



KENT BOTANICAL RECORDING GROUP

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Front cover: *Beta vulgaris* subsp. *maritima* (Sea Beet). Photo by David Steere, Dengemarsh, 27 July 2019

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2019 field meeting reports

TWIG MEETING, MOTE PARK, MAIDSTONE, Saturday 16 February

When Owen suggested last summer that we should hold the first 2019 KBRG meeting in February I thought he was quite mad and hoped that once winter set in and temperatures dropped he would change his mind. He didn't though, and when we met up in December to start on the meetings programme he had already set aside a February date that avoided any clash with Wales playing rugby. The plan was to try out John Poland's very recently published "*The Field Guide to Winter Twigs*" in Mote Park in the centre of Maidstone.

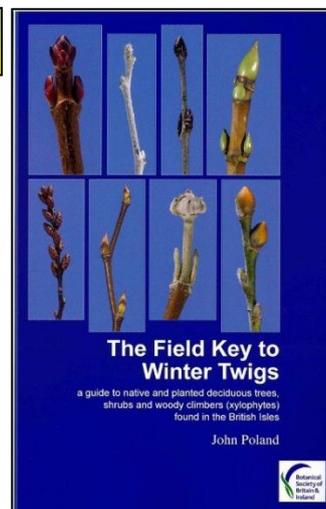
January brought the usual snow and biting cold winds, just the weather I thought for standing still outdoors looking up names in an unfamiliar book. Then by a miracle it warmed up to record high temperatures in February; they took a bit of a dip on our twig day but nevertheless eighteen members and friends met up in the car park in Mote Park all well wrapped up, pleased to be out together again and eager to look at twigs. Good old Owen he got it dead right as usual!



Mote Park was once a country estate, now a municipal park and has a wonderful collection of trees and shrubs both old plantings and native species. We began under a fine old *Castanea sativa* (Sweet Chestnut), last year's fruits beneath giving us a good clue to its identity. However, we checked it out against the key in Poland's book, six of us had a copy and Joyce had a trusted book of her own. Poland's key begins by asking if buds are alternate, opposite or whorled. Ours were alternate with unarmed twigs, sessile buds with 2-3 scales which took us to section A1. The twigs were stout and with very prominent white lenticels which all went towards confirming Sweet Chestnut, although the few old leaves still present were unusually slender for the usual form.

All twig meeting photos by Owen Leyshon

Next we checked out some fairly young *Acers* by the lake with opposite buds, very red twigs and snake-bark which, along with a distinct suckering habit, seemed to key out best as *Acer cappadocicum* (Cappadocian Maple). We inspected the medifixed hairs which Poland tells us you will find on the twigs of *Cornus* (Dogwoods) and there they were (with x 20 lens) on the twigs of a variety of colourful planted Dogwood bushes by the lake. This is one in a list of unusual characters which can provide a shortcut to naming your plant.



We looked at buds on a peculiar oak with very elongated leaves (lots still under the tree) and a cluster of whiskery stipules at twig tip suggestive of *Quercus cerris* (Turkey Oak) though it might possibly have been *Quercus x hispanica* (Luccombe Oak). In spite of the din from the model boats on the lake we carried on to examine twigs of *Betula pendula* (Silver Birch), *Alnus glutinosa* (Common Alder), *Fagus sylvatica* (Beech) and *Platanus x hispanica* (London Plane), the latter distinct with



its single scale buds and zig-zagging twigs. Joyce pointed out how similar the buds of *Prunus* (Cherry) species can look to those of Oak with their clustered many-scaled buds. As we proceeded with the book we learnt about the importance of looking for stipule scars, as well as leaf scars, and of counting bundle scars, looking for the colour, the taste and smell of pith and of course the appearance of bark.

We were very fortunate in having member Josh Bartel with us who is very knowledgeable about trees and he was happy to fill us in with lots of extra detail. *Corylus colurna* (Turkish Hazel) had the appearance of a hazel on steroids, a very pyramidal tree with extra-large male and

female flowers on display. Its bark was just as described in Poland – ‘flaking in small scales to reveal orange-brown underbark’ and on the ground were the remains of last year’s large ornate nut clusters. A huge specimen of *Acer campestre* (Field Maple) was admired by all, then a flowering Ash which had grey rather than black buds, which were whorled rather than opposite. This transpired to be *Fraxinus angustifolia* (Narrow-leaved Ash). *Metasequoia glyptostoboides* (Dawn Redwood) was the last before lunch and one of the few conifer species included in our book because it is deciduous, and there it was, with its fibrous red bark and tiny opposite buds with round pale branchlet scars alongside.

We had lunch in comfort at a convenient group of benches and then some of the group wandered a little along the River Len looking for flowering *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* (Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage) to include in the Wild Flower Society winter plant hunt, but without success.

Amongst other species the afternoon turned up *Nothofagus obliqua* (Roble), one of the southern hemisphere beeches and *Acer saccharinum* (Silver Maple) with whorled rather than opposite buds and showy clusters of red female stigmas. Buzzard, Mediterranean Gull, Kingfisher and Siskin were all noted by the group throughout the day.



Back at the car park Owen provided never-more-welcome tea and oatcakes and we had a number of requests from members to arrange another twig day in a different location next year. We certainly proved that learning to use a new field guide together is a lot more fun than struggling alone.

SB

WILLOWS IDENTIFICATION DAY, LEYBOURNE LAKES COUNTRY PARK, Wednesday 17 April

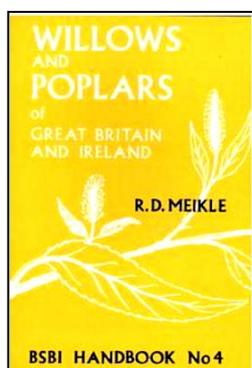
Thirteen KBRG members attended this meeting which was led by Joyce Pitt with the intention of taking an early look at *Salix* (Willows). It was rather too early to check the leaves but a wonderful array of catkins was examined.

Hybrid Crack-willow, *Salix x fragilis* var. *russelliana*, was very common along the stream. This variety only occurs as female. We examined the leaves which appeared to be attenuate and the ovaries were also attenuate unlike those of *Salix x fragilis* var. *fragilis*. We later found female trees of *Salix fragilis* var. *fragilis* and were able to compare both the leaves and female ovaries.

Further on, growing on damper ground, we saw *Salix viminalis* (Osier) in addition to *Salix x smithiana* (its hybrid with *Salix cinerea*, Grey Willow), *Salix x reichardtii* (the hybrid between Goat Willow and Grey Willow) and *Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia* (Grey Willow), the latter previously known by the name *Salix atrocinerea*.

Photo by Owen Leyshon

We did not find any true *Salix caprea* (Goat Willow), *S. alba* (White Willow) or *S. triandra* (Almond Willow). The area where the latter once grew had been badly disturbed. It is to be hoped this species is still around nearby as it is a native of this area and generally unusual in Kent.



Large areas of the Country Park now resemble municipal parkland with little interest. Parts of the relict damp meadow areas have been recently planted up with trees. We found four sedges: *Carex acutiformis* (Lesser Pond-sedge) and *C. riparia* (Greater Pond-sedge) in one ditch and *C. hirta* (Hairy Sedge) and *C. pendula* (Pendulous Sedge) in damp grassland. Mounds of calcareous gravel lining one path were colonised by *Myosotis ramosissima* (Early Forget-me-not), *Erophila verna*, (Common Whitlowgrass), *Cerastium semidecandrum* (Little Mouse-ear), etc. One young *Neottia ovata* (Common Twayblade) rosette was discovered in a grassy pathway. Other finds included a common lizard basking on a wood pile, a bee fly *Bombylius discolor*, and orange tip, holly blue and brimstone butterflies were enjoying the warm sunshine.

Thanks to Owen for Welsh cakes and tea back at the car park and to Joyce for a most enjoyable and informative day.

