.J. (1999). *British Red Data Books 1 Vascular Plants*. J.N.C.C.

***Logfia minima* (Sm.) Dumort. (*Filago minima* (Sm.) Pers.) (Small Cudweed)**

Draft account

Vc15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Logfia minima is widespread over the British Isles, although nowhere particularly frequent, and its conservation status in Great Britain has been one of 'Least Concern'. However, in England there is some evidence of decline, and it is considered to be **Near Threatened**. A comparison of its area of occupancy in England over the periods 1930-1969 and 1987-1999 produced a calculated decline of 24% in the likelihood of recording the species. In Kent, it is not common, but is neither rare nor scarce, and it seems to be increasing, rather than sharing the English decline.

Account

The first Kent record was probably made by Thomas Johnson in 1632 at a fairly late stage in his journey from Sandwich to Canterbury, published as *Gnaphalium minimum* Lob. However, Francis Rose, in the 1972 edition of Johnson's *Descriptio Itineris*, considered it at least possible that the plant was *Gnaphalium uliginosum* (Marsh Cudweed) instead. Otherwise, the earliest reference would appear to be by Thomas Forster, in *Flora Tonbrigensis* (1816), who found it 'In sandy and stony places, on Tonbridge Wells Common, near the Rocks, and elsewhere'. Hanbury and Marshall (1899) regarded it as thinly spread over almost the whole of Kent, on heaths, sandy or gravelly ground.

Farthing Corner. Photos by David Steere, 14 August 2016



However, by the time of Philp (1982), the thin spread had become much more attenuated, reduced to 12 tetrad records, and the species was regarded as very local and scarce on sandy soil at heaths, quarries and waste ground. Apart from a few outliers, Small Cudweed followed the line of the sands of the Folkestone Formation which traverse the county just south of the North Downs and the Gault Clay. The distribution is shown as very similar in Philp (1982), but with 15 tetrad records, an apparent increase of 25%. Only four of the tetrads are the same in both the 1971-80 and 1991-2005 surveys, so that it is not a case of the later survey having added a few sites to a continued presence at the earlier sites. It looks as though there may be a certain amount of coming and going, with

this annual species appearing where disturbance creates bare sandy areas on the Folkestone Formation.



As this species is not rare or scarce in Kent, the distributional data maintained in this register will be at 1km square (monad) level. This will entail recording at a finer scale than the tetrads given in Philp (2010), from which the accompanying 1991-2005 distribution map is taken (with kind permission of the late Eric Philp and the Kent Field Club), which shows the Folkestone Beds in brown. The 2010-20 records are also mapped below (28 monads, the equivalent of 22 tetrads, in comparison with the 15 tetrads of Philp, 2010), and so the 1991-



2005 and 2010-19 surveys both show incremental increases. The later records are surprising in comparison with the earlier ones, for they provide a greater emphasis on outliers than the previously recognised linear distribution along the Folkestone Formation. It is possible that the linear distribution will re-emerge with further survey work, although some records may depend upon sand quarries which have been infilled or have become less accessible.

Habitat (colliery shale), Betteshanger. Photo by Sue Buckingham 5 August 2020

The outliers merit further comment. Those records near the east coast relate to Betteshanger (formerly Fowlmead) Country Park, where *Logfia minima* is very abundant on the sharp-draining colliery spoil which virtually lacks nutrients, as does the sand which is the species' usual growing medium; also a nearby proposed development site on a similar substrate. The Dungeness records derive from consolidated sand/shingle at Lydd Ranges, normally inaccessible MOD land. Records in the Pembury/Tudeley area are for sandy track-sides and places where surface scraping had taken place to encourage the growth of *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather); the geology here is Tunbridge Wells Sand. One of the north western outliers is for old gravel workings at Dartford Heath (Hanbury and Marshall, 1899, mention the species' presence on Dartford Heath and Common), but some of the Tertiary sands south of here ought also to be capable of yielding records, for there are finds in the 1990s at Farningham Woods and Crockenhill not represented in Philp (2010). Another north western outlier is at the former Beckenham Place golf course, where plants were growing on the imported sand in bunkers. A similar habitat also accounts for finds on a closed golf course between Brenchley and Paddock Wood. Presence on consolidated sand/shingle gravel at Dungeness is unsurprising, given that it was recorded here for Philp (1982).

Habitat (sand, Folkestone Formation), Eureka Park, Ashford. Photo by David Steere, 5 July 2020

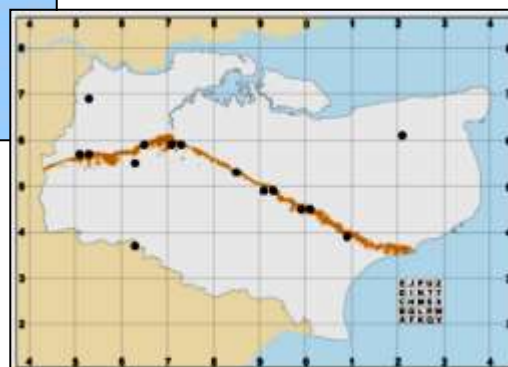
As *Logfia minima* is a small annual, it is reliant upon open ground and low competition, generally deriving from an initial level of disturbance.



Presumably this brought in the small, straggling colony observed by the M20 between Népícar and Addington by Feltwell & Philp (1980)³², although this was some 19 years after motorway construction and the species appears in adjoining sand quarries where disturbance has, while working continues, been much more substantial. Infertile sandy or gravelly substrates assist in minimising competition and the species can be seen on old sand quarry slopes in Kent, where the steepness and infertility has slowed vegetation succession. It sometimes shares its habitat with *Filago germanica* (Common Cudweed), a species with some similarity; *L. minima* is generally a smaller, less branched plant. Other differences between these species are set out in the account for *Filago germanica* (q.v.).



