

KENT BOTANICAL RECORDING GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 6

October 2013

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Kent Botanical Recording Group website: hosted by the Botanical Society of the British Isles at <http://www.bsbi.org.uk/kent.html>

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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kent-Botany/223421087698067>

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Front cover: Leaves of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii x incarnata* (the hybrid between Common Spotted-orchid and Early Marsh-orchid) – first Kent record. Photograph by Daphne Mills, May 2013

Looking forward to 2014 field meetings

We will soon be putting together ideas for 2014 Meetings Programme so now is your chance to offer suggestions for venues for next year! Ideally, we aim to have meetings at sites where there's a good chance of re-finding plants for the RPR or simply where we could have a productive meeting.

Do let us know if you would like to lead a meeting and also if you are in a position to obtain access to privately owned land with good meeting potential. You don't have to be able to identify all the plants in order to lead a meeting – that's where everyone else can contribute!

If you have any ideas or suggestions please e-mail them to Sue Buckingham at suebuckingham7110@btinternet.com or to Owen Leyshon at owen.leyshon@rmcp.co.uk

2013 field meeting reports



Sunday 19 May 2013: Fowlmead



Photograph by Owen Leyshon

During a long cold spring which had delayed flowering times by around three weeks, the forecast of a dry, sunny Sunday encouraged a very impressive attendance of 19 members at the first KBRG meeting of 2013 in Fowlmead Country Park, near Deal. The park has been created as a nature reserve and country park from landscaped spoil from the former Bettshanger Colliery, the shale mixed with green waste and fertiliser to create topsoil. The resulting broken, open nature of much of the site provides a natural seed bed and as a result there have been some very interesting botanical finds in the last couple of years, including *Ranunculus parviflorus*, (Small-flowered Buttercup), *Eleocharis acicularis* (Needle Spike-rush), *Galium parisiense* (Wall Bedstraw) and *Lythrum hyssopifolia* (Grass-poly). The purpose of the meeting was to add some early season records to the list for any of the four monads in which the park lies.

Left:

Praying for enlightenment at the car park?

Steve Coates found the *Lythrum* in 2011 and he was happy to lead members a few yards from the car park to a drainage ditch where there were plenty of tiny seedlings of Grass-poly and hopefully they will flower later in the year. *Ranunculus parviflorus* was first spotted in the car park and abundantly everywhere thereafter.

Alex Lockton, the BSBI's coordinator and a recent member of KBRG encouraged us to see just how well we knew some of our early flowering species. Squatting down just beyond the car park, we realised perhaps we didn't know the combination of hair types on the leaf stalks of *Geranium molle* and *G. pusillum* (Dove's-foot and Small-flowered Crane's-bill) as well as we might and a copy of Clive Stace's New Flora was retrieved from the car park for assistance and transported all day. One or two pale flowers on *Myosotis ramosissima* (Early Forget-me-not) nearly had us fooled into listing *Myosotis discolor* (Changing Forget-me-not) until on checking we were reminded that Changing Forget-me-not has the flower tube eventually longer than the calyx. So, it was indeed all Early Forget-me-not before us. As the day progressed we came across a number of plants of *M. ramosissima* which had pink flowers! Other problems with *Cerastium*s (Mouse-ears), *Vulpias* (Fescues) and *Equisetum*s (Horsetails) were also ironed out with help of 'Stace' and I think we all learnt from the exercise.

Daphne Mills discovered *Vicia lathyroides* (Spring Vetch) growing under some planted shrubs with *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Bird's-foot Clover) and *Lamium amplexicaule* (Henbit Dead-nettle) nearby. From our rare plant register list, *Trifolium suffocatum* (Suffocated Clover) and *Filago vulgaris* (Common Cudweed) were quite common, with *F. minima* (Small Cudweed) and *Poa infirma* (Early Meadow-grass). A number of garden escapes have established themselves in the park, some perhaps originating from the green manure. They included *Symphytum orientale* (Soft Comfrey), *Helleborus foetidus* (Stinking Hellebore), *Cortaderia selloana* (Pampas-grass), *Polygonatum x hybridum* (Garden Solomon's-seal) and a single plant of *Cerintho majus* (Greater Honeywort). Geoff Joyce and Sue Buckingham each gathered a leaf from a patch of *Bergenia* for checking later and thought this might be *Bergenia x schmidtii* (*B. crassifolia* x *B. ciliata*) (a hybrid Elephant-ears). Clive Stace says there are no records in the wild; but adds that, although *B. crassifolia* and *B. cordata* are the two species most often recorded, they may not be the commonest. Eric Clement has since confirmed *Bergenia x schmidtii*, adding that this is the most frequent taxon which he sees both in and out of gardens.

Finally we came upon the small, now dried-up pool in which *Eleocharis acicularis* (Needle Spike-rush) was found last year. It was flowering well and a nearby patch of *Galium parisiense* (Wall Bedstraw) was admired. Our findings added a good number of records to the list. Any species missing from the list circulated to members will be because records were generally made only for what was not already on our database.

Other observations for the day include a female Marsh Harrier, Buzzards, three Hobbies hunting out on the grazed marshland, a singing Lesser Whitethroat and a number of Green Hairstreak butterflies.



Thursday 6 June 2013: West of Cowden

We met almost at the junction of Surrey, West Kent and East Sussex along a remote lane in the valley of the Kent Water. This was a joint meeting with Surrey Botanical Society, attended by 12 Surrey botanists, eight from Kent and one from Sussex. The plan was to make a circuit into Kent as far as Scarletts, then northwards around Dry Hill reservoir, from which the remainder of the excursion ran through Surrey.

Within 40 metres of the start we were in Kent, marked by a change in road surface, and we began our list for the part of TQ4340 which lay in Kent. Diligent recording by the group brought our total of records for this square from three up to 112! Working along Smithers Lane, we came across *Pilosella aurantiaca* (Fox-and-cubs) and an odd plant of *Tragopogon pratensis* subsp. *pratensis*, the less common of the two Goat's-beard subspecies generally found in Britain, having yellow ligules as long as the phyllaries. We then side-tracked to an alder swamp bounded by the Kent Water, and hence the East Sussex boundary. This proved to be an

excellent habitat, and capable of being negotiated without recourse to wellingtons. Tall tussocks of *Carex paniculata* (Greater Tussock-sedge) abounded, with a scattering of *Carex remota* (Remote Sedge), but the young hybrid plant (*Carex x boeninghausiana*) which the leaders had found on a recce beforehand was no longer in identifiable condition. However, another was discovered, which appeared to be many years old, comprising quite a substantial tussock. Other swamp flora included *Cardamine amara* (Large Bitter-cress), largely gone over, *Dryopteris carthusiana* (Narrow Buckler-Fern), *Ribes nigrum* (Black Currant) and *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Wood Club-rush).