JP & SB

STAPLEHURST, Saturday 18 May

A large group gathered along the roadside near Staplehurst Train Station for this joint meeting of the Kent Botanical Recording Group and Kent Field Club, led by Stephen Lemon, for general recording in the Low Weald. The footpath along



the edge of the station had a rich mix of native and naturalised plants including *Viola odorata* (Sweet Violet), *Carex divulsa* subsp. *divulsa* (Grey Sedge), *Vicia sativa* (Common Vetch), *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling), *Schedonorus arundinaceus* (Tall Fescue) and the hybrid willow *Salix caprea x cinerea* = *S. x reichardtii*. Crossing the railway we continued on a footpath along the northern side where *Carex spicata* (Spiked Sedge) and *Trifolium medium* (Zigzag Clover) were observed.

Stephen demonstrates. Photo by Owen Leyshon

Crossing the road, we climbed a very steep stile to drop back down and continue along the northern side of the railway, through residents' gardens, to a row of old ponds lined with woodland. At the first pond the ancient woodland flora included *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell), hybrid hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna x laevigata* = *C. x media* and in addition the group recorded a few plants of the rare plant register (RPR) species *Lathyrus linifolius* (Bitter-vetch), as well as *Polystichum setiferum*, (Soft Shield-fern), not a common plant on the Weald Clay. A recce for the meeting in March had produced a large patch of *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* (Wild Daffodil) in the woodland bordering another pond nearby, the plants having become invisible

among the bluebells by the date of the meeting. The ponds themselves were perhaps excavated for drainage when the railway was constructed and, despite having filled with peat and being colonised by *Salix cinerea* (Grey Willow), they still possessed an interesting flora. A small unshaded area by the edge of the middle pond contained a colony of the RPR species *Carex vesicaria* (Bladder-sedge) in fruit with *Iris pseudacorus* (Yellow Iris), probably declining here with the increasing tree cover. More notable in the adjacent pond was an eighteen tussock strong colony of another RPR species, *Carex elongata* (Elongated Sedge). This was growing where the *Salix* shade was light, on the deep saturated peat that had formed in the centre of the pond, along with *Equisetum fluviatile*, (Water Horsetail), *Carex pseudocyperus* (Cyperus Sedge), *Lycopus europaeus* (Gypsywort) and more *Iris pseudacorus*. The *C. elongata* colony was not accessible to the whole group, but specimens were retrieved and made available, showing the characteristic inflorescence and spotted sheaths.

Stephen, as the only wellington boot wearer, was volunteered to search the pond centre. Photo by Owen Leyshon

We moved into the adjacent horse-grazed pasture where a shallow unmapped pond contained *Callitriche brutia* (Intermediate Water-starwort) and also RPR species *Ranunculus aquatilis* (Common Water-crowfoot). A fenced pond at the opposite end of this pasture had more *C. vesicaria*. Lesley Mason produced an *Oenanthe* (Water-dropwort) specimen collected from this field which had vegetative features indicating it was the RPR species *Oenanthe fistulosa* (Tubular Water-dropwort), but without an inflorescence for additional confirmation. We moved into an un-grazed field on higher ground which had a circular track excavated around it. Here we had lunch here and afterwards began examining the southern edge of the field, where an umbellifer was found in good numbers, another *Oenanthe* species which Joyce Pitt suspected would be *Oenanthe pimpinelloides* (Corky-fruited Water-dropwort), but with very young inflorescences making identification uncertain. A collection was made later in the year when the field was being grazed by horses, which confirmed identity as *O. pimpinelloides*. At the far end of this field Laurence Clemons discovered a few flower spikes of RPR species *Anacamptis morio* (Green-winged Orchid), which perhaps had naturally colonised the field from seeds produced by the huge colony at the nearby Kent Wildlife Trust reserve, Marden Meadow.



The group made its way into Marden Meadow to admire the rich flora. The one party went to admire the display of *A. morio* in the far western field and discovered a new colony of *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (Adder's-tongue) in the middle field which had not been previously recorded. Another group made their way to the pond by the railway in the small field at the north-western corner of the reserve. Here was found *O. fistulosa*, a new species for the site, near the edge of the pond close to sedges *C. vesicaria* and true fox-sedge *Carex vulpina* (True Fox-sedge). In the pond itself there was more of the water-starwort *C. brutia*, displaying the diagnostic expanded pincer-like leaf-tips, with styles adpressed to the side of the fruit.



***Anacamptis morio*. Photo by Owen Leyshon**

The way back to the cars was more direct via minor roads, the group pausing to consider whether a colony of the apomictic *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks Buttercup) could be placed to one of the many 'agamospecies' listed within Sell & Murrell's *Flora of Great Britain and Ireland*. Although the required basal leaves were collected, they could not be satisfactorily assigned.

This very productive meeting ended with tea and Welsh cakes provided to the group, courtesy of Owen Leyshon. One of the last plants examined was the hybrid sedge *Carex otrubae x remota* = *Carex x pseudoaxillaris*, collected by the leader from a ditch at the junction of the A229. The group recorded 209 plants across the three monads visited, during which RPR species *L. linifolius* and *O. fistulosa* were re-found and new sites were discovered for RPR species *C. elongata* and *C. vesicaria*, as well as the scarce *R. aquatilis* and *O. pimpinelloides*. Laurence Clemons was just as productive sweep-netting for insects throughout the meeting and recorded 165 species from 11 insect orders, the highest number from along footpath by the station, including *Ectopsocus briggsi*, *Gonepteryx rhamni rhamni*, *Biorhiza pallida*, *Andrena haemorrhhoa* and *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata*.

SOUTH OF BETHERSDEN, Thursday 23 May

The owner of Plurenden Manor Farm with its large woodland and adjoining fields had very kindly given us permission to park our cars at the farm and to spend the day recording in this otherwise under-recorded part of the Low Weald. The meeting was led by Sue and Owen, joined by seven other KBRG members, and we set off from the farm on a beautiful sunny morning, first turning into a large field where a number of the farm's pregnant Friesian cows were also enjoying the sunshine. They seemed pleased to see us as we passed through and into a corner of Paul's Wood where we found some good quality plants in with the fading bluebells, *Conopodium major* (Pignut), *Melica uniflora* (Wood Melick), *Silene flos-cuculi* (Ragged-Robin) and *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid).

In the main block of woodland we were surprised to see many of the hornbeams and willows almost completely defoliated by insects but no evidence of what had been eating them. Water was still lying in puddles on the heavy clay in a few places and beside one we found *Carex pallescens* (Pale Sedge), *C. demissa* (Common Yellow-sedge) and *C. leporina* (Oval Sedge) all together. *Potentilla erecta* (Tormentil), *Veronica officinalis* (Heath Speedwell) and *Hypericum pulchrum* (Slender St Johns-wort) were scattered, indicating acid conditions in some of the higher areas, along with non-flowering *Scutellaria minor* (Lesser Skullcap). There were a number of woodland ponds but they were all quite shaded and lacked marginal vegetation apart from one with some *Ranunculus flammula* (Lesser Spearwort). This was probably because of grazing since there was plenty of evidence of deer although we only got a distant view of a few after lunch.

Sue's plan for the day had been to work through the wood and then to take a circuit of lanes and footpaths back to the farm, but as we progressed the wood proved much more interesting than expected so we spent the day exploring it, beginning with the western section, called Paul's Wood. Lunch was taken in a clearing in the centre and that provided both shade and sun so that everyone was comfortable.

In Plurenden Wood, at the north eastern boundary, we came across a stream with some *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks Buttercup) and *Allium ursinum* (Ramsons) on its banks. We followed that with the intention of accessing a second 'blank monad'. *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge) was abundant on a muddy slope with *Hypericum tetrapterum* (Square-stalked St John's-wort), *Galium palustre* (Marsh Bedstraw) and a single *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple-orchid).



Confirming Carex elongata. Photo by Sue Poyser.

We came out into the sunshine to add a few non-woodland species to the list in a grassy field which had been arable not long ago. The map showed a woodland pond close to the field edge which had the potential of being better lit than those we'd seen inside the wood. We were right, although only *Ranunculus sceleratus* (Celery-leaved Buttercup), presumably toxic to the deer, was growing on the water's edge but on an unreachable island in the centre of the peaty pool was some lush vegetation including what looked tantalisingly like tufts of RPR species *Carex elongata* (Elongated Sedge). At this point Stephen Lemon and his wellington boots were very sorely missed and Sue decided the only thing for it was to paddle

out barefoot and retrieve a specimen to be absolutely certain. There was no doubt of course and as we congratulated ourselves with such a good discovery, Jack and Daphne headed off to investigate a sunlit patch within the wood and to discover yet another rarity – *Ranunculus tripartitus* (Three-lobed Water-crowfoot) – at the margin of a large dried up puddle on a path through the wood.