Logfia minima (Small Cudweed) 2010-20



Logfia minima (Small Cudweed) 1991-2005

³² Feltwell, J. & Philp, E. (1980). Natural History of the M20 motorway. *Transactions of the Kent Field Club* **8**(2): 101-114.

Lotus angustissimus L. (Slender Bird's-foot-trefoil)

Draft account.

vc 15; gone from vc 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Lotus angustissimus is a very local plant of southern England and the Channel Islands, regarded as **Near Threatened**, both in England and Great Britain as a whole. Between 1980 and 1999, it had been seen in 50-60 locations in Britain, mostly in Devon and Cornwall, but more recently the number has been assessed at less than 30. The intermittency of its Kentish presence has been such that it was placed on the 'probably extinct' list, but following its rediscovery in 2016, it is assessed as **rare**.

Account

The first published occurrence in Kent was a find by B.D. Jackson and the Rev. W.W. Newbould³³ at the Isle of Grain, where it was in some quantity, although close-bitten by sheep. This appears to have been a grassland coastal habitat akin to those which are usual for the species in south west England. Subsequent finds near Gravesend (mentioned in Hanbury and Marshall, 1899) and Stone Marshes (by W. Watson, mentioned in Francis Rose's MS Flora) may have been of comparable character. A find at a gravel pit at Sevenoaks c.1977 was dismissed by Philp (1982) as probably introduced there with other species deliberately planted. None of these occurrences appears to have been persistent (Francis Rose mentioned a report of it having been re-found at Grain, only to dismiss this as in error)³⁴.



Trenleypark Wood. Photos by Liam Rooney, 11 August 2016

However, three populations have had a longer history, none of them relating to classic coastal habitat. One of these was at Waystreet Farm, Hernhill, where found by Francis Rose in 1955 on a bushy bank on Thanet Sand. There were 35 plants present around the edges of a heavily rabbit-grazed scrubby bank, when visited by Rosemary FitzGerald and Andrew Henderson in 1985 (grid reference given as TR 058 614½, although TR0578 6144 looks more likely). No later record can be traced; the area was reported as full of nettles in 1995.

A further population was found by Francis Rose in 1945 at scrubbed-in gravel pits at Swanton Farm, Littlebourne, TR 203 591, and recorded there in 1949, 1950, 1953 and 1960. This is currently the transmitter site at Court Hill, a transmitter mast having been erected in 1983 on what was then an old sandpit and farm tip. *Lotus angustissimus* survived the changes and its population in 1985 was estimated at over 650 plants. The terrain was sandy clay and associated species included *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort), *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird's-foot), *Potentilla argentea* (Hoary Cinquefoil) and *Spergularia rubra* (Sand Spurrey). Most *Lotus angustissimus* plants were found on a cinder track on the north side (inferred as at TR 2030 5904) and near the edge of woodland on the west, with a scattering elsewhere. A record was made by Eric Philp in 1989, but the plant could not be re-found for the purposes of the 1991-2005 county survey (Philp, 2010), despite repeated visits to the various East Kent localities. Nor was it found in August 2016, when there were no areas of bare ground suitable for germination.

³³ B.D. Jackson (1875). *Lotus angustissimus* Linn., in Kent. *Journal of Botany* N.S. 4: 335-6 (not p.280, as given in Hanbury and Marshall, 1899).

³⁴ Rose, F. (1960). Botanical Records for Kent, 1955-58 – Vascular plants. *Transactions of the Kent Field Club* 1(2): 56-65.

The most widespread population, however, appear to have been that at Trenleypark Woods, found by Miss E. Day, c.1960. This is not far from the Littlebourne site and finds have been scattered over a fairly wide area of chestnut coppice on Thanet Sands. Its rediscovery here by Mrs H. Ayers led to a visit by Rosemary Fitzgerald and Andrew Henderson in October 1987 when plants were found at TR 193 598½ (>20 plants; TR 1932 5986 inferred from map; TR195598½ (>10 plants); TR 196 596 (5 plants; TR 1961 5959 inferred from map); and TR197 595½ (>500 plants on 55 yards of path). Associated species included *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort), *Hypericum pulchrum* (Slender St John's-wort), *Filago germanica* (Common Cudweed), *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird's-foot) and *Rumex acetosella* (Sheep's Sorrel). After then, there was a long absence of record and, although seen by Joyce Pitt in 2005, it was placed on the county 'probably extinct' list (scope for re-finding) in 2013.

A KBRG meeting was planned for August 2016 to re-find the species in Trenleypark Woods, which was successful. Hundreds and possibly thousands of plants were found in fruit and flower on bare sand and gravel and lining both sides of a path (Stour Valley Walk) from TR 19105 59832 westwards to TR 19205 59844 (c. 100m)³⁵. The path ran through sweet chestnut coppice cut in winter 2014/15, and its margins were rabbit-grazed. There were outlier plants: a patch of eight seen at a gateway 30m east of the main population at TR 19072 59824; and a solitary plant seen at a third site on a different path at TR 19560 59683. The prostrate matted growth of the nibbled path-side plants made counting individuals quite impossible. The associated flora was very similar to that recorded in 1985 – species of rides and path-sides in acid, somewhat sandy woodland, where exposed to light. It is likely that, although populations of *L. angustissimus* are known elsewhere to undergo dramatic fluctuations, possibly weather-related, a major factor at this site is the coppicing cycle. A persistent seed-bank probably enables continuation through unfavourable phases in the coppicing cycle, although it may be that rabbit disturbance also assists the occasional plant to reproduce when other areas are shaded out.