Photograph by Geoffrey Kitchener

Above: **Spot the sedge competition!**

It was some time before we resumed the road, eventually striking northwards near Scarletts, up a hollow-way which cut through sandstone exposures. This brought us onto higher ground, through grassy fields and out of monad TQ4440 which already had some records for 2010 onwards, although we were able to add 36 more, so as to give a total of 121. Early into TQ4441 we passed a wet area fenced off from livestock in which grew tussocky *Carex paniculata*, surrounded by tufts of *Carex remota* and with a small tussock of an evidently intermediate plant, another *Carex x boeninghausiana*. We had been very successful as regards this cross, given that the *New Atlas of the Kent Flora* refers to the last Kent record being in 1954 (although there has been another, in 1979). A copse ran alongside the path where we saw a series of hawthorns demonstrating a range of hybridity from *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn) to *Crataegus laevigata* (Midland Hawthorn).

The remoteness of the countryside here was apparent from the occasional sighting of deer. Plunging into damp woodland on clay, we found that not everything which looked like *Carex sylvatica* (Wood-sedge) was actually that species; and that we had also *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge), identifiable not just by the thin spikes but also, as Caroline Bateman pointed out, by ridged veins running parallel to, and on each side of, the leaf mid-rib. Our pace speeded up, and hence our recording reduced, as we sought our lunch spot, somewhat later than planned as a result of the time spent earlier in the alder swamp. Similarly, after lunch we took the next section at speed, taking less than a dozen records for TQ4341, in order to ensure that adequate time was afforded for recording in the Surrey half of the circuit.

We crossed the county boundary north of Dry Hill Reservoir, after which most of the return was downhill back towards the valley of the Kent Water. Surrey records are not included in this report, but chance had dictated that the more interesting habitats lay on the Kent side of the boundary for this year's joint county meeting.



Sunday 9 June 2013: Lamberhurst

A joint meeting with the Sussex Botanical Recording Society convened at the car park in the village centre, apparently in great numbers, but it transpired that a walking group had also chosen the same venue and soon departed, leaving 16 botanists. We had parked in the administrative county of Kent, but were a little south of the River Teise and so, botanically, were in East Sussex (vice county 14). SBRS had only 36 species recorded in the Sussex part of tetrad TQ36T within which our meeting spot lay. So, for a quick boost to numbers, Helen Proctor (the SBRS leader) divided us into small groups, despatched separately round the streets of Lamberhurst in order to see what could be found in 35 minutes. Each group reported with a somewhat different list, but in each case greatly in excess of 36, and SBRS came away with 144 species for the tetrad, including *Poa infirma* (Early Meadow-grass).

We then set off on a footpath west of the village across the river, where a long time was spent in the vicinity of the bridge, with the advantage that both vice county floras could be recorded simultaneously – Sarah Kitchener kindly picked up the recording pen for Kent. It was a more attractive area than the presence of *Fallopia japonica* (Japanese Knotweed) and *Heracleum mantegazzianum* (Giant Hogweed) – or whatever the latter should be called – might suggest. Although *Bromus commutatus* (Meadow Brome) was growing at the edge of the ensuing field, the rest had just been cut for hay, so we traversed this at greater speed to join another path alongside arable. Here we explored the weeds, and found both *Fumaria officinalis* (Common Fumitory) and *F. densiflora* (Dense-flowered Fumitory), the last of these being a real surprise so far away from its usual chalk habitats. Also present was subspecies *longipedicellatus* of *Bromus hordeaceus* (Soft-brome), notable (not surprisingly) for its long pedicels. Throughout the day we were fortunate to have Mervyn Brown's advice as regards grasses.



Photograph by Helen Proctor

Above: **Weed study time**

The way then led into woodland by the river, with *Caltha palustris* (Marsh-marigold) and *Crataegus x media* (hybrid Hawthorn). A recce beforehand had produced a new location here for *Cardamine bulbifera* (Coralroot), demonstrating its affinity for the vice county border. This proved unexpectedly difficult to re-find, even when the right part of the wood had been located, as the spikes when not in flower were at a distance quite similar to the many bluebell spikes going over. Nearer, of course the blackish stem-bulbils (hence

bulbifera, viz. bulbil-bearing), were more visible. Crossing over the river, we re-entered West Sussex and passed through Lamberhurst vineyards so as to regain our starting point.

After lunch we followed a shorter walk up The Broadway and School Hill, where there were a number of garden escapes and *Geranium lucidum* (Shining Cranesbill), which often occupies an equivocal position in and out of gardens. We turned off to the church and then down to the river again, seeing a white form of *Hesperis matronalis* (Dame's-violet) on the banks. Once again we reverted to East Sussex, returning via a golf course whose wild flora had an aura of sown origins, and the recreation ground.

So far as Kent records were concerned, we already had some data for two of the three monads encountered. However, we managed to increase our records for 2010 onwards for TQ6636 from 71 to 105; those for TQ6736 from 40 to 157; and in TQ6836, where we had no records at all, we added 77. It was therefore a productive day, as well as one which introduced us to different recording methods in the morning as well as attractive countryside throughout the day.



Tuesday 11 June 2013: Western Heights, Dover

Eleven KBRG members joined Owen Leyshon and Sue Buckingham in the Cut off Car Park on North Military Road to explore surrounding chalk grassland slopes, where *Arabis hirsuta* (Hairy Rock-cress) has been seen in the past.

The first plants of Hairy Rock-cress were spotted immediately on stepping out of the car park onto a steep northeast facing slope above the road. Although many still had flowers, most of the plants were fruiting which made them quite difficult to see for the purpose of counting. Because of the damage we would cause by trampling if we walked among them it was agreed that we would attempt to estimate the entire population giving consideration to the number which Sue had come up with a couple of weeks earlier when the plants were in flower and therefore much easier to see. The *Arabis* was thriving wherever bare chalk was exposed and on this side of the road this had come about thanks to scrub clearance by English Heritage in their attempts to make the slope safer for public access.

Similar work on the opposite side of the road had been carried out by the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership on the land owned by Dover District Council, again resulting in large areas of bare chalk, and there also were hundreds more plants of *Arabis hirsuta* along with *Hippocrepis comosa* (Horseshoe Vetch), *Polygala vulgaris* (Common Milkwort) and *Anthyllis vulneraria* (Kidney Vetch). The latter is the food plant of the Small Blue butterfly and we were all delighted to see a colony of these along with Common Blue, an Adonis Blue, Wall Brown and other butterfly and moth species throughout the day. The *Arabis* population on the steep banks on either side of the road was finally estimated to be to be in the region of 1500 to 2000 plants.