Ranunculus tripartitus. Photo by Owen Leyshon

As well as recording six species for the Kent RPR, we acquired a good number of general records in four monads, two of which had previously no records at all. Thanks to the landowner for giving us free-rein to access his fields and woods and for allowing us to park. As promised we have sent him a list of our finds. Thanks to Doug and Sue for doing some of the recording and as always thanks to Owen for providing tea and Welsh cakes.



SB

SHERWAY BRIDGE, near HEADCORN, Friday 14 June

We met up in the car park of Sam's Fishing Lakes near Sherway Bridge, Headcorn for this meeting and ten members parked there with the kind permission of the owner. The plan was to boost Low Weald records and establish if there was any likelihood that *Potamogeton alpinus* (Red Pondweed) might still occur in the River Sherway where it was last seen by Francis Rose in 1962. This species is said to need water about a metre deep but sadly there is now only a very small flow of water in the river channel so although we headed out towards the bridge, we turned off beforehand onto a footpath to look instead at a string of very interesting ponds and meadows. *Silaum silaus* (Pepper Saxifrage) and *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling) were seen by the roadside and the first pond had RPR species, *Hottonia palustris* (Water-violet), *Ranunculus flammula* (Lesser Spearwort), *Veronica scutellata* (Marsh Speedwell) with *Oenanthe aquatica* (Fine-leaved Water-dropwort) and *Myosotis laxa* (Tufted Water-forget-me-not). Stephen Lemon showed us two liverworts floating in the water, *Riccia fluitans* and the very rare *Ricciocarpus natans*.



Massive Marsh Fern colony. Photo by Sue Buckingham

Carex elongata (Elongated Sedge) was pointed out by Stephen at the next pond where he had seen it on a previous visit and where we were pleased to find *Scutellaria galericulata* (Common Skullcap) with its beautiful blue flowers and a White-legged Damselfly.

We spent a long time examining Hawthorns along a neighbouring hedgerow including *Crataegus rhipidophylla* (Large-sepal Hawthorn) which Lliam Rooney had recorded there in 2015. The other species, *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn), *C. laevigata* (Midland Hawthorn) and the hybrid *C. x media* were all present and with some suggesting introgression with *C. rhipidophylla*.

We had our lunch at the next pond tucked away in woodland where back in April Sue and Stephen, whilst trying out a circuit for the meeting, had been surprised to find young emerging fronds of *Thelypteris palustris* (Marsh Fern). From its size this appears to be a long-established colony but nonetheless is a previously unknown site for Marsh Fern and, like other colonies, is in a peat-filled clay pond. From the same spot, Stephen and Bob collected some *Callitriche* (Water-starwort) for microscopic examination of pollen grains at home. The referee, Richard Landsdown, was able to confirm presence of *Callitriche platycarpa* (Various-leaved Water-starwort) from Stephen's photos which showed the required triangular-shaped grains.

After lunch we headed off on a circuit of footpaths and lanes, finding *Silene flos-cuculi* (Ragged Robin), *Hylotelephium* (*Sedum*) *telephium* (Orpine), and eventually emerging onto some arable fields yellow with *Ranunculus sardous* (Hairy Buttercup) which seems really to like the Weald clay. We spotted *Anthemis cotula* (Stinking Chamomile) with its unpleasant smell and bracts among the disc florets, followed by *Euphorbia platyphyllos* (Broad-leaved Spurge). Then Owen called us all over to something he said "looked interesting".

Ranunculus arvensis: discovery (Photo by Sue Buckingham)
and the prize exhibit (Photo by Owen Leyshon)



It was indeed the first of seven flowering and fruiting plants of *Ranunculus arvensis* (Corn Buttercup), a most exciting discovery. Although we spread out and searched the field, we found no more Corn Buttercup. But we added a few plants of *Stachys arvensis* (Field Woundwort).

Carex x pseudoaxillaris, the hybrid between Remote Sedge and False-fox Sedge was seen on the roadside on our way back to the fishing lakes where we celebrated our very successful day with tea and Welsh cakes, thanks of course to Owen.

SB

ARABLE MEETING, CHARTHAM VINEYARD, Tuesday 18 June

A meeting with a different flavour this time - our first at a farm with a vineyard. Fourteen members met up in the parking area of Burnt House Farm in the Chartham Downs and listened while the owner, (who works alongside Natural England with Dan Tuson as advisor) told us about her vineyard and her campaign for other vineyards to operate by using the minimal amount of chemical spray around the vines, allowing wild plants to grow in the alleys between.

All Chartham meeting photos by Owen Leyshon

We began our survey in an old orchard adjacent to the vineyard which had a good ground flora with plenty of *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid), *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling), *Orobancha minor* (Common Broomrape) and *Petroselinum segetum* (Corn Parsley). Then into the vineyard where we spread out and took a row each noting what was growing on the thin soil over the chalk. From these 1½ metre-wide unsprayed alleys we listed *Euphorbia exigua* (Dwarf Spurge), *Filago vulgaris* (Common Cudweed) and *Fragaria vesca* (Wild Strawberry) for the Rare Plant Register with *Kickxia elatine* (Sharp-leaved Fluellen), *Kickxia spuria* (Round-leaved Fluellen), *Trifolium campestre* (Hop Trefoil), *Viola arvensis* (Field Pansy), etc.



We'd also been asked to take a look at what was growing on a series of dry grassy terraces below the vines and above the River Stour, and there we found a beautiful flowering plant of *Valeriana officinalis* (Common Valerian). There was plenty of *Knautia arvensis* (Field Scabious), *Galium verum* (Lady's Bedstraw), *Lotus corniculatus* (Common Bird's-foot-

trefoil) and butterflies including Marbled White and Common Blue. We had lunch at this very pleasant and interesting spot.

As planned, we left Burnt House after lunch and drove a few miles down the road to spend the rest of the afternoon on a neighbouring arable farm where the owner (who also works with Natural England) is known to have a good population of *Misopates orontium* (Weasel's-snout). We were met by the farmer himself and he was pleased to have us and keen to have our opinion on how he might control the scrub that was building up on an area of arable reversion on his marginal slopes.



Weasel's-snout was having a good year and there were hundreds of flowering plants. Storm clouds were building ominously as we cut up across the valley to an area of thinly sown unsprayed corn to see what other arable weeds we might find. There was plenty of *Fumaria parviflora* (Fine-leaved Fumitory) and we were delighted to put up a hare. In the arable reversion were hundreds of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) with *Rhinanthus minor* (Hay Rattle) and along with a fine chalk flora we enjoyed the fruits of *Fragaria vesca* (Wild Strawberry). We felt it could do with a bit of grazing to keep the scrub down but that was a difficult option on an arable farm and we pondered the problems of getting and keeping the "right sort" of habitats on working commercial farms.

Luckily the rain didn't arrive until long after we'd left and so we enjoyed the usual tea and Welsh cakes at the farm thanks as always to Owen. We were very grateful to both farmers concerned for giving us access to their land and

we passed on lists of our finds from the day.

SB

HOTHFIELD HEATHLANDS, KWT RESERVE, Saturday 22 June

Photo by Owen Leyshon

An invitation was extended to BSBI (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland) and Kent Field Club members to join this meeting and therefore it was no surprise that on such a lovely sunny June day attendance was excellent with 25 in the party. Led by Stephen Lemon, we all set off from the official car park and began our exploration at the old football field which is dry and sandy and has a good selection of rare clovers. Alex Lockton had recently found *Trifolium glomeratum* (Clustered Clover) there and he led us along to the spot and we all got down on hands and knees to look. The Hothfield Heathlands reserve has had many visits from botanists since we began in 2011 but because it spreads over four monads (and two tetrads) there are still species missing from the record lists in each of the monads, so the plan was to attempt to find as many as we could. Clustered Clover was on our target list for the entire reserve as, before Alex, it hadn't been refound since Eric's record in his last Atlas and we also added *T. striatum* (Knotted Clover) from the same area, so that was a good start.