Lotus angustissimus is generally regarded as an annual, germinating in autumn to flower next summer, if it survives (and it seems a delicate plant to over-winter, although summer drought on a harsh-draining substrate may be deleterious in any event), or germinating in spring to flower from August onwards³⁶. The abundance in 2016 may have been due to light exposure (with the opening up of coppice) triggering autumn germination followed by an exceptionally mild winter; then a damp spring enabling survival and growth, with perhaps a second flush of germination. Abundant autumn growth of new plants was noted at the October 1987 sighting³⁷.

³⁵ It was still present in August 2018, when a record was made of its being frequent along a track at TR 1917 5983, for some 30m.

³⁶ Leach, S.J. (1999) *Lotus angustissimus* L. (Fabaceae), in (ed.) Wiggington, M.J. *British Red Data Books 1 Vascular Plants*. JNCC, Peterborough.

³⁷ Fitzgerald, R. (1988). *Lotus angustissimus* L. Slender Birds-foot Trefoil. Unpublished NCC report.

The habitat requirements for the species appear to involve a certain amount of winter damp, but a well-drained soil in summer, with enough vegetation to provide support for the straggling growth, although not such as to out-compete it. Some bare ground would also be required for germination, but very bare, sharp-draining ground may result in stunted growth, as reported by FitzGerald (1988)³⁸, in drawing attention to larger plants at Trenleypark Wood being sheltered by *Agrostis capillaris* (Common Bent) and *Holcus lanatus* (Yorkshire-fog) fringing the edge of forestry tracks. This was also observed by Sue Buckingham in relation to



the 2016 sighting, where the exposed plants mostly had ripe fruit and few flowers remaining whilst those few plants seen in slightly denser growth with *Holcus lanatus* were at an earlier stage of flowering and fruiting and tended to have a more upright growth form. This suggests environmental impact, although summer/autumn germination effects may also be relevant.

Lotus angustissimus could be confused with *Lotus subbiflorus* (Hairy Bird's-foot-trefoil), although the latter is not present in Kent. They differ in that the latter is hairier, with 2-4 flowers per head (1-2(3) for *L. angustissimus*) and smaller fruits. Otherwise, a species which might need distinguishing, if stunted, (and which is present at Trenleypark Wood) is *Lotus pedunculatus* (Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil). However, the small flowers (5-6mm) of *L. angustissimus*, occurring singly or in pairs, their shape and colouring and the long slender legumes (up to 30 x 1-1.5mm) containing abundant seed (around 26 in a pod) distinguish *L. angustissimus* clearly.

This account has benefited greatly from the assistance of Sue Buckingham.

³⁸ *Vide supra.*

***Lysimachia foemina* (Mill.) U. Manns & Anderb. (*Anagallis arvensis* subsp. *foemina* (Mill.) Schinz & Thell.) (Blue Pimpernel)**

Draft account

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Lysimachia foemina is not regarded being particularly at risk over Great Britain as a whole (being treated as of 'Least Concern'), although nationally scarce. In Kent it is **rare**, with only three recent site records.



Ranscombe Farm. Photo by Lorna Holland, 9 September 2006

Account

John Gerard in his 1597 *Herball* referred to finding *Lysimachia foemina* "with blewe flowers in a chalkie corne fielde in the way from master William Swaines house of Southfleete to Long fielde downes, but never any where else". This constitutes the first Kent record if referring to the true Blue Pimpernel, which has long

been confused with the blue form of *L. arvensis*. The true plant substantially lacks hairs on the corolla-lobe fringes and where present, they are 4-celled, rather than 3-celled.

Cornfields account for many of the records cited by Hanbury and Marshall (1899), who regarded the plant then as rather scarce. It is an introduced archaeophyte, as with many other arable weeds, and there is some evidence of decline in Kent in recent years. Philp (1982) gives it in eight tetrads³⁹, particularly in arable fields on chalk in the Hartley/Fawkham area and east of the Medway between Cobham and Upper Halling. By contrast, the only two records in Philp (2010) are off the chalk – open fields near Rolvenden (TQ8233, south west of Cott Farm) and from Pluckley (TQ94G).

Ranscombe Farm. Photos by Lliam Rooney, 24 July 2012.



³⁹ These are: TQ57R (chalk field alongside Darenth Wood, 1976), TQ56X, Y and TQ66D (Fawkham / Hartley), TQ66X, Y, Z (Ranscombe Farm area) and TR25C (between Adisham and Bekesbourne).

The Cobham / Upper Halling area includes Ranscombe Farm which has a long history of occurrences. According to Hanbury & Marshall (1899) a specimen from a cornfield between Cobham and Cuxton was in the herbarium of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). There appear to be gaps in its appearances, which traditionally have been along the northern boundary of Kitchen Field, where this chalky arable field slopes up to the edge of Lodge Wood in Cobham Park. Records on 9 and 15 September 2006 at TQ6968 (comm. Lorna Holland and Brian Woodhams) did not seem to be followed by others until 2012, when hundreds (if not thousands) of plants were seen by many observers from early July onwards. This population surge apparently follows a change from ploughing in autumn to spring, so the cultivation regime is evidently important for this species. It was, however, not repeated to the same degree in 2013, although still present at Kitchen Field according to Richard Moyse, who also then found it at TQ 698 675 on the margin of Brockles Field, which had received some light spring cultivation. It was also present in 2014, when about six plants were reported by David Steere as seen in the centre of the rutted path which crosses Kitchen Field, TQ 698 680, about 100-200 yards away from the tradition location at the field's northern boundary. Fewer than ten plants were seen by Richard Moyse in 2016.



Ranscombe Farm. Photos by Lliam Rooney, 24 July 2012.
Above: growing with *Lysimachia arvensis* (the usual scarlet colour form) and *Euphorbia exigua* (Dwarf Spurge). Right: habitat.