A single *Ophrys sphegodes* (Early Spider Orchid) was spotted near the top of the slope and very close by it, a gentian with a single large flower. It seemed to have the right characteristics for *Gentianella anglica* (Early Gentian) and Owen climbed down to retrieve his copy of Stace's New Flora from the car. The description confirmed our suspicions especially regarding the very long topmost pedicel (which measured more than the height of the rest of the plant), and the total number of internodes at 2 or 3. Our corolla length of 22 mm was somewhat outside the limit, but there has always been disagreement about the status of this plant, which Eric Philp considered to be merely an early form of the Autumn Gentian and Stace says the two are so closely related that they might be better represented as subspecies. We found a second smaller plant on the slope just below. We also came across a number of Cotoneasters none of which had yet started to flower. *C. horizontalis* (Wall Cotoneaster) and *C. simonsii* (Himalayan Cotoneaster) were agreed; *C. salicifolius* (Willow-leaved Cotoneaster) was present and the two other species were set aside to confirm later.



Photograph by Sue Buckingham

Above: **Even by lunch time, the botanists have not progressed beyond sight of the car park...**

Whilst we ate lunch at the foot of the *Arabis hirsuta* slope, Mervyn Brown discovered we were sitting right beside *Avenula pratense* (Meadow Oat-grass), an uncommon grass, for which there are only 18 tetrad records in Eric Philp's Atlas. The group found it very useful to have Mervyn and Brian Woodhams present, both being particularly helpful with grass identification. The remainder of the day was spent exploring the area around the old barracks and nearby chalk grassland slopes.

During the morning Owen had received a call from a lady who believed that she had discovered a plant of *Neotinea ustulata* (Burnt Orchid) at Lydden Down the day before and had taken many pictures of it. This being quite close by, at the end of the meeting, seven of us drove the short distance to Lydden and were thrilled to discover the single plant of Burnt Orchid in TR2745. The location was further north than the spots where some of us remember having seen it in the past.



Sunday 30 June 2013: Gibbin's Brook

Gibbin's Brook had been visited by the Kent Field Club in 2011, but a KBRG meeting was scheduled here for 2013 on the basis that there were still some historic records to be re-found; we were able to add quite a few taxa to the KFC listing. The pony grazing regime which had operated in recent years had just been discontinued, so we had the benefits of their management improvements without the current season's growth having been eaten down. Owen Leyshon kindly guided us.

We began with the northern boggy area which was fairly wet but still fairly negotiable in walking boots. There was a remarkable amount of *Carex echinata* (star sedge) along the eastern edge where sphagnum moss was forming, but where the terrain was drier and more open than further into the bog. It was not long before a scatter of *Dactylorhiza maculata* (Heath Spotted-orchid) was spotted with *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid), and a particularly vigorous specimen was subsequently confirmed as the hybrid between them. Penetrating further into the bog we found *Carex panicea* (Carnation Sedge) and *Carex nigra* (Common Sedge), both fairly inconspicuous and scarcely fruiting. We were fortunate to have Stephen Lemon with us, who has been paying a lot of attention to sedge characters. There were, even less conspicuous than the vegetative sedges, a couple of spikes of *Triglochin palustris* (Marsh Arrowgrass) – unexpected here on non-coastal terrain.



Photograph by Geoffrey Kitchener

Above: **Hesitating on the brink of the bog...**

In a corner of the bog we saw *Valeriana dioica* (Marsh Valerian) and, not far away, in a marginal, part-shaded area both *Dryopteris carthusiana* (Narrow Buckler-Fern) and *Dryopteris dilatata* (Broad Buckler-fern). The potential for a hybrid was canvassed, but material from the most likely specimen was subsequently examined without abortive spores being detected. *Epilobium palustre* (Marsh Willowherb) was widespread. The party then worked along the bog margin, past sheets of *Silene flos-cuculi* (Ragged-Robin), and encountered a couple of plants of *Carex laevigata* (Smooth-stalked Sedge), looking very atypical in *Salix* shade before we emerged onto drier ground. A Water Crowfoot in a pond by the access road which divides northern and southern parts of the bog attracted much attention. Our botanical keys provided varying assistance, but it was eventually determined as *Ranunculus peltatus* (Pond Water-crowfoot), a species with few current Kent records.

The southern bog, visited after lunch, was generally much drier than the northern one and held a desiccated tussock of *Carex paniculata* (Greater Tussock-sedge) which looked as though it had seen better and wetter days. The area as a whole, however, had benefited much from the clearance of scrub and coarse vegetation. There was a good sedge flora, again with *Carex echinata*, *C. nigra* and *C. panicea*. Patches of *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel) were present and Alfie Gay was able to attest to the spread in the last couple of years.

Again, we saw *Dactylorhiza maculata* (Heath Spotted-orchid), but this time a vigorous specimen suggested some input from neighbouring *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) and we took it to be the hybrid. After some study, a forget-me-not was identified as *Myosotis secunda* (Creeping Forget-me-not), whose nearest record is at Hothfield, a site with other scarce flora in common, including *Eriophorum angustifolium* (Common Cottongrass). An area with much growth of *sphagnum* moss also supported a small amount of this species, which Alfie Gay and Leonie Seymour had found in 2011. Protective fencing was no longer needed for this and so we dismantled it. A secondary colony was now also present.



Photograph by Sue Poyser

We saw ten rare plant register species that day and agreed that this was a habitat of exceptional quality. The meeting was rounded off by the provision of tea and cakes by Sarah Kitchener, an innovation prompted by Surrey Botanical Society hospitality at our joint meetings.

Left: **Botanists' Tea Time**



Tuesday 2 July 2013: Pegwell Bay and Stonelees

David Johnson, Sue Buckingham and eight other KBRG members met in the Pegwell Bay Country Park car park with the main purpose of learning from David about the *Dactylorhiza* (Marsh-orchid) taxa on the KWT Reserve at Stonelees. We had to walk a half mile or so to reach the reserve and recorded on the way. A single plant of *Artemisia absinthium* (Wormwood) was spotted on the margin of the car park and a large patch of *Artemisia verlotiorum* (Chinese Mugwort) had established itself on the trackside leading down to the reserve. There were many planted shrubs along the route including a very robust garden form of *Rosa spinosissima* (Burnet Rose) which couldn't be counted for record purposes.