Next stop was a boggy area east of Bog 4 where *Crassula helmsii* (New Zealand Pygmy-weed) has been a big problem in the past and is still present though in much smaller quantity. We saw *Ranunculus flammula* (Lesser Spearwort), fruiting *Menyanthes trifoliata* (Bogbean) and huge tussocks of *Carex paniculata* (Great Tussock-sedge). We spent until lunchtime at Bog 4 which is the most northerly of Hothfield's wetlands and where Stephen was kept busy pointing out the many

Carex species. We had *Carex echinata* (Star Sedge), *C. leporina* (Oval Sedge), *C. nigra* (Common Sedge), *C. panicea* (Carnation Sedge), *C. laevigata* (Smooth-stalked Sedge), *C. pulicaris* (Flea Sedge) and *C. rostrata* (Bottle Sedge). *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Wood Club-rush) was new for the reserve. *Erica tetralix* (Cross-leaved Heath), *Molinia caerulea* (Purple Moor-grass) and *Ranunculus sceleratus* (Celery-leaved Buttercup) were added to the monad. *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid) were looking good and we located a couple of fine clusters of *Dactylorhiza x halleri*, its hybrid with *D. maculata* (Heath Spotted-orchid). *Epilobium palustre* (Marsh Willowherb) was fairly frequent and one particularly large-flowered plant was different enough for us to decide to collect and pass to Geoffrey Kitchener as it looked like a possible hybrid. This was confirmed by Geoffrey after the meeting as simply *Epilobium palustre* but with atypically large flowers. We enjoyed species such as *Veronica scutellata* (Marsh Speedwell) and *Myosotis secunda* (Creeping Forget-me-not).

We had lunch perched on logs where there was shade for those who wanted it and sun for anyone who didn't. The afternoon took us onto the southern half of the reserve and an opportunity to check up on nationally endangered species *Ranunculus tripartitus* (Three-lobed Water-crowfoot). Although quite late in the season, we managed to find a little with

flower and we were surprised to see flowering *Pilosella aurantiaca* (Fox-and-cubs) perched up on a tree stump nearby.



All the typical valley bog species were at their best at Bog 2 with great pink patches of flowering *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel), *Drosera rotundifolia* (Round-leaved Sundew), *Hypericum elodes* (Marsh St. John's-wort) and *Narthecium ossifragum* (Bog Asphodel), fruiting *Eriophorum angustifolium* (Common Cottongrass) and *Potamogeton polygonifolius* (Bog Pondweed), etc..

Drosera rotundifolia. Photo by Owen Leysdon

Danthonia decumbens (Heath grass) was searched for on the dry slopes above and found by Helen Proctor close to *Nardus stricta* (Mat-grass). Throughout the day we added twenty-six new records to three monads, perhaps not a large total in itself, but we agreed that it had been a wonderful day simply enjoying Hothfield's special plants. We had admired no less than 26 Rare Plant Register species!

The meeting ended of course with tea and Welsh cakes in the car park thanks to Owen.

SB & SL

ARABLE MEETING, CHEVENING, Tuesday 9 July

This meeting at Home Farm, a mixed livestock/arable farm on the Chevening estate, was the first arable meeting we've held in West Kent and was arranged for us by Rose Morgan of Natural England. Twelve of us met in the yard after being allowed through the remotely operated security gates. We then drove off in convoy following the farmer to park in a grassy field adjacent to his arable ones.

The plan was to record weeds growing on the arable margins and also to report on the progress of a large area of adjoining arable reversion on the slope of the North Downs which was last ploughed in 2001.

Interesting species listed from the margins of crops of rape, wheat and maize on the thin chalk soil included *Euphorbia exigua* (Dwarf Spurge), *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax), *Kickxia elatine* (Sharp-leaved Fluellen) and *K. spuria* (Round-leaved Fluellen). *Anagallis arvensis* (Scarlet Pimpernel), *Aethusa cynapium* (Fool's Parsley), *Chenopodium polyspermum* (Many-seeded Goosefoot) and *Viola arvensis* (Field Pansy) were also seen. There were some large patches of prostrate *Bryonia dioica* (White Bryony) and plenty of colour in the margins from *Papaver rhoeas* (Common Poppy), *Sonchus arvensis* (Perennial Sow-thistle) and *Crepis biennis* (Rough Hawk's-beard). Chris Cook spotted *Bromus x pseudothominei* (Lesser Soft-brome) which doesn't often get recorded and we noted some *Rhinanthus minor* (Yellow-rattle) which appeared to have been sown at some time in the past.

Colour in the margins.
Photo by Sue Buckingham

We had to climb a gate in order to reach the arable reversion where *Cruciata laevipes* (Crosswort), *Linum catharticum* (Fairy Flax), *Lotus corniculatus* (Common Bird's-foot-trefoil) and *Trifolium pratense* (Red Clover) were the most noticeable species. However, the rabbit-grazed slopes on the thin chalk at the foot of the field had a good diversity of chalk species with *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid), *Avenula pubescens* (Downy Oat-grass), *Briza media* (Quaking-grass), *Carex flacca* (Glaucous Sedge), *Cirsium acaule* (Dwarf Thistle), *Origanum vulgare* (Wild Marjoram) and *Poterium sanguisorba* (Salad Burnet). We chose to have lunch there and enjoy the magnificent view over the Weald whilst watching Red



Kites and butterflies. The slopes above with clay topping were less diverse in species and after a good walk around we chose to return back to the cars via a path through some woodland. There we added *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine) and *Mentha arvensis* (Corn Mint) to the list and Geoffrey pointed out *Rosa corymbifera* (*R. canina* Group *Pubescentes*) in a hedge.

In the absence of Owen and the tea urn, we had to make do with cold drinks and biscuits. After the meeting a good list of arable weeds and chalk grassland species was passed on to the farmer and to Natural England's farming advisory team.

SB

HEXDEN CHANNEL, NEWENDEN, Thursday 18 July

After weeks of hot sunny weather it had to happen, with a cloudy damp morning greeting the nine members of the Kent Botanical Recording Group led by Owen Leyshon.

This was the only ray of sunshine... Photo by Owen Leyshon

The aim was to record in blank monads along the Hexden Channel, and the group first met by the cricket pitch at Newenden. Joyce Pitt quickly volunteered to scribble down the records for the day, having the misfortune not to know that the route was going to cross five monads and four tetrads.



The group immediately went over to the banks of the River Rother by the cricket pitch and Daphne got her grapnel out and



recorded *Potamogeton perfoliatus* (Perfoliate Pondweed) and *Potamogeton lucens* (Shining Pondweed). On the far side of the river [*Ed: this will have been in East Sussex*] *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frog-bit) and *Nuphar lutea* (Yellow Water lily) could be seen.

The Rother banks. Photo by Owen Leyshon

The group then slowly meandered down the north side of the river bank recording small pockets of *Sagittaria sagittifolia* (Arrowhead), *Persicaria amphibia* (Amphibious Bistort), *Lythrum salicaria* (Purple Loosestrife), *Stachys palustris* (Marsh Woundwort) and *Vicia cracca* (Tufted Vetch), while more dominant stands of *Oenanthe crocata* (Hemlock Water Dropwort)

and *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan Balsam) were noted. A small clump of *Lysimachia vulgaris* (Yellow Loosestrife) was also recorded in the bankside vegetation.

The route then left the river and immediately *Bromus secalinus* (Rye Brome) was found growing in large areas in the margins of a cereal field. After several large cereal fields with very little botanical interest, we found a shaded woodland edge to have lunch.

After lunch the route took us around the edge of the wood and a large shaded pond, where we noted *Asplenium scolopendrium* (Hart's-tongue Fern) and then headed down to the floodplain and ditches which held *Oenanthe fistulosa* (Tubular Water-dropwort), *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit) and to the banks of the Hexden Channel where *Butomus umbellatus* (Flowering Rush) was recorded.