***Lysimachia minima* (L.) U. Manns & Anderb. (*Centunculus minimus* L. or *Anagallis minima* (L.) E.H.L. Krause) (Chaffweed)**

Draft account

vc 15 and 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Chaffweed's main distribution in the British Isles is in the south, west and north west of Britain, and western Ireland. This distribution appears to be fairly stable except in England, where losses, perhaps associated with changes in heathland management, have taken place; the possibility that these losses may be accelerating has resulted in the species being regarded as **Near Threatened** in Great Britain as a whole and **Endangered** in England. In Kent it is not a common plant, but the extent of its occurrence is such that there is no special designation of rarity or scarcity.



Account

The first possible evidence of the presence of Chaffweed in Kent is the tentative identification of its fruit within a peat deposit dating from 1700 BC to 200 AD in a sewer trench outside Wingham⁴⁰. The first published record for Kent (and for Britain), however, was given as an addendum to the 1724 edition of John Ray's *Synopsis Methodica Stirpium Britannicarum* (edited by Dillenius), as present in a dale just before Chislehurst Common. Hanbury and Marshall (1899) only gave it as mostly historic records for Chislehurst, Tunbridge Wells, Hothfield, Brabourne, Willesborough Lees and Sandling Park, remarking that it was rare, but was probably less so than it seems, being very inconspicuous. This is an understandable assessment. Chaffweed is a very small plant, difficult to see other than at ground level. It is most probable that it had been overlooked and was significantly more widespread than this,

particularly in woodland rides in the Weald. This potential for overlooking is also illustrated by the differences between the surveys in Philp (1982) and (2010). The 1971-80 survey accounted for eight tetrads in the administrative county. However, the 1991-2005 survey accounted for 21. The increase does not represent any population expansion, but reflects a targeting of this species in its favoured habitats. A particular concentration was revealed in Wealden hectads TQ73 and TQ83 (Bedgebury / Cranbrook / Hemsted Forest), with 14 tetrad records in those squares.

Hemsted Forest. Photos by Lliam Rooney, 25 July 2013



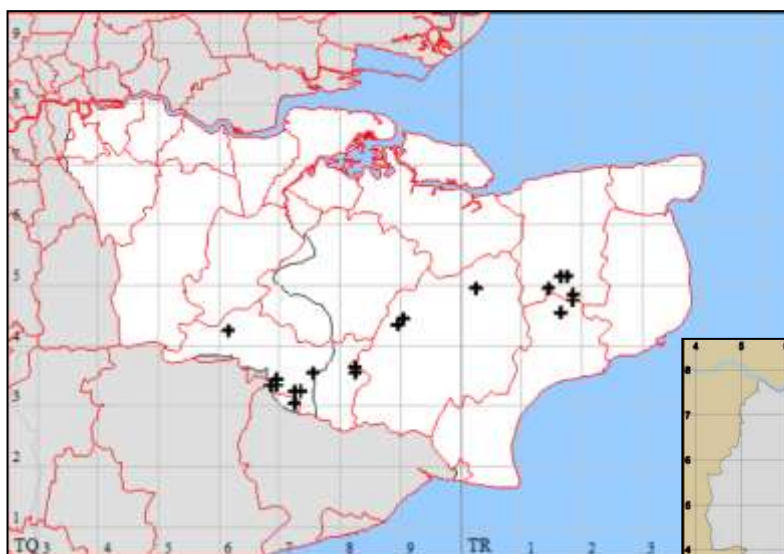
⁴⁰ H. Godwin (1962). Vegetational History of the Chalk Downs as seen at Wingham and Frogholt. *Veröffentlichungen des Geobotanischen Institutes der Eidg. Tech., Hochschule, Stiftung Rübel, in Zürich* **37**: 83-99.

Lysimachia minima is an annual of open areas such as forest rides and path sides, generally on acid soils, sand or Weald Clay. It relies on disturbance to maintain bare soil for establishment and in order to avoid competition which would otherwise overwhelm so small a plant. Seeds generally germinate in the spring, but there are occasional autumn-germinated plants which are comparatively large and obviously account for much greater seed production per plant. Jim Bevan described⁴¹ finding this species with Eric Philp, initially using the presence of *Linum radiola* (Allseed) as a prompt, as the two grow in association. Other associated species were *Aphanes arvensis* (Parsley-piert), *Gnaphalium uliginosum* (Marsh Cudweed), *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St. John's-wort) and *Juncus bufonius* (Toad Rush). The presence of *Centaureum pulchellum* (Lesser Centaury) may be indicative for Chaffweed, but in relation to nearby damper ground. Areas with *Scutellaria minor* (Lesser Skullcap) will be too damp; as also those with *Lythrum portula* (Water-purslane), which may resemble Chaffweed at a distance. Bevan also refers to its discovery in woodland on chalk, in TR04J (perhaps somewhat surprisingly, although this habitat has also been reported from Dorset, and is likely to be applicable to several of the records given in the table below; also, E.J. Salisbury secured 45.6% seed germination on John Innes compost with chalk⁴²). A chalk locality was also recorded by Francis Rose in 1986, above a chalk pit near Brook, Wye.

Hemsted Forest. Photo by Lliam Rooney, 25 July 2013

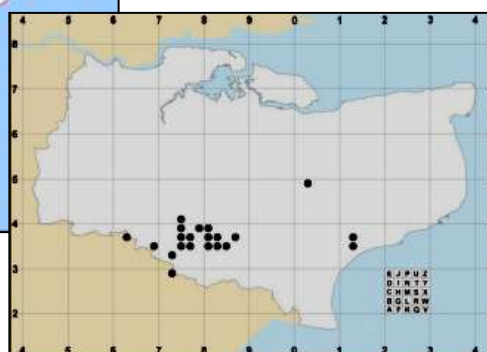


As this species is not uncommon in Kent, the distributional data maintained in this register will be at 1km square (monad) level. This will entail recording at a finer scale than the tetrads given in Philp (2010), from which the accompanying 1991-2005 distribution map is taken (with kind permission of the late Eric Philp and the Kent Field Club).