Other interesting plants on the way included *Stachys x ambigua* (Hybrid Woundwort) and *Anisantha diandra* (Great Brome), the latter with *Poa pratensis* ssp. *pratensis*, the true Smooth Meadow-grass, on an introduced heap of chalk. To clarify the position on *Poa pratensis*, Mervyn Brown explained that the typical wild plants in Kent are the subspecies *angustifolia* and *irrigata*. What gets recorded as *pratensis* tends to be the escaped cultivars from amenity plantings and sports fields which are between *pratensis* and *irrigata* in appearance. Our find, true *pratensis*, is generally tall, which this was, is not particularly drought-tolerant and is found more commonly in the west of the country. Mervyn's explanation relates to the taxonomy in BSBI Handbook No 13 *Grasses of the British Isles* by Cope and Gray which differs from that used in Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles*.

Dactylorhiza praetermissa (Southern Marsh-orchid) was flowering abundantly in its usual colour form, also in a paler shade of pink and we soon had its very robust hybrid with Common Spotted-orchid, *D. x grandis*, of which we saw many splendid multi-stemmed specimens. A smaller plant with ring spots on the leaves, a much more modest flower spike and flower lip pattern of unbroken purple loops, rather than dots and dashes, was *D. praetermissa* var *junialis* (Leopard Marsh-orchid) of which we saw no more than a handful of specimens on the reserve. This taxon has been downgraded from subspecies to variety. *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) was also present and *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine), *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid) and *Neottia ovata* (Common Twayblade) were also recorded. An old record for *Epipactis palustris* (Marsh Helleborine) exists for the reserve but it seems this hasn't been seen for some time and the site has become too dry.



Photograph by Owen Leyshon

An area of saltmarsh provided us with a change of habitat and a bank on which to eat lunch. Here we found *Glaux maritima* (Sea-milkwort), *Triglochin maritima* (Sea Arrowgrass) and 13 plants of *Carex extensa* (Long-bracted Sedge) which in Kent only occurs in the Pegwell Bay area. This record is in TR36G which adds a third tetrad to the two listed in Philp (2010). Near the car park a patch of rhizomatous *Euphorbia* caused problems so Sue took some home for study. With leaves mostly widest above the middle it keys out to *Euphorbia esula* (Leafy Spurge) but the leaf tips are acuminate which suggests *E. x pseudovirgata* (Twiggy Spurge). Sue promises to return, collect more and get a second opinion.

Around mid afternoon we moved a very short distance to the site of the old Hoverport. Eric Philp had recorded *Anisantha madritensis* (Compact Brome) there and we soon found plenty of plants some of which exhibited so much variation that Mervyn collected material to examine later at home. (He later confirmed *Bromus madritensis* – Cope and Gray terminology). A few large patches of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid) were growing amongst the concrete; a very different habitat from the morning specimens! *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) was also enjoying the calcium-rich site along with carpets of *Anthyllis vulneraria* (Kidney Vetch), which prompted some to consider whether Small Blue butterflies might colonise.

Nearer the sea *Lepidium latifolium* (Dittander) and *Eryngium maritimum* (Sea Holly) had established between the concrete slabs of the old hovercraft apron with a great deal of surprisingly tall *Parapholis strigosa* (Hard-Grass). The site of the old Hoverport is surrounded by land with SSSI status and, because of its great natural history value, interested people have been fighting to have it included in the designation but unfortunately without success to date.

As well as enjoying a profusion of orchids and learning to understand the Marsh-orchid hybrids and variety, we added a good number of general records to the Database. Thanks to Mervyn this included a number of grasses.



Wednesday 17 July 2013: South Foreland

Owen Leyshon and Sue Buckingham met eight other KBRG members not far from the South Foreland lighthouse on a hot sunny day. The purpose of the meeting was to record the chalk flora and also to provide the National Trust with a list of plant species for some areas which were under arable cultivation but are now being left to revert back to chalk grassland after successfully launching an appeal to buy the land.

We recorded generally on path-side and open chalk grassland before we reached the first area which is just south west of the lighthouse. It was almost completely carpeted with fruiting *Anisantha sterilis* (Barren Brome), above which the taller heads of *Anisantha diandra* (Great Brome) were easy to spot. We discussed an attractive *Bromus* species which Mervyn Brown took home and later offered a provisional identification as *Bromus racemosus/commutatus*. Tom Cope and Allan Gray in *Grasses of the British Isles* refer to these as one species but they are separate in Clive Stace's *New Flora*. We continued to see this grass quite commonly in the old arable fields.



Photograph by Owen Leyshon

Above: **A location to cast light on the Night-flowering Catchfly?**

The interesting part of the field was adjacent to the new post and wire fence where the bare chalk was exposed from the winter's work and we started to pick up some good arable weeds. *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax), *Kickxia spuria* (Round-leaved Fluellen) and *Fumaria densiflora* (Dense-flowered Fumitory) were occasional. Species for the Rare Plant Register were *Euphorbia exigua* (Dwarf Spurge), *Anthemis cotula* (Stinking Chamomile); and we were delighted to find a single plant of *Silene noctiflora* (Night-flowering Catchfly). In spite of a diligent search by all, very surprisingly we were unable to find another.

We had lunch on the clifftop chalk grassland, looking out to France and then headed inland a little to the Harbour Field, a second area for reversion. On the way *Kniphofia x praecox* (Greater Red-hot-poker) was found established beside a track along with other garden escapes, *Leucanthemum x superbum* (Shasta Daisy) and *Solidago gigantea* (Early Golden-rod).



A very large patch of *Bromus inermis* (Hungarian Brome) was admired beside the Harbour field but the field itself proved rather disappointing, the dominant species being *Anisantha sterilis* again with *A. diandra* and their ripe spikelets embedded themselves in our socks and shoes in a most uncomfortable manner as we searched.

Left: **Alfie Gay's brome-collecting boots!**

Photograph by Owen Leyshon

A few of us drove along to the Memorial at St Margaret's at Cliffe to take a look at a third arable area where *Adonis annua* (Pheasant's-eye) had been found in the past. We saw *Valerianella dentata* (Narrow-fruited Cornsalad), *Papaver hybridum* (Rough Poppy) and *Legousia hybrida* (Venus's-looking-glass) but no Pheasant's-

eye. Apart from the *Legousia*, the other species are already recorded at this spot so they have not been put on the list for the day circulated to members subsequently. The poppies here had put on a spectacular display and the splendid views along the cliff made a fitting end to the day.



Thursday 25 July 2013: Hemsted Forest

Steve Peters, Wildlife Ranger for Forest Enterprise (of the Forestry Commission) and 12 KBRG members met Sue Buckingham at the northern end of Hemsted Forest with the main purpose of finding *Centunculus minimus* (Chaffweed), *Radiola linioides* (Allseed) and *Serratula tinctoria* (Saw-wort). There was sufficient space for all our vehicles so we had no need to drive into the forest.