Wild Angelica. Photo by Owen Leyshon

Here a number of grapnel-throwing efforts were conducted with aquatic and marginal plants being added to new squares. A quick sprint was then done to get to the west end of the Hexden Channel and the Hexden bridge by the A28, recording *Angelica sylvestris* (Wild Angelica) en route. At Hexden Bridge we went up the slope on a footpath through arable fields and back down into the village of Newenden.



Cups of tea and Welsh cakes were welcomed at the end of a long day on what was an ambitious long route for a KBRG field meeting – with very little option to shorten the route without retracing our footsteps - so well done, everyone.

OL

BILSINGTON, ROMNEY MARSH, Tuesday 23 July

A group of seven botanists joined the leaders Sue Buckingham and Owen Leyshon at the quiet rural St. Rumwold's church at Bonnington on the banks of the Royal Military Canal. It was a very hot day with a pleasant gentle sea breeze blowing across the Marsh.

Admiring the RMC. Photo by Owen Leyshon

Crossing over the Royal Military Canal bridge the group looked down to admire the *Nuphar lutea* (Yellow Water Lily), *Nymphoides peltatus* (Fringed Water-lily) and the large stands of *Potamogeton lucens* (Shining Pondweed) in the Canal. We ambled down the quiet lane and then took a quick detour off down a bridleway to check out a ditch in which Owen then found a couple of male *Aeshna affinis* (Southern Migrant Hawkets/Blue Eyed Hawkets). Several of the group spent a little bit of time trying to photograph the dragonflies as they whizzed up and down the ditch.



Returning to the lane we continued for another 100 metres and then left the lane for arable fields, coming across our first well-developed *Sium latifolium* (Greater Water-parsnip) plant in a reed-dominated ditch. Following the ditch back to the Canal we walked west along the south bank of the Canal in the direction of Bilsington, noting several more *Sium* plants on the north bank. A Hare was disturbed and a pair of Red-legged Partridges moved off when we set up for lunch, which was taken in the shade of a hedgerow near to Bridge Farm.



Looking for Sium. Photo by Owen Leyshon

After refreshments we explored a series of ditches to the south of Bridge Farm where the landowner had given permission for the group to walk. The vast majority of the ditches were sheep-grazed, but some were fenced off and some were bordered by arable which allowed various marginal plants to flourish. Some of the botanical highlights were ditches with over 100 *Sium latifolium* (Greater Water-parsnip) plants plus *Oenanthe fistulosa* (Tubular Water-dropwort), *Veronica catenata* (Pink Water-speedwell) and *Althaea officinalis* (Marshmallow).



Sium latifolium.
Photo by Owen Leyshon

Welsh cakes, tea and coffee were taken in the shady grounds of St.Rumwold's church at the end of another very pleasant and worthwhile field meeting.

OL

SOUTH NORWOOD COUNTRY PARK, Saturday 27 July

The ten attendees from Kent and Surrey set off for this joint KBRG / Surrey Botanical Society meeting in the face of a Met. Office yellow weather warning for expected rain, and their optimism was rewarded by a day without rainfall. Caroline Bateman (our Surrey co-leader) at the outset explained the history of the site, which included use as a sewage farm, although a country park since 1989, administered by the London Borough of Croydon. Its boundaries lie within Croydon, but in Victorian times the Kent/Surrey border followed field edges through what is now the park, and for botanical recording purposes the vc16/17 (West Kent/Surrey) division is the same, although there were no physical features whatsoever by which we could see the divide. Nevertheless, Caroline had worked out its notional position and the purpose of the Surrey recording was to make records which properly reflected that division, previous records probably having been made without that knowledge (and confused by several monads being involved). For Kent, the recording position was relatively straightforward: nearly all the Kent part of the park was in TQ3568, for which we had no recent records at all.



Photo by Sarah Kitchener

We began in botanical Surrey, our start enlivened by the Croydon Tramlink, whose trams were passing over the conjunction of four monad gridlines. The adjoining part of the park lies over debris from the Blitz, and the subsequent conversion into a park evidently involved wildflower sowings such as *Medicago sativa* subsp. *sativa* (Lucerne), *Onobrychis viciifolia* (Sainfoin) and *Poterium sanguisorba* subsp. *balearicum* (Fodder Burnet), all continuing as established. There were substantial areas of coarse vegetation which impressed as regards the towering spikes of *Carduus crispus* (Wetted Thistle) and *Lactuca serriola* (Prickly Lettuce) but, on the whole, possessed limited charm, whether for botanists or dog-walkers.

However, once we gained access to the pitch and putt course (not then in use), we found much more variety there, partly due to the close mowing and often sandy ground. Caroline pointed out the remains of *Trifolium striatum* (Knotted Clover) which had been just about identifiable at the time of recce, and now required the eye of faith for recognition. This species, however, could not be found in the north-eastern third of the course, which lay in botanical West Kent, where recording was handed over to Geoffrey Kitchener.



Staying put for lunch at the pitch and putt. Photo by Sarah Kitchener

We lunched at the course, a very satisfactory spot save for the presence of a single blood-sucking Blandford Fly which sought out Geoffrey Norman before meeting its doom. Working back to the main park, we explored some stream habitat and encountered a large patch of escaped *Hemerocallis fulva* (Orange Day-lily), probably the cultivar 'Kwanso' which is apparently characterised by its unique robustness – this patch was certainly more than holding its own. Our path then passed through rough grassland into which our leader plunged, having spotted at some distance a hybrid dock, *Rumex x pratensis*, the cross between Curled and Broad-leaved Docks. This led to a session with neighbouring willowherbs, in the course of which three hybrids were found and demonstrated (*Epilobium x floridulum*, *E. x mentiens* and *E. x palatinum*). It was then seen that the first Michaelmas Daisies were coming into flower, over two months before Michaelmas, and we attempted to key out a specimen. It was initially disconcerting that this came out as Confused Michaelmas-daisy (*Symphotrichum novi-belgii*, formerly *Aster novi-belgii*), not just that the name suggested that either we or the plant might be confused, but also because Stace says that this is an over-recorded taxon. However, it was checked afterwards and the identification appears correct. We then circumnavigated the large pond at the eastern end of the park which is in part parallel to a stream: the unculverted parts were found to have a wetland flora of limited occurrence in the general area, including *Apium nodiflorum* (Fool's-water-cress), *Lycopus europaeus* (Gypsywort) and *Myosotis scorpioides* (Water Forget-me-not). The *Caltha palustris* (Marsh-marigold) here was not in flower and may have been the introduced large-flowered taxon sometimes referred to as *polypetala*; but more clearly introduced were, on the bank, several stands of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* (Red Bistort). We returned via what were described as water meadows, but as these were largely of *Lolium perenne* (Perennial Rye-grass), there does not seem to be the native floral continuity that can be experienced on many London commons. Nevertheless, the range of plants seen was wider than expected, and in Kent we ended up with a tally of over 150. All enjoyed the tea and scones provided at the end by Sarah Kitchener, and Caroline's flapjacks.

GK

ORLESTONE FOREST, Saturday 10 August

This projected meeting, joint with the British Pteridological Society, was cancelled due to high winds and a yellow weather warning.



BEWL WATER, Thursday 16 August

Eighteen members of KBRG and/or Sussex Botanical Recording Society gathered at Rosemary Lane at the eastern end of the reservoir for a joint, cross-border meeting led by Helen Proctor for Sussex and Geoffrey Kitchener for Kent. Geoffrey pointed out the county administrative boundary running along the north shore and its departure from the botanical vice counties recording boundary which was in the middle of the reservoir, following the submerged River Bewl in part. We therefore started from botanical Kent, with the complication that our cars were parked in hectad TQ73, but the waters of the reservoir just below were in hectad TQ63. We made the most of that very small slice of TQ73, noting

escaped *Silene coronaria* (Rose Champion) and *Alcea rosea* (Hollyhock); also *Rorippa palustris* (Marsh Yellow-cress) in the lane gutter and *Euphrasia nemorosa* (Eyebright) somewhat bizarrely in a crack of the concrete reservoir wall.