Lysimachia minima (Chaffweed)
2010-20

Lysimachia minima (Chaffweed)
1991-2005



Comparison with 2010-20 recording status, given here in both map and tabular format, indicates that we have not found recently the same density of occurrences in the Bedgebury and Hemsted Forest areas, where the species was targeted in 1991-2005. However, we are recording outliers in areas when not seen before (especially in TR14 and TR15), so it is possible that the

⁴¹ J. Bevan (1999). *Anagallis minima* in Kent. *BSBI News* 81: 19-21.

⁴² E.J. Salisbury (1969). The reproductive biology and occasional seasonal diromorphism of *Anagallis minima* and *Lythrum hyssopifolia*. *Watsonia* 7: 25-39.

success of the targeted 1991-2005 survey has deflected attention from locations which were not targeted, but where this inconspicuous annual may yet be present.

Site	Grid reference	Site status	Last record date	Recorder	Comments
Knatts Valley	TQ5762		July 1985	JP	TQ 5721 6262.
Pembury Walks west	TQ6142		16 August 2014	SB	Frequent along a narrow, damp footpath at TQ 6189 4229 and for at least five metres in both directions. Associated plants: <i>Linum radiola</i> , <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> , <i>Ranunculus flammula</i> , <i>Plantago major</i> and <i>Potentilla erecta</i> .
Chingley Wood	TQ6833		22 August 2019	SL, CAS, DTS	Chingley Wood, old hardcored track down to pond, TQ 687 338. One large fruiting plant.
South west of Kilndown	TQ6933		(1) 11 August 2018 (2) 13 August 2017	1) KBRG / KFC meeting (2) SL	(1) Chingley Wood, Damp margin of path at TQ 686 339. (2) Chingley Wood, T-junction of rides where ground recently re-landscaped, just south of stream, TQ 6912 3375.
South west of Kilndown	TQ6934		(1) 13 July 2019 (2) 11 August 2018 (3) 13 August 2017	(1) JH & AH (2) KBRG / KFC meeting (3) SL	(1) TQ 69159 34703, woodland ride, Scotney Estate, Kilndown. (2) Chingley Wood. Quite scarce and very small this year due to prolonged summer drought. (3) Chingley Wood, open damp sandy track bordered to west by Sweet Chestnut coppice cut this Spring, TQ 691 340. A few plants.
Eccles	TQ7160		20 March 1991	JP, AWa & PBU	Eccles Old Pit, TQ 719 608.
Bedgebury	TQ7232		17 August 2017	KBRG meeting	On a damp ride with <i>Linum radiola</i> , scattered plants at TQ 7285 3281 to TQ 7280 3279 and elsewhere along same ride. In profusion on another ride at TQ 7270 3234 again with abundant <i>Linum radiola</i> .
Flimwell	TQ7243		25 July 2014	JVC & JAR	TQ 72138 30930, small patch 30 x 10 cm on damp woodland track; a few other plants seen in vicinity.
Bedgebury	TQ7332		17 August 2017	KBRG meeting	Scattered plants with <i>Linum radiola</i> on a damp ride from TQ 7316 3278 and continuing westwards along the same ride.
Bridge Woods, west of Rochester Airport	TQ7363		23 May 1984	FR & JP	TQ 7379 6339.
Angley Wood	TQ7535, TQ7636		(1) 12 August 2014 (2) 16 July 1995	(1) AG, JP & MT (2) JBe, EGP	(1) TQ 7584 3592, at least a dozen plants in woodland ride with <i>Linum radiola</i> . (2) TQ 761 363, edge of ride in Angley Wood, 10+ plants.
Wilden Wood, Staplehurst	TQ7541		3 October 1998	JBe	TQ 754 419, on damp NS aligned ride in Wilden Wood.
Roundhill Wood, Sissinghurst	TQ8138		21 May 1998	JP	TQ 810 382, later recorded at TQ 809 380.
Hemsted Forest	TQ8135		22 July 1995	JBe, EGP	TQ 819 355, on a track east of Dockenden.
Hemsted Forest	TQ8136		30 August 1998	JBe, EGP	TQ 815 363, edge of track, Chittenden Wood
Hemsted Forest	TQ8137		6 August 1995	JBe, EGP	TQ 818 370, damp edge of ride, Chittenden Wood.