The main access tracks, which have been artificially constructed, are unsuitable for growth of Chaffweed and Allseed so we began by searching an old grassy path which ran alongside. We soon found a good list of typical High Wealden plants and this included *Centaureum pulchellum* (Lesser Centuary), *Isolepis cetacea* (Bristle Club-rush) and two hybrids – the one between Corn and Water Mints *Mentha x verticillata* (Whorled Mint) and *Potentilla x mixta* (*P. anglica* x *P. reptans* – Hybrid Cinquefoil).

Throughout the day a prolific growth of sedges along most of the rides was much admired and included *Carex pilulifera* (Pill Sedge), *C. pallescens* (Pale Sedge), *C. leporina* (Oval Sedge), *C. laevigata* (Smooth-stalked Sedge) and *C. binervis* (Green-ribbed Sedge). We opted to explore a small side path which had not been artificially raised and therefore had stretches which showed signs of seasonal flooding. Here we came across a large patch of *Lythrum portula* (Water-purslane), a tiny plant with opposite leaves which wasn't well-known to most of the group and it was whilst admiring and photographing it that Judith noticed an equally tiny but different plant. This one had alternate leaves with a distinctive black edge to their undersides. It was *Centunculus minimus* (Chaffweed) and we counted 30 plants on the damp bare sandy path. The tiny round fruits described as like little pink apples were easy enough to see but it was much harder to make out the minute flowers. Nearby on the same path we saw some *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath-grass) and *Molinia caerulea* (Purple Moor-grass).



Photograph by Sue Poyser

Above: **Chaffweed is found!**

Lunch was taken by *Salix aurita* (Eared Willow) and *Frangula alnus* (Alder-buckthorn). As we sat and peered at the ground a second small group of four Chaffweed plants was spotted – proving that we now ‘had our eye in’.

The second half of the day was spent exploring the north-western side of the forest in the hope of finding Saw-wort or Allseed but we were unsuccessful. It was a very hot day and we enjoyed excellent close views of White Admiral butterflies sunning themselves along the rides.



Sunday 4 August 2013: Fairfield, Romney Marsh

There was a good turn-out for our Romney Marsh meeting, where we convened along a narrow lane near Fairfield church, an isolated building surrounded by sheep and capable of being cut off by winter floods. Having chosen such a remote location, we were surprised that non-botanists appeared as well, but it transpired that services are held here on the first Sunday of each month. The congregation perhaps also made assumptions about remoteness, as one attendee had parked projecting onto the road, preventing a combine harvester from passing, so we could see the farmer crossing the fields to interrupt the service and call out the errant member of the flock. We had no problems with farmers: Owen Leyshon had kindly made arrangements with the local landowners for access, and guided us through the network of fields and ditches.

Along the road was a known location for *Salix purpurea* (Purple Willow), which we found. Some debate ensued as to whether its genes had influenced a neighbouring *S. cinerea* (Grey Willow), which seemed atypical; but we found the latter elsewhere as well, and concluded that this was a local form. The fields in which the church was located held a remarkable saline flora in their depressions. The site is eight km inland, but the silty



Photograph by Owen Leyshon

clay here is unusually thin above the underlying peat and it appears likely that the peat still holds salt from periods when the sea had covered it. Almost the first plant to be found on the stock-trampled lower ground was the rare plant register species *Puccinellia fasciculata* (Borrer's Saltmarsh-grass) – this proved to be much commoner on the day than the usual *Puccinellia*, *P. distans* (Reflexed Saltmarsh-grass) – and we also saw *Glaux maritima* (Sea-milkwort), *Samolus valerandi* (Brookweed) and *Spergularia marina* (Lesser Sea-spurrey).

Owen led us through a mosaic of habitats from the area around the church (TQ9626) through the fields and alongside ditches, dipping briefly into TQ9727 (for 11 new records), where *Hippuris vulgaris* (Mare's-tail) grew in patches along the dykes, as far as Brack pumping station, in TQ9627. Much of the pastures had been sheep-grazed, but we were still able to identify the somewhat delicate-looking *Bromus x pseudothominei* (Lesser Soft-brome) as a widespread grassland component.

The peat had been uncovered where clearance of the top soil had been undertaken, and had affected by ditch dredging at times, so there were occasions throughout the day when we came across the remains of bog oaks from a period when the present marshland was afforested, between 6,000 and 3,000 years ago.



Photograph by Geoffrey Kitchener

Above: **The oldest plant encountered on our meeting**

The ditches were, in general, not as remarkable as those seen on the 2012 Dowells meeting, but nonetheless held a number of aquatics - *Ceratophyllum submersum* (Soft Hornwort), *Elodea nuttallii* (Nuttall's Waterweed), *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Spiked Water-milfoil), *Potamogeton crispus* (Curled Pondweed), *Potamogeton natans* (Broad-leaved Pondweed), *Potamogeton pectinatus* (Fennel Pondweed) and *Zannichellia palustris* (Horned Pondweed). Owen pointed out how the presence of *Althaea officinalis* (Marsh-mallow) was often correlated with ditch margins which were not accessible to sheep. There was, however, one stretch of ditch, somewhat meandering in outline, which preserved a particularly good flora. In a short compass we found *Carex spicata* (Spiked Sedge), *Oenanthe aquatica* (Fine-leaved Water-dropwort) and *Oenanthe fistulosa* (Tubular Water-dropwort). Further along, *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit) was growing amidst a soup of duckweeds, a habitat recognized as having affinities with that at the Dowells where in 2012 we saw *Wolffia arrhiza* (Rootless Duckweed). Sure enough, this species, the smallest flowering plant in the world, was also present here, perhaps more easily felt (as small gritty particles rolled between finger and thumb) than seen. This site appears to be a new one.

The session concluded with tea and cakes for all provided by Sarah Kitchener, and much appreciated.



Tuesday 13 August 2013: Conyer brickworks

Fourteen members met by the Ship Inn at Conyer for the final KBRG meeting of 2013, to explore the area of the old brickworks. We hoped to find *Chenopodium chenopodioides* (Saltmarsh Goosefoot), *C. glaucum* (Oak-leaved Goosefoot), *Nepeta cataria* (Cat-mint) and also look for *Scirpoides holoschoenus* (Round-headed Club-rush) - the latter was last recorded 1971-91.