Bewl Water strandline. Photo by Sarah Kitchener

The rest of the day was spent in TQ6931 and initially, having sorted out the hybrid dock *Rumex x pratensis* from its parents, we descended to the reservoir draw-down zone, where Rare Plant Register species *Rumex maritimus* (Golden Dock) was found. It is late germinating and fast growing, and had made a start where the rise and fall of the waters had enabled little else to grow beyond a mat of *Crassula helmsii* (New Zealand Pigmyweed). This mat was continuous round the shores, presumably the largest colony in the south-east, and perhaps covering 100 acres overall, taking into account all the inlets.



The shores showed an interesting zonation, with a lot of pioneer species in the middle range and a line further up favoured by *Bidens tripartita* (Trifid Bur-marigold) and *Mentha x verticillata* (Whorled Mint), the hybrid between *M. aquatica* (Water Mint) and *M. arvensis* (Corn Mint). The hybrid was remarkable for its vigour and abundance: we found it in varying forms, perhaps reflecting different hybridisation events including backcrossing. Although it is said to be usually sterile, it must be fertile here to spread so thoroughly, as we found it everywhere, sometimes with *M. arvensis*, but never with *M. aquatica*, which was only seen in one place in the course of the day's botanising. More colour was added by *Lysimachia vulgaris* (Yellow Loosestrife) and the yellow was picked up again in separating the common species *Hypochaeris radicata* (Cat's-ear), *Leontodon saxatilis* (Lesser Hawkbit), and *Scorzoneroides autumnalis* (Autumn Hawkbit). Where the *Crassula* was more patchy, *Lythrum portula* (Water-purslane) crept along the ground and, given a chance, other low-growing species such as *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort) and *Spergularia rubra* (Sand Spurrey) made an appearance.

Some rough grassland carried a population of largely hybrid docks, which gave rise to speculation as regards a possible triple hybrid, although subsequent examination showed that this was probably no more than *Rumex x pratensis* again. We reverted to the pathway bounding the reservoir, and added considerably to our records, including a colony of *Epilobium* (willowherbs) in bramble scrub, which bore a single plant of the hybrid between *Epilobium montanum* (Broad-leaved Willowherb) and *E. ciliatum* (American Willowherb), perhaps our commonest willowherb cross, although with only one



previous record in TQ63. From willowherbs to willows, Stephen Lemon located a small tree with leaves whose narrowness suggested influence from *Salix viminalis* (Osier), but which did not match a species. For a hybrid, the obvious other parent would have been *Salix caprea* (Goat Willow) or *Salix cinerea* (Grey Willow), but this was not resolved at the time. Subsequently Clive Stace and David Streeter opined for *S. cinerea* on the basis that faint striae (longitudinal ridges) from that species could be detected under the bark of twigs, so this cross was *S. x holosericea*. This cross was also present across the Sussex border as, indeed, were most of plants seen in Kent.

Lunch in Sussex. Photo by Sarah Kitchener

The incentive to reach Sussex was that we were not allowed to stop for lunch until we did so, and we eventually crossed a small stream which trickles down from Ticehurst and originally fed the River Bewl, its bed now submerged in the reservoir – we were now in botanical Sussex! There were some relics of a former landscape in the shape of a number of *Prunus*

domestica (Wild Plum) trees, which must have been a field boundary before reservoir construction, and there were some very floriferous reservoir banks, the sighting of which was a signal to open up our lunch supplies. Once we had built up a sequence of records comparable with those achieved during the morning in Kent, we reversed our steps. Some of us added a record of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid) in seed on the way back. Concluding the day, Sarah Kitchener kindly provided tea, coffee, cakes and scones.

GK

ELMLEY RESERVE, SHEPPEY, Friday 6 September

A very chilly wind greeted eight KBRG members in the car park at the Elmley Reserve where our aim was to access an under-recorded tetrad of grazing marsh well away from the usual public access areas. To save some time we took up the offer to move cars nearer our target area and headed out for a lone building way out on the grassland. Beside it was a great mound of introduced chalk used for putting down in the gateways to make them accessible for vehicles. This gave us a good few unexpected species such as *Reseda lutea* (Wild Mignonette) and *Poterium sanguisorba* (Salad Burnet).

Leaving the mound and cottage behind we struck out on the grazing marsh with many saline depressions and masses of *Oxybasis* (*Chenopodium*) *chenopodioides* (Saltmarsh Goosefoot) along with *O. glaucum* (Oak-leaved Goosefoot), *Spergularia marina* (Lesser Sea-spurrey) and some flourishing patches of *Hordeum marinum* (Sea Barley) which still had a few anthers so that José could record it in her Wild Flower Society diary. Along the dike margins we found *Hippuris vulgaris* (Marestail), *Glaux maritima* (Sea Milkwort) and a few very small scraps of a water-crowfoot later confirmed as *Ranunculus baudotii* (Brackish Water-crowfoot). In spite of numerous attempts with a grapnel in various places during the day we found only *Potamogeton pectinatus* (Fennel Pondweed), *Ceratophyllum submersum* (Soft Hornwort) and *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Spiked Water-milfoil), all aquatics which can tolerate the brackish conditions.

Unexpected geology: the group investigates a chalk mound.

Photo by Owen Leyshon

Luckily for us the cattle kept their distance all day but our area had been grazed earlier and then "topped" which meant that most plants including the *Rumex maritimus* (Golden Dock) plants were much smaller than they might have been. On the dry banks of the Counter Wall and elsewhere we found *Bupleurum tenuissimum* (Slender Hare's-ear) which is hard to spot at the best of times and on this occasion called for particularly sharp eyes. There was *Trifolium fragiferum* (Strawberry Clover) and both *Lotus tenuis* (Narrow-leaved Bird's-foot-trefoil) and a little *L. corniculatus* (Common Bird's-foot-trefoil). Along a ditch margin Alfie spotted the stiff wiry stems of *Carex divisa* (Divided Sedge) in spite of it having all the fruits grazed off.

Owen managed to find us a sheltered lunch spot on the leeward side of a large earth mound which was just before we were to enter our third monad. We felt privileged to be out there in the vast expanse of grassland with distant views of the Sheppey Bridge, plenty of Marsh Harrier sightings and Green Sandpipers popping up from every bend in the dikes.



We found a few patches of the attractive *Polypogon monspeliensis* (Annual Beard-grass) and alongside one which we found after lunch was a small patch of *X Agropogon lutosus*, its hybrid with *Agrostis stolonifera* (Creeping Bent).

We'd been forecast rain during the afternoon and sure enough it came, no problem spotting it heading straight for us, and with no shelter at all we beat a hasty retreat in the direction of our cars, tea and Welsh cakes at Rose Cottage. That meant we didn't reach the fourth monad but we were happy to have recorded well in three, with seven rare plant register species. We are extremely grateful to Gareth who gave us permission to be on the reserve and took the time to come out and show us where we could leave our cars for the day.



The long retreat, rain coming on. Photo by Owen Leyshon

SB

GLASSWORTS MEETING, OARE MARSHES, Sunday 6 October

Once again, all too quickly, the final meeting of the year had come around.

In 2011 our president Eric Philp had led the first Glasswort meeting at Oare Marshes where all the UK species, including the only recognised hybrid, were found. This year we were being joined by members of the Wild Flower Society and as the inaugural Glasswort meeting had been so successful and taking into account parking and accessibility, we thought it would be a good idea to revisit the same area of saltmarsh. Both Liam Rooney and Sue Buckingham, the leaders of what has now become a rather perennial Glasswort meeting since 2014, had always been blessed with fine dry weather for the days which they picked. So for the preceding fortnight they had been closely following the weather forecast and as they watched, the meteorological prognosis became progressively worse, eventually culminating in torrential rain lashing



against the windscreen as they drove along the M2 towards Faversham. Could this be the end of their good luck? They were optimistic and as they arrived in the car park of the Kent Wildlife Trust's Oare Nature Reserve, a rainbow graced the sky as if offering a divine promise of a fair day.