Hemsted Forest	TQ8235		(1) 16 September 2020 (2) 15 August 2019 (3) 30 August 1998	(1) SB & JL (2) SB (3) JBe, EGP	(1) With <i>Juncus bulbosus</i> and <i>Lythrum portula</i> , 5 plants at TQ 8215 35263 (2) Hemsted Forest, two well-grown plants at TQc82180 35474, in the shelter of a small bank at the edge of a wide ride with a lot of bare clay as a result of recent forestry operations. Associated plants: <i>Gnaphalium uliginosum</i> and <i>Juncus bulbosus</i> . (3)(a) TQ 820 350, edge of track, Timber Wood. (b) TQ 821 350, middle of a track, Timber Wood.
Hemsted Forest	TQ8236		(1) 25 July 2013 (2) 30 August 1998	(1) KBRG meeting (2) JBe, EGP	(1) 30 plants at TQ 82539 36047 on a bare, seasonally wet sandy path with <i>Lysimachia nemorum</i> , <i>Ranunculus flammula</i> , <i>Lythrum portula</i> and <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> . Also, four plants on a sandy path at TQ 82531 36242. (2) TQ 820 362, edge of track, Causton Wood.
Dering Wood	TQ8943, TQ9044		5 August 2014	KBRG meeting	A few scattered plants along a damp ride at TQ 89712 43740 with <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> , <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> and <i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i> . Also a hundred or more plants scattered along the margins of a damp ride at TQ 90221 44094 and TQ 90225 44084 and continuing for several metres south westwards along the ride.
Boughton Aluph	TR0249		(1) 11 August 2017 (2) 1 August 1998	(1) SB (2) JBe, EGP	(1) 15 plants on damp path TR 0278 4989 with <i>Isolepis setacea</i> , <i>Juncus bufonius</i> and <i>Hypericum humifusum</i> . (2) TR 028 498, track by chestnut coppice, King's Wood.
Bilsington	TR0335		5 September 1998	JBe, EGP	TR 038 354, Priory Wood (canopy closed, coppice 50+ yrs old).
Denge Woods	TR1051		25 May 1986	JP	TR 1015 5169.
Bigbury	TR1157		26 September 1989	JP	TR 111 575.
Lympne	TR1335		30 September 1995	JBe, EGP	TR 131 356, damp sandy ride in Lympne Folks' Wood, 10+ plants.
Saltwood	TR1336		30 July 1995	JBe, EGP	Kiln Wood, wet area recently planted up.
Upper Hardres Wood	TR1449		20 September 2016	SB	Upper Hardres Wood. Just 5 plants counted along a damp (fairly overgrown) ride from TR14456 49439 to TR14495 49525. Associated plants: <i>Hypericum humifusum</i> , <i>Lythrum portula</i> and <i>Gnaphalium uliginosum</i> .
Elhampark Wood	TR1645		6 September 2014	AG	TR 1624 4584, fifteen plants growing in damp, disturbed areas on edge of forest track, and TR 1643 4584, one plant in damp open ground in forest.
Bishopsbourne	TR1651		14 September 2016	SB	Gorsley Wood. Groups of plants on damp grassy paths at TR 1666 5177 and at TR 1695 5198.
Bishopsbourne	TR1751		14 September 2016	SB	Gorsley Wood. Plants scattered from TR 1719 5186 south to TR 1713 5172 on a ride in damp ruts made by chestnut coppice vehicles. More plants on side track at TR 1723 51829.

Covert Wood	TR1847		1 September 2016	SB	Covert Wood, just a few plants in a couple of damp hollows along a wide ride at TR18391 47888 and at TR1819 4789
Covert Wood	TR1848		(1) 5 August 2017 (2) 12 August 2014	(1) AG & LR (2) AG	(1) Covert Wood, edge of sparsely vegetated ride on slope, TR 184 481. A few tiny plants. (2) TR 1844 4824, eight plants, and TR 1820 4809, at least twenty plants. A complete search of the rides was not carried out and it seemed likely that more was present.

Lysimachia tenella L. (*Anagallis tenella* (L.) L.) (Bog Pimpernel)

Draft account



vc 15; probably lost to vc 16

Rarity / scarcity status:

Due to the relative frequency of boggy and marshy habitats in other parts of Great Britain, especially in the west, *Lysimachia tenella* is not subject to threat generally (and so its status is treated as of "Least Concern"). However, the paucity of those habitats in Kent means that it qualifies to be locally **scarce**. Indeed, it has not been seen at all in West Kent for some time.

Sandwich. Photos by Lliam Rooney, 8 June 2011

Account:

Lysimachia tenella was first published for Kent by Christopher Merrett in 1666, referring to it as in the meadows between Deptford and Lewisham. Damp heathy places continued long enough in Kent for Hanbury and Marshall (1899) to regard the species as rather common. Now, however, such habitats have been lost to such an extent that the Bog Pimpernel is reduced to a handful of locations.

Philp (2010) treated the species as rare and decreasing through loss of habitat, the number of tetrad records having declined from five (in Philp, 1982) to four. This does not necessarily signify, as records for 2010-20 comprise seven tetrads (corresponding to eight monads).



Lysimachia tenella favours wet open ground, and may be suppressed by rank growth or overshadowing – *Salix* / *Betula* clearance and pony grazing at Gibbin's Brook, for example, apparently restored this species to that site and it has been spreading (2013). Whilst it grows in acid bog at Hothfield, it is not limited elsewhere to acid conditions. For example, at Etchinghill it has been found in marshes fed by chalk springs at the foot of the downs; at Charing it has been seen on the bank of a small chalk stream; and at Sandwich it flourishes in an apparently calcareous scrape in sand of the fixed dunes and appears to have spread thence to newly created habitat several hundred metres away.

Site	Grid reference	Site status	Last record date	Recorder	Comments
[Hawkenbury Bog]	[TQ5937]		[After 1970, before 1981]	[Philp, 1982](Although given in Philp (1982), this site was in vc14 East Sussex, not West Kent vc16.
Snodland	TQ76B		10 July 1987	JP	Peaty field: two sites since lost to development.
Charing	TQ9449		3 July 2018	JL & LS	TQ 9470 4945 on the bank of a small chalk stream. Land to the south of the Swan Hotel
Hothfield Bog	TR94S	KWT managed	(1) 17 July 2016 (2) 30 June 2016	(1) DS (2) AW	(1) TQ9645, main bog. (2) TQ970457.