Alongside the lane leading up to the brickworks, *Euphorbia characias* (Mediterranean Spurge) and *Phlomis fruticosa* (Jerusalem Sage) were thriving as result of garden throwouts. On the disturbed ground of the old brickworks we found a calcicolous flora with *Carlina vulgaris* (Carlina Thistle), *Blacksonia perfoliata* Yellowwort, *Rosa rubiginosa* (Sweet-briar), etc. The day was hot and sunny and the flowers of *Buddleja davidii* (Butterfly-bush) were attracting lots of butterflies including Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow.

Limonium vulgare (Common Sea-lavender) and *Aster tripolium* (Sea Aster) were flowering on the nearby saltmarsh with *Glaux maritima* (Sea Milkwort) and we spent time inspecting the ligule and anthers of *Spartina anglica* (Common Cord-grass), discussing with Mervyn Brown how it differs from the very rare *S. maritima*

(Small Cord-grass) which Eric Philp had said might well be extinct in the county. We recorded a few plants of *Onopordon acanthium* (Cotton Thistle) on a bank and found some scattered plants of *Nepeta cataria* (Cat-mint) before sitting down to lunch.

Low banks around a small hollow made for a comfortable place to sit and there we noticed by our feet, small plants of *Chenopodium* looking very red and with largely untoothed leaves. They seemed to be very good candidates for *C. chenopodioides* (Saltmarsh Goosefoot). The plants were flowering but there were no fruits which are essential for accurate determination so these needed to be checked later (the identification was subsequently confirmed). Accompanying plants of *Spergularia marina* (Lesser Sea-spurrey) indicated the brackish nature of the otherwise bare ground.



Both photographs by Sue Buckingham

Left and right: **Conyer's bricks and Chenopods, Young Saltmarsh Goosefoot.**

We searched the low lying areas of the brickworks, which must have been wetter in the past for Round-headed Club-rush to have flourished. This plant is native in dune slacks in Devon but elsewhere occurs as an alien, especially in industrial areas. It appears to have succumbed here to scrub encroachment and subsequent drying out of the habitat.

From the coast path we added Rare Plant Register species *Inula crithmoides* (Golden-samphire), *Carex divisa* (Divided Sedge) and *Hordeum marinum* (Sea Barley). On the way back to our cars two plants of *Elytrigia x drucei* the hybrid between Sea and Common Couch were spotted by Mervyn and a *Carex* plant was subject to much discussion but remains un-named so far.

Maidstone herbarium news

The herbarium is closing for the remainder of 2013, due to works to be carried out at the museum which affect access to this facility. Just beforehand, David McCosh (co-author of the *Atlas of British and Irish Hawkweeds*) was able to visit and tackle the re-ordering of the hawkweed collection, which Eric Philp was engaged on, before his ill-health prevented further progress. This re-ordering is to accommodate the current treatment of this genus by Sell & Murrell, recognising 412 species where there were 248 before. There is more still to be done, and we hope that David will be enabled to follow through. Maidstone's hawkweed collection is of national significance, and it is most helpful that he has been able to work on it.



Psstttt:...Norm the Worm here!

I'm wondering if KBRG Members, or their families, might be interested in a new publication?

An Introduction to the Flowers, Plants and Trees of Kent before written records

This is a book on CD ROM for children of all ages!

Have you ever wondered:

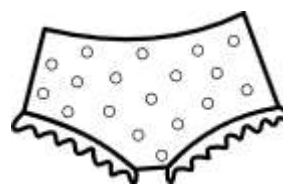
- What flowers, plants and trees were available to people before writing began?
- What plants could be used in hunting, in making tools or for some medicines?
- Is there any idea what type of climate and environment once existed and can we date plants with any accuracy?

KBRG member, Kate Kersey, aided by Norm the Worm, has found some information which could help to answer some of these questions...

Readers might also find out what was on the breakfast, lunch and dinner menus in previous times!

Copies at the price of £12 per disk, which includes postage and packing, can be ordered from Mrs K. Kersey, 5 Greensand Road, Bearsted, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 8NY.
(All proceeds to North Downs Young Archaeologists Club),

Norm the Worm reproduced courtesy of Young Archaeologists Club, Council for British Archaeology



Botanical bloomers or Plants are not Pants!

A communication from Owen Leyshon:

Here is an extract from an email I sent through to Sue Buckingham a couple of months back....

...Also I have found some *Oenothera cambrica* (Small Flowered Evening Primrose) c40 plants near my house on some old fixed sand/edge of the road, but probably need to send some pants off to you or Geoffrey to have a look over...

Now, I would just highlight that spell check does not pick up this specific typing error, so the moral of the story is to read back through your emails if possible, to save having to explain in a second email what you actually meant!

Bastard Balm – an illegitimate Kent record

Melittis melissophyllum (Bastard Balm) is an uncommon west country plant, also found in Hampshire, Dorset and (very rarely) in West Sussex. It was perhaps always surprising that it should have been recorded as a native in Kent at all; it was noted in the *New Atlas of the Kent Flora* as last recorded in 1879.

In fact, the 1879 note seems to be the only record and there are some unusual features about it. The record was attributed to Joseph Edward Little (1861-1935), a distinguished botanist with a high reputation in the Botanical Society and Exchange Club of the British Isles, who collected and determined many critical plants. Normally, his determination would be something to rely upon, but at the date of publication of this record he was so young as to be by no means an experienced botanist. Secondly, the publication itself was in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, not an obvious home for observations on the occurrence of native plants (although from here the information found its way into Hanbury & Marshall's 1899 *Flora of Kent*).

The mystery is resolved by correspondence in 1929 with C.E. Salmon, who had become puzzled by this and other records which appeared in the same note in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, and who wrote to J.E. Little for an explanation. The original papers came to light this year, having been in the possession of the late Eric Philp. Little explained that he had made the records whilst a pupil at Tonbridge School and that he believed they had been sent for publication under his name by a friend, William Thomson, who was a not infrequent contributor to the periodical, generally under his initials W.T.T. The reference to Bastard Balm was in fact to a find of *Melissa officinalis* (Balm) between Tonbridge and Yalding, near the River Medway.



Image protected by creative commons licence at http://www.floralimages.co.uk/page.php?taxon=melittis_melissophyllum,1

Above: **Bastard Balm** photographed near Plymouth

The same article also gave *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen) on stiff clay between Penshurst and Maidstone (which also found its way into Hanbury & Marshall). However, Little had not seen it in situ and thought this was probably on sandy loam near Somerhill Park; he could not vouch for the species, although he had been shown a specimen of *Pyrola* on which the record was based. *Poa bulbosa* (Bulbous Meadow-grass) was also mentioned as found on stiff clay ('A most unlikely station', as Hanbury & Marshall observed); and Little disowned this record completely, as also *Fragaria elatior* – now *F. moschata* (Hautbois Strawberry).