Photo by David Steere

As the monad containing the saltmarsh was already well recorded we only really needed to concern ourselves with the genera *Salicornia* and *Sarcocornia* (Glassworts) and how they are to be identified. Members of the Kent Botanical Recording Group and Wild Flower Society were both brandishing various crib sheets of this difficult

group of plants and after a health and safety talk by Sue were raring to go. Following in our previous footsteps we took the coastal path eastwards towards Oare Creek and it wasn't long before we reached the first part of the saltmarsh. Once we had assembled on the saltmarsh we numbered 25 in total, or 26 if you count Elska, Danny Chesterman's dog! We had chosen October as the month to have the meeting because this is when the Glassworts, once they start fruiting, begin to change colour and this can help determine their identification. Almost straight away an opportunity arose to distinguish

Suaeda maritima (Annual Sea-blite) from the Glassworts as at first glance they can look very similar, especially as both begin to change colour. It wasn't long before the first Glasswort was found, *Salicornia ramosissima* (Purple Glasswort). This is the most common of the Salicornias, as well as the most polymorphic, and Liam pointed out that it was in the diploid *S. europaea* group which is characterised by its convex, beaded sides to the fertile segments with the central flower being distinctly larger than the two lateral flowers. Soon after, a member of the group found *Sarcocornia perennis* (Perennial Glasswort) and handed it over to Liam for confirmation. Liam pointed out how only the non-fertile segments had been presented to him and that it usually has a combination of narrower flowerless segments and distal, wider fertile segments. Before long, such a piece was found and people were able to observe the rather squashed, stubby flowering segments which Liam likened to a thumb with way too many knuckles.

Liam in action. Photo by David Steere

The next *Salicornia* to be found was *S. fragilis* (Yellow Glasswort), giving Liam the opportunity to show the characteristics of the tetraploid *S. procumbens* group which have more or less straight-sided fertile segments with the flowers all being of a similar size. Then another tetraploid Glasswort appeared. This time it had a long tapering terminal spike as opposed to a shorter more or less cylindrical one shown by the previous species. *Salicornia dolichostachya* (Long-spiked Glasswort) was a good contender; however to Liam it didn't quite have the right jizz. The yellow colouring was clearer like *S. fragilis* and the number of fertile segments to the terminal spike was just within the range of both species. Liam went on to explain that some authorities believe that these two species are best combined because plants often show a range of intermediate characteristics. He also explained that when the plants are 'behaving themselves' they are distinctly different and what we were seeing was possibly an example of a hybrid between the two.



So far we weren't doing too badly and we had barely moved from our original spot! With much more saltmarsh to cover we decided to head on and look for a good example of *S. dolichostachya* which was more likely to be further out on the bare mud with greater tidal coverage. It didn't take long to find a good colony alongside a runnel where the long tapering branches and terminal spikes were neatly combed out as they laid down like Glasswort dreadlocks. They also had a more dirty-yellow colouring which can turn brownish, and on closer inspection Liam showed how the lower fertile segments in particular bulged out slightly at the bottom which he likened to a portly gentleman tying his belt too tight, something that *S. fragilis* does to a lesser degree. This part of the saltmarsh had a large population of both *S. fragilis* and *S. dolichostachya* and a spectrum of intermediate plants could be observed causing more confusion where plants simply couldn't be named to species level.

Now the hunt was on for *Salicornia europaea* (Common Glasswort) which, despite its name, isn't very common. Liam thought he might have found some plants and standing astride a runnel like Colossus of Rhodes began inspecting the finer details. He had explained that below the flowers of Glassworts are reduced leaves which look like papery scarios margins to the segments and how the width and angle of these were diagnostic. After some deliberation and measuring to see if the margins were 0.1mm or less it was decided that they were just *S. ramosissima*. Following further search we decided to look at the upper part of the saltmarsh below the seawall as Liam was keen to look for and find the very rare *Salicornia obscura* (Glaucous Glasswort). Whilst searching for something looking different amongst a genus of plants renowned for looking very alike, he did spot a plant that stood out from the colonies of *S. ramosissima* and *S. fragilis*. It was clear green with very narrow scarios margins which made a very acute angle forming a distinctive cuspidate point. This is typical of good *S. europaea* and so Liam was happy to name it so.

After lunch, which was had sprawled out along the seawall, we decided to head to the end of the saltmarsh which held a raised drier area where we knew a good amount of *Salicornia disarticulata* (One-flowered Glasswort) would be found. Moving along, Liam was still keeping his eye out for *S. obscura*, especially as we were now in the general area where it was originally found. He was looking for something with short upturned branches with no tertiary branching and of a glaucous to matt-green colour. Something did catch his eye and a plant matching that description was indeed found. On further inspection, once some of the mud had been wiped away, it seemed that there was barely any scarios margin to speak of and the angle between segments was very obtuse. As *S. obscura* is the only remaining species in the *S. europaea* group, it seemed to rule out the other two species. However, Salicornias are a very difficult group and this process of elimination isn't that straightforward. Liam didn't want to name it there and then and so decided to look at it later on once it had been cleaned up more thoroughly. It was also suggested that it be sent to Fred Rumsey at the Natural

History Museum which Liam did do as scanned images. Once it had been cleaned it was clear that it was rather glaucous and matt but there did seem to be scarious margins which would measure greater than 0.05mm, especially in the terminal spike. Fred Rumsey kindly got back and said that whilst he wasn't overly familiar with good *obscura*, so far as concerned the specimen, other than being a little more obviously glaucous and with somewhat more upswept branches than many *Salicornias*, there was little more that could convince him of it being *S. obscura*. He did go on to say that, 'with the eye of faith' the plant did have less-unequal flowers (which are another indicator), particularly on the main axis. So if it isn't a poor example of *S. obscura*, then it's a poor example of something else and like in many cases when trying to identify Glassworts you just have to drop it, forget it and move on.



Salicornia disarticulata. Photo by Owen Leyshon

Moving on, we came to the area where *Salicornia emerici* (Shiny Glasswort) had been found and last seen in 2011. Liam has been fudging the pronunciation of this for years but now has it in good faith that it is pronounced (em-air-ree-chee). Whilst he wasn't at all hopeful of finding it he did have a good look around just in case, whilst half the group went to the drier part of the saltmarsh to look for *S. disarticulata* and its hybrid with *S. ramosissima* (*S. x marshallii*). Liam wasn't successful, but the others were. One-flowered Glasswort does what it says on the tin, which makes it the easiest *Salicornia* to identify, and there were plenty of them, ranging from large bushy plants to smaller simpler ones. It didn't take long before hybrids were found and for confirmation Liam inspected a plant that was going around. It did indeed have a mixture of one, two and three flowers to the segments and more importantly, a one-flowered segment sitting below a three-flowered segment to show it wasn't just a question of growth development. Before we left the saltmarsh he found a very large and bushy *Salicornia* which stumped him somewhat and so he took it home for further thought. He concluded that it was a luxuriant form of *S. ramosissima* (which after all means greatly branched) but was perhaps still immature and wasn't showing the usually obvious beaded sides to the segments.

We became more strung out as we began to head back to the road which leads to the car park. Along the path a willow was spotted which seemed to have the influence of *Salix purpurea* (Purple Willow) which made it look distinctly different from the neighbouring *S. cinerea* (Grey Willow). However, it was later confirmed to be just that but with the possibility of having some genetic content of *S. viminalis* (Osier).

In 2011 Geoffrey Kitchener had found a rare hybrid dock *Rumex x schreberi* (*R. hydrolapathum* x *R. crispus*, Water and Curled Docks) behind a barbed wire fence which was the first record for Kent. As we were retracing our steps we came across it again, only this time it had been joined by another hybrid dock, *Rumex x weberi* (*R. hydrolapathum* x *R. obtusifolius*, Water and Broad-leaved Docks) another first record for Kent! Further along, *Typha x glauca* (the hybrid between Bulrush and Lesser Bulrush) was rediscovered as was *Bupleurum tenuissimum* (Slender Hare's-ear) which had plants still with flowers present. Caroline Ware found a red-coloured Goosefoot, hoping it to be *Oxybasis* (*Chenopodium chenopodioides* (Saltmarsh Goosefoot) which was later confirmed by Sue Buckingham.