		reserve	(3) 8 August 2015 (4) 5 July 2013 (5) 23 July 2012 (6) After 1990, before 2006 (7) 1997 (8) 1999/2000	(3) BW (4) LR (5) SB (6) EGP (Philp, 2010) (7) JP (8) BB	(3) TQ9645. (4) A small patch, 1 foot x 1.5 foot, at TQ 96716 46141. (5) A few small patches of plants by the board walk at TQ 96827 45655. (8) TQ 9682 4564, by boardwalk in Bog no. 2.
Dungeness	TR0618	RSPB reserve	2002	BB	TR 066 183: one plant in dry area at edge of <i>Cladium</i> pit, where the species was recorded by FR in the 1950s. However, due to water levels, lack of grazing, <i>Phragmites</i> and <i>Salix</i> dominance, etc. the plant assemblage has fluctuated and it could not be re-found in 2003 or subsequently. The 2002 plant may have been from seed-bank or dragged out in <i>Salix</i> clearance, but died after starting to flower in a dry spell.
Cuckold's Coombe, Brook	TR 0744		Late 1990s	BB	TR 0761 4444, an area cleared of willow and grazed by cattle, known previously for a range of fen plants. [Searched for, 2014, and not seen.]
Gibbin's Brook	TR1138	CROW access land, SSSI	(1) 30 June 2013 (2) 17 July 2011 (3) 28 June 2010	(1) KBRG meeting (2) KFC meeting (3) AG	(1) In the area where one patch was found on 17 July 2011, now at least three well separated patches, one at TR 1159 3860 and the others in general vicinity. Also, the same patch as was recorded on 28 June 2010 at TR 116 384, when then about 10cm square. Now spread over an area of 5 x 3m. (2) TR 11590 38611, one patch. (3) TR 116 384: a tiny patch, c.10cm square, growing in an area of peat bog that looked as if it had recently been cleared of <i>Salix</i> scrub. It was growing in quite closely grazed and recently disturbed, bare, peaty ground with various <i>Juncus</i> species, <i>Potentilla erecta</i> , <i>Hydrocotyle vulgaris</i> and <i>Galium palustre</i> . Later in 2010, it was found to occur across 0.6 hectare, in open areas as well as those cleared (JN).
Westenhanger	TR 1336		After 1990, before 2006	EGP (Philp, 2010)	Pond in Kiln Wood, TR 132 364.
Etchinghill	TR1638		8 June 1997	JP	Meadow on gault clay.
Etchinghill	TR1739	SSSI, at least in part	After 1990, before 2006	EGP (Philp, 2010)	Marsh fed by chalk springs from coombe in chalk escarpment. There are specimens collected by FR from this area, including The Lince, from as far back as 1946, in MNE. Etchinghill sites searched 2011 by JP and AG without sightings.
Ham Fen meadow	TR3254		2005	JP	Present at least from 8 July 1997.
Ham Fen	TR3354	KWT reserve	(1) 17 June 2018 (2) 13 July 2013 (2) 1 August 2012 (3) 5 August 2001	(1) SL (2) KFC meeting (2) SB (3) RM, BW	(1) (a) Hacklinge, west side of A258, cattle grazed pasture and ditches (Unit 56), northern end, TR 33864 54597. At least 4 small patches in a closely grazed area, growing with <i>Carex nigra</i> , <i>Carex flacca</i> , <i>Carex hirta</i> , <i>Carex distans</i> , <i>Cirsium palustre</i> and <i>Triglochin palustris</i> . Rest of this pasture seemed poorer quality (more dominated by grasses).

					(b) Hacklinge, west side of A258 (Ham Fen KWT), flooded ditch, cattle poached edge along both sides (Unit 53: Ham Fen Fields), TR 33846 54488 to TR 33765 442. (2) Small patch at TR 33427 54855 with another patch present beside <i>Carex lepidocarpa</i> , TR 3342 5490. (2) Frequent on wet peat at TR 333 548 and abundant at TR 3384 5449.
Ham Fen	TR3355	KWT reserve	(1) 19 July 2017 (2) 26 August 2006	(1) SB & SL (2) RM, BW	(1) Frequent from TR 3305 5529 southwards to TR 3315 5512 within a wet peaty mire at Ham Fen.
Near Temptye	TR3456		1982	AH	
Sandwich	TR3557		(1) 19 June 2020 (2) 8 June 2011	(1) SB (2) LR	(1) A large patch of plants a few metres across appeared last year on the banks of an artificially created pool at TR 35823 57301. Presumably originating from the population a few hundred metres distant at TR 3578 5793 on Royal St Georges. (2) TR 35789 57932: six large patches (on average 0.6m x 0.3m), with numerous plants between, in a seasonally flooded dune slack, scraped out, roughly 6m x 5m, edged with <i>Iris pseudacorus</i> and <i>Carex distans</i> . Looks dry but water percolates up. Present at least since 8 September 2009 (JP).



Sandwich, habitat. Photo by Liam Rooney, 8 June 2011

Lythrum hyssopifolia L. (Grass-poly)

Draft account. Habitat photo needed.

vc 15; gone from vc 16

Rarity / scarcity status

Lythrum hyssopifolia is an archaeophyte, or ancient introduction, and is an extremely local plant of winter-flooded ground in southern England, otherwise a recently introduced plant, generally casual. It is considered an **Endangered** species in both England and Great Britain as a whole and is protected from picking or uprooting, under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended. A comparison of its area of occupancy in England over the periods 1930-1969 and 1987-1999 produced a calculated decline of 62% in the likelihood of recording the species. In Kent, there are only two colonies of relatively recent standing, of which one may have been destroyed c.2020 and the other is the site of a planning application for development (February 2021): it is very **rare** and at risk of extinction in the county.

Betteshanger Country Park. Photo by Steve Coates, August 2011

Account

Fossil fragments were identified from clay subsoil at a Late Bronze Age hut site at Minnis Bay (Conolly, 1941)⁴³, but there is a possibility of contamination by modern material (Godwin, 1975)⁴⁴. There has been no more than a handful of later Kent records, the first of which was 'In the Ditches near Feversham Abbey Pond', given by John Blackstone in his *Specimen Botanicum* (1746), but taken from a list by the Rev. John Bateman (which Edward Jacob says was produced about 70 years before publication of Jacob's *Plantae Favershamienses* in 1777). Syme (*English Botany*, vol. 3, 1865) said that he had a specimen from 'Near Rochester, Kent' – this may relate to a gathering by C. Conway in 1833, held in **BM**. Also, Hanbury and Marshall (1899) received a communication from J.G.