The episode seems to have been somewhat embarrassing to the Little of later years, with his schoolboy records having taken on a life of their own. It is quite difficult to kill off a record once it is in the public domain! The BSBI database has now been amended so as to treat Bastard Balm as rejected and the species is being moved from Part 1 of the '*Probably extinct*' Kent plants list to Part 3 (Extinct taxa, doubtful as to identification, location or native status).

Minutes of the Kent Botanical Recording Group Annual General Meeting 2.00 pm, Sunday 24 March 2013

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

1 WELCOME

The Chairman began by thanking everyone for coming along to the meeting and Sue Buckingham for agreeing to take the minutes. This being the first meeting since the death of our president, Eric Philp, a minute's silence was held to remember Eric and also Dan Clay who had also recently died.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE had been received from Jan Armishaw, Margot Birkbeck, Jon Bramley, Juliet Cairns, Chris Cook, Jose Gibbs, Margot Godfrey, Margaret Holdaway, David Newbold, John Puckett, Chris Rose, Heather Silk and Gill Tysoe.

3 MINUTES OF AGM held on 31 March 2012

These were published last year in newsletter no 4 which was circulated to all members at the time and published on our webpage. The Chairman proposed that the Minutes should be adopted as a true record of the proceedings, which they were with no objections. No action points were minuted from the 2012 AGM and the Chairman said he believed that the current agenda would cover anything which was a follow-through from that meeting.

4 REPORTS FOR THE YEAR

Membership

The Chairman said that from our start in 2010, membership continued to increase and currently stood at 83, a net increase of 5 since last year. The current membership list had been circulated the previous month and since then Alex Lockton, who was present at the meeting, had moved to Whitstable and joined. The Chairman explained that Alex has had much to do with botany in Shropshire, is co-author of the book, *Rare Plants in Shropshire* and as BSBI's co-ordinator, had been very helpful where we interface with BSBI and was responsible for setting up our website and incorporating our material into it. The Chairman added that he was sure that everyone would want to welcome Alex and that there would be contact opportunities at the end of the meeting. Each of the following reports was also given by the Chairman.

Meetings

In addition to the 2012 AGM at Brogdale last year we held 8 field meetings and these included a joint session with Surrey Botanical Society both sides of the border at Limpsfield Chart and another cross-border meeting with Sussex Botanical Recording Society north of Bayham. Two of the meetings included surveys for the BSBI's threatened plants project.

There was an intention to have some supplementary informal meetings with Eric Philp to study hawkweeds, but these did not take place. The Chairman said that the current year's programme had expanded to ten meetings and everyone should have received this.

He then raised the following points.

- *Variety of day of week and start times of meetings*

For the current year's programme, four meetings are at weekends and six on week days. Weekends are the more difficult ones to arrange, because of avoiding clashes with the Kent Field Club which meets at weekends. However, the start times in our programme are varied, although for the current year mostly 10 o'clock. The Chairman said that it would be helpful to know if there were any views regarding the mix of days and meeting times, and asked if we were getting this right in the programme. He asked if it mattered

about having a standard start time, if 10 00 am was ever too early, given that we could be at any extreme of the county, and if anyone had any thoughts about our meeting arrangements.

Doug Grant replied that that he was not unhappy about 10.00am. as a meeting time but pointed out that Kent Field Club always meet at 10.30. This was a standard time on which he could rely without the need to check for each meeting. He said that he would prefer KBRG to standardise the meeting time where possible. There were no other comments from the floor.

• **More people to offer to lead meetings in 2014**

The Chairman thanked Sue Buckingham and Owen Leyshon for the work they had put into preparing the current year's meeting programme, adding that he felt sure they would wish him to say that there is scope for more people to lead meetings in future programmes.

He invited everyone to think during the current year of places where the Group could have a productive meeting in 2014 and whether they might be able to help take people round them, reminding members that meeting leaders were not expected to know all of the plants they come across. Then he invited comments about this and next year's programme.

Sue Buckingham added that it would be of value if some meetings could be arranged in potentially interesting places which are not normally accessible to the public, such as the one we had on privately owned land in 2012 on Gomersham Downs.

Publications

Since the last AGM publications were as follows

- 2 newsletters
- Kent Botany 2012, reporting on the Group's finds over the year
- For the rare plant register, Part C (which was split into two, because it was so large) had been completed and put onto the website; Parts D and E had been issued to members for feedback, totalling 33 new species accounts since the last AGM.
- Updates of existing publications: the RPR list of names (both the ordinary list and the list with latin names which have now reached version 6); the list of probably extinct Kent plants, and RPR Parts A, B and the beginning of Part C. All of these had been reissued so as to take account of the Group's 2012 records, new photos and other new information.

The Chairman explained that on the website, the date of issue is now spelled out on the current version of the RPR parts making it easier to tell that there has been an update. This means that those members who like to print out the parts need to be aware that their print will become out of date. He pointed out that this is a plus for internet publication because instead of waiting decades for a new printed flora, users can see an update every year for recent finds. He added that he had become aware that not everyone had picked up the changes made in February, explaining that because computer searches often store old versions of websites that have been visited in order to make it quicker to see search results, they sometimes ignore the current version of the website unless the user takes action to refresh. The old version of the website has a photo of wild cabbage on sea cliffs and the current updated one has early spider orchid also on sea cliffs.

Alex Lockton said that it would be possible for the BSBI to ensure that the webpage automatically refreshes. The sense of the meeting was that it was not a material issue. **Sue** thanked the Chairman for the excellence of these publications to which he replied that he hoped everyone was enjoying reading whatever interested them.

Finances

Because we operate through the internet, for publications and email, and therefore incur no postage costs, we have continued another year without the need to introduce membership subscriptions and currently we have no projects which generate costs. The Chairman expressed thanks to Kent Wildlife Trust for free room hire. Brogdale had cost us £30 for last year's AGM but members donated £50 towards refreshments supplied by Sarah Kitchener and so £20 had been carried over towards future needs. It was agreed to minute this rather than have formal accounts and a treasurer.

Regarding refreshments for the current meeting, the Chairman had thought that as Kent Wildlife Trust normally has refreshment facilities in the public area, perhaps we should not be providing our own. However an urn now appeared to be available and it was agreed to use it in the meeting room at future meetings.