Prebble as regards the presence of the species on the 'South Norwood side of the Irrigation Fields of the Croydon Local Board of Health, between South Norwood and Elmers End'. These were sewage works, with lagoons for (unsuccessful) drainage, and the site is now South Norwood Country Park, through which the vc16/17 boundary runs.

Betteshanger Country Park. Photo by Steve Coates, August 2011

There are also relatively modern records: by Cyril West, 1930, recorded as a casual at Teston; by H. Gray at West Malling, 1935; again by Cyril West, a single plant in a marshy area on the vc16 side of the River Medway near Aylesford in 1941, not seen the following year; by Ted Lousley, a casual at Barming, on 24 July 1966 (specimen in **BM**); and also a find by Miss L.M. Keens by a path through a barley field leading to Princes golf clubhouse at Sandwich in 1968⁴⁵. None

⁴³ Conolly, A.P. (1941). A report of plant remains from Minnis Bay, Kent, VII data for the study of post-glacial history. *New Phytologist* **40**: 299-303.

⁴⁴ Godwin, Sir H. (1975). *History of the British Flora*, 2nd edition. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

⁴⁵ Confirmed by Lady Anne Brewis, and mentioned in a letter from the finder to Francis Rose.

of these records points to any permanent presence, but most suggest that the River Medway, on both sides of Maidstone, provided a focus.

The only recent finds have been near Betteshanger. The first was at Betteshanger (formerly Fowlmead) Country Park. Here the species was initially seen by Joyce Pitt in 2010, but its identity was not confirmed. Subsequently, on 6 August 2011, Steve Coates found the same population, and it was possible to confirm it as *Lythrum hyssopifolia*. The colony was not in a classic winter-flooded field habitat, but in a ditch (TR 35287 54067) between the car park with its associated road system, and a children's play area. The plants were growing within an area of 165cm x 105 cm, containing mud and stones, beside an inlet pipe which brings water from the car park and consequently keeps this part free of larger vegetation. A count was made of 83 plants around 8 cm high, mostly with spent flowers, and about another 30 smaller ones in a congested clump, some of which were developing flowers. The site is submerged from time to time. Associated species included plants of a weedy nature and of wetland: *Agrostis stolonifera* (Creeping Bent), *Apium nodiflorum* (Fool's-watercress), *Atriplex prostrata* (Spear-leaved Orache), *Epilobium hirsutum* (Great Willowherb), *Juncus articulatus* (Jointed Rush), *Pericaria maculosa* (Redshank), *Plantago major* (Greater Plantain), *Potentilla reptans* (Creeping Cinquefoil), *Pulicaria dysenterica* (Common Fleabane), *Rumex conglomeratus* (Clustered Dock) and *Tripleurospermum inodorum* (Scentless Mayweed).



The habitat is artificial, in the sense that it is the product of laying out for public access over a large area of shale derived from the former Betteshanger colliery. The origin of the plant here is not obvious, but may have been brought in by birds; or on Continental vehicles (British sites are rare and not necessarily vehicle-accessible); or as a seed contaminant. The last-mentioned origin for casual occurrences is suggested by a number of sources from Salisbury (1968)⁴⁶ onwards, but with little evidenced indication of what it may be supposed to be contaminating, although there is a USA report of its presence in clover and lucerne seed and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency records it as having been found once as a seed contaminant in the period 2001-8. Stace (2010) refers to casual occurrences from birdseed, although the usual *Lythrum* from this source is *L. junceum* (False Grass-poly). The site was sealed off for works in 2019/20 and it is possible that the plants have gone.

Betteshanger Sustainable Parks proposed development site. Photo by Sue Buckingham, 2 June 2020

The second site is some 1.8km away, discovered by Sue Buckingham on 7 June 2020, at Betteshanger Sustainable Parks, the site of a planning application for development (February 2021), which would destroy it. At least 500 small plants were noted as spread over an area of 3m x 3m of bare colliery shale, TR 33770 53089, mostly in a depression made by vehicle tyres and in an area which had obviously been flooded during the previous (very wet) winter season. A winter-wet habitat, drying out to permit germination, is required by

⁴⁶ Salisbury, E.J. (1968). The reproductive biology and occasional seasonal dimorphism of *Anagallis minima* and *Lythrum hyssopifolia*. *Watsonia* 7: 25-39.

Grass-poly and this seems to imply a fairly exacting habitat in relation to the colliery shale substrate which otherwise might be expected to drain more freely; it may be that a level of compaction is required. It is clear that 'the ecological requirements of *L. hyssopifolia* are specialised, and it relies for its continued occurrence on the flooding and disturbance of its sites' (Preston, 1999), although here it is likely that the barrenness of the habitat acts as proxy for disturbance in keeping the terrain open. Associated species at Betteshanger included *Epilobium tetragonum* (Square-stalked Willowherb), *Ranunculus parviflorus* (Small-flowered Buttercup) and *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Bird's-foot clover).



Photo by Sue Buckingham, 17 December 2020

Photo by Sue Buckingham, 2 June 2020

The Betteshanger proposed development site, showing winter-wet and summer-dry characteristics

L. hyssopifolia and *L. junceum* may be separated by the former having pale pink flowers with (usually) 4-6 stamens and 2-3mm petals; *L. junceum* has purple flowers with 12 stamens and 5-6mm petals.

Grass-poly is an annual with quite specialised ecological requirements, needing winter-wet disturbed ground, and germinating in spring when waters recede. Populations may vary from year to year depending on the suitability of conditions, but the long viability of the seeds provides a buffer against temporary environmental change⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ Preston, C.D. *Lythrum hyssopifolia* L. (Lythraceae), in (ed.) Wiggington, M.J. (1999). *British Red Data Books 1 Vascular Plants*. J.N.C.C.