Recording

As there was a general report on the 2012 recording position in Kent Botany 2012, the Chairman said he aimed not to duplicate that in his report. However more records have gone onto the system since then, altering the figures. Currently, starting from 2010 we have 65,000 records on the County database; of which 16,000 are for 2010, over 26,500 from 2011 and the balance, about 22,500 from 2012. He explained that the reason these figures differ from previous reports is the recent addition of 2010 and 2011 records from Metropolitan West Kent. This was an area we had not been concentrating on particularly because there were London recording initiatives through the London Flora project anyway. The figures refer to general recording where the main 2012 contributors in terms of numbers had been the Chairman himself, Sue Buckingham, Doug Grant, Sue Poyser, Juliet Cairns and Joyce Pitt, together with KBRG meetings and various botanists working in groups.

The area with the most records since 2010, in terms of 10km squares, was first (with 4000 records) TQ76, the Rochester and Medway area at which Doug Grant and Sue Poyser have been working so hard. Secondly with 3994 records was TQ47 in south east London, reflecting recording by Juliet Cairns and Professor Mick Crawley. Following these were TR35, the Deal-Sandwich area, so popular with botanists, and TQ77, which includes Cliffe and Higham with many records from Doug and Sue as well as others.

Our records were passed on to BSBI, most recently in January, when they received over 19,000 records and amendments from us and our 2012 records will be passed on to Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre, probably in April.

The Chairman explained that we had not put out a special call for general records, so as not to distract from the priority task of rare plant recording. However we would need good county coverage for the period up to 2019 and Geoffrey is happy to receive any general records when the recorder is sure of identification and of the 1 km square involved. He added that he could supply a list of existing recent records for any given 1 km square by email any time so that members can know what else needs finding.

Rare plant register

The Chairman reported that we had over 650 rare plant records in 2012 and because this was reported in Kent Botany 2012, he had chosen for the present meeting to focus on some of the rare plant species accounts currently with the membership for feedback before going onto the website.

Moving away from his formal report for a while he then delivered a PowerPoint presentation discussing the following species.

- Dipsacus pilosus*, Small Teasel
- Drosera rotundifolia*, Round-leaved Sundew
- Eleocharis acicularis*, Needle Spike-rush
- Eryngium campestre*, Field Eryngo.

5 CONSTITUTION

This item has been included regularly on our AGMs in order to remind the membership that we have no regular constitution and that we continue to run on an informal basis. The Chairman invited those present to consider if they were content with this situation. Owen Leyshon and Sue Buckingham had informally contributed to this year's meetings programme and help had come from various quarters for publications and this was acknowledged in them.

Geoffrey said that if there was a view that KBRG at its AGM should be appointing people for distinct roles, then this was the time for discussion. He reminded everyone that we previously had one appointment of Eric Philp as president and this was an honorary office without a job and there was therefore no requirement to seek a replacement immediately. The Chairman also pointed out that it was perfectly possible to continue as we were currently without president, secretary, treasurer, membership secretary, etc.

There were no requests from the floor to elect people for such roles but the Chairman was asked if he was content with his current work load. To which he replied that he was just as long as he continued to receive help with the Field Meetings programme. He pointed out that should we decide to produce any of our publications as hard copy, we might then need to appoint a treasurer.

6 MAIDSTONE HERBARIUM DIGITISATION

The herbarium is an important reference source for Kent plant specimens, ancient and modern and includes a nationally important hawkweed collection. Eric tended it until prevented by ill health but although the Chairman visits it and also David Johnson, its use is limited and it has a fairly low profile. The Chairman explained that this profile was about to change now that Maidstone Museum have begun a project to catalogue the whole collection digitally and this should increase access to the collections with a searchable database initially at the Museum, and eventually with online availability for researchers and the public. Each specimen is being taken out, its details including any notes on the sheet, recorded on computer and it is photographed. The Museum is doing this through volunteers and there is scope for our members to assist in volunteering.

Geoffrey said that this was an opportunity to get to grips with all sorts of interesting specimens. For example, there are the Francis Rose specimens which give details of all sorts of locations from the 1940s to the 1960s, and would have been the basis of the Flora of Kent which was never completed for publication. The collection holds the type specimen by which *Rumex x philpii* was named after Eric and to illustrate this Geoffrey projected a photograph of the sheet.

He explained that the Museum would give guidance in how to record and photograph. Volunteers would be required to register with the museum first in order to be allowed to go behind the scenes, when collections staff were available from Mondays to Fridays during normal working hours. He said that if anyone was thinking of offering to help, would they please let him know after the meeting and he would email the volunteer application form.

The Chairman was aware of another herbarium project launching, relating to the 19th century naturalist Robert Pocock, and he invited **Pauline Heathcote** to comment. She explained that Pocock was a printer, botanist and naturalist from Gravesend who collected botanical specimens and forwarded them onto others and that an important connection had been established between Pocock and Kent orchids. Some of Pocock's specimens were in the London Natural History Museum and it was hoped to organise a team of volunteers to search through, bring together and digitise the London collection. Pauline asked for volunteers to assist with this work.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS OR COMMENTS

There was some discussion from the floor regarding the value of general recording in one's own locality or 10 km square and **Rodney Burton** said that he had found the 'Grab a grid reference' website (with satellite and map alongside) useful for identifying potentially 'good' areas for general recording.

Rodney added that he would like to have available a map for his area which would show the current state of recording at monad level. Last year Hannah Cook from the Records Centre produced a map for the County showing distribution of plant records from areas with no records to those with more than 120. The Chairman said that although this should be possible to produce from MapMate, he had experienced difficulty with it and in response, Alex Lockton offered assistance.

Liam Rooney had produced a county map showing where there were monads with no records in them and said he was happy to e-mail this to anyone who asked.

8 DATE OF NEXT AGM

The next AGM will be Saturday 22 March 2014 at Tyland Barn, subject to availability.

With no further business the formal part of the meeting closed at 3.00 p.m.



The perils of botanising! While Liam Rooney and Bob Gomes carry out their investigation of *Isolepis cernua* (Slender Club-rush), a herd of Charolais are about to conduct an investigation of their own.

Photograph by Geoffrey Kitchener

Contributions and photographs for the next newsletter will be most welcome!

Contributions, letters, queries, comments and photographs etc, for the next newsletter are welcomed by the editor!

Whilst KRBG does not produce a research journal as such, there may also be scope to put articles of a substantial nature and other papers onto the website by way of publication, as an alternative.

If sending photographs for inclusion in the newsletter by e mail, 300dpi minimum, please.

All contributions should be sent to Geoffrey Kitchener, contact details below.

Thanks to Sarah Kitchener and Kate Kersey for reviewing this newsletter and to Sue Buckingham for the AGM minutes and several meeting reports. Also to the photographers credited above.

Contact details for Geoffrey Kitchener:

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Cromlix, Otford Lane, Halstead, Sevenoaks, Kent TN14 7EB



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