Although we didn't find every UK species of Glasswort it was indeed a successful day and people were happy with what was found. Liam only hopes people were left more enlightened than confused with this very difficult group of plants! Back at the car park, tea and cakes were (thanks to Caroline, José Gibbs and Owen Leyshon) gladly received and so ended another Glasswort meeting where, yet again, we were lucky with the weather.

LR

More on recording Kent roses

In newsletter no. 9 (October 2016), we looked at different Kent roses and how the name of the commonest species, *Rosa canina* (Dog-rose), had been used too widely in the past. The name had been applied to a *R. canina* hybrid, *Rosa x dumalis*, as well as true *R. canina*, both being common in the county. Many recorders are now used to distinguishing

between them and if uncertain, simply record the rose as *R. canina* agg. (agg. means an aggregate of more than one kind of rose).

Rosa canina, August 2016 Photo by Liam Rooney



Now, however, the 4th edition of Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles* seeks to align our rose names more closely with those used by Continental botanists. What we used to record as *R. canina* is now split into several species, which we can broadly equate to groups into which *R. canina* has been split for many years now. I gave these groups in newsletter no. 9, but here they are again, with their new names:

- *R. canina* Group 'Pubescentes'. Hairy under leaves (sometimes midrib only) and on leaf stalk/rachis. Leaves uniserrate, no glands generally; maybe a few glands on stipule margins. This is now ***Rosa corymbifera***.
- Group 'Lutetiana'. Glabrous throughout. Leaflets uniserrate, no glands generally; maybe a few glands on stipule margins. This remains true ***Rosa canina***.
- Group 'Dumales'. [Nothing to do with *R. x dumalis*.] Glabrous throughout. Leaflets biserrate or multiserrate, with scentless red glands on leaf teeth. Similar glands on stipule margins, some on leaf stalk/rachis, occasionally on leaf underside esp. midrib. This is now ***Rosa squarrosa***.
- Group 'Transitoriae'. Intermediate between last two groups. Glabrous throughout. Leaflets irregularly uniserrate, i.e. small leaf teeth sometimes between large ones and not on sides of large ones. Some glands on stipule margins, occasionally on leaf stalk/rachis. This is difficult: while close to *R. canina*, it probably includes hybrids with *R. squarrosa*. I am advised by Roger Maskew, BSBI Rose referee, that this group should be treated as true ***Rosa canina*** as well. The *New Flora* says hybrids between *R. canina* and *R. corymbifera* might also be involved, but it seems to me that these would have a very few hairs on the leaflet lowerside midrib, and wouldn't have fitted clearly into Transitoriae to begin with.

So from now onwards, we should only record *R. canina* when we are sure that it would have fitted group 'Lutetiana' or Transitoriae. If we're not sure which group it should go in (and it's not what we've called *R. x dumalis*), then our *R. canina* record should be made as ***Rosa canina* agg.**



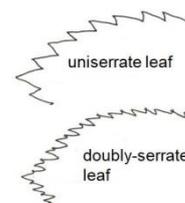
What we have been recording as *R. x dumalis* in recent years, with wavy stems flushed pink and with narrow, folding leaflets. Photo by Liam Rooney, August 2016. This specimen was probably *R. x subcanina*, in the light of Roger Maskew's guidance.

What has happened to *R. x dumalis*, then? This name still exists, and applies to hybrids between *R. squarrosa* and *R. vosagiaca* (a northern species which has only one claimed record in Kent, but whose genes have reached here probably through the spread of *R. x dumalis*, which is fertile and behaves like a species). But the name doesn't apply to hybrids between true *R. canina* and *R. vosagiaca* (*R. x subcanina*), which are probably just as common with us, and which we've also been including under the name *R. x dumalis*. Roger Maskew has these tips as regards recording:

- Because of frequent back-crossing many intermediate plants cannot be safely determined, so I would suggest you do not try to put a name to everything, only record plants that are obviously one or the other.
- If a plant shows sufficient evidence of *R. vosagiaca* to be considered a hybrid, is completely glabrous, has uniserrate, eglandular leaflets, and eglandular petioles and rachises, record it as ***R. x subcanina*** (don't worry if there are a few

glands on the stipule margins, virtually every rose bush has some); whereas glabrous plants with a tendency towards doubly-serrate leaflets, with at least a few non-scented glands (fully formed reddish glands, not dark brown or black gland rudiments) on the majority of leaflet margins, and similarly on the petioles and rachises should be recorded as *R. x dumalis*.

- I am sure most districts will have some convincing material of all these taxa, in which case, complex plants can be ignored. The only other thing to remember, is to always check that any glands are not of the sweet-briar or downy-rose type, and that the pedicels are completely eglandular.



Roger also says, there is one further complication perhaps worth mentioning. In the past certain *R. canina* plants could not be placed in any of the groups, and were ignored for recording purposes. He is now finding that some of these plants represent hybrids, and there are two which are most likely to be widespread and frequent. *R. canina x squarrosa* has intermediate glandulosity and leaflet serration, and *R. canina x corymbifera* has intermediate pubescence, but to be convinced of either you really need examples of the parents nearby for comparison. *R. arvensis x squarrosa* is also worth looking out for.

So there we have it: the most up-to-date advice on rose recording! No-one is going to pretend that this is easy, and you may wish just to stick with *R. canina* agg. But for those who want, here is a challenge for 2020...

GK

Kent Botanists

David McClintock

Many Kent botanists will remember David McClintock, who lived at Bracken Hill, Platt and co-authored the *Collins Pocket Guide to Wild Flowers* (1956, and reprinted at least into the 1980s) – still one of the best ID guides despite the passage of time. He was a botanist and plantsman of great distinction. I owe him much for encouragement in my early years' botanising, when I had contact with his project for what eventually became the BSBI's *Illustrations of Alien Plants of the British Isles*. Andrew McClintock, his son, has recently managed to get a biography of David onto Wikipedia, which is well worth a read: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_McClintock

GK

Miss Harvey

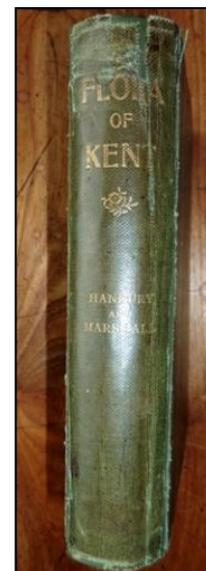
I've seen Miss Harvey's name in Matthew Cowell's *A Floral Guide for East Kent* (1839) and she made many good records, especially between Dover and Sandwich, such as *Eriophorum angustifolium* (Common Cottongrass), *Juniperus communis* (Juniper), *Malcolmia maritima* (Virginia Stock) and *Neotinea ustulata* (Burnt Orchid). Miss Harvey (c.1797-1873) was the daughter of Admiral Sir John Harvey of Deal and was a member of both London and Edinburgh Botanical Societies, but not much seems to be known about her. Some knowledge is to her detriment: apparently she was found, in the course of distributing botanical specimens, to mix them up from different localities, so that the place-names on her labels (and hence confirmation that the verifiable species in question was actually present at the recorded site) cannot be relied upon. Further information has now become available with an article by Martin Rickard in the *Pteridologist* (2019) 6(6) 414-416 about two albums or portfolios of pressed ferns acquired by him and which she prepared. Although such albums were prepared commercially, there is no evidence that Miss Harvey needed to do so, or did so. One of these collections is of ferns of more northerly provenance, and Martin suggests that this may be related to her move to Scotland. He also notes signs of carelessness, with 'filix' spelled correctly in one collection, but not the other; and with the number of species in the album being differently stated on the cover and inside list. One can't help but think that, although to her contemporaries she was 'a lady-botanist, of well-known name', she might have opened herself to a charge of being more lady than botanist at times; but maybe that's a bit unfair, it's not easy to evaluate her botanical contribution overall from such a distance in time.

GK

George Pittcock of Thanet

I'm looking at a small, green cloth bound volume, gold-lettered on the spine: Hanbury and Marshall's *Flora of Kent* (1899), kindly lent by John Badmin. This is fascinating, not just because of the text, but it has been liberally annotated by an earlier owner, who has pasted in a bookplate - G.M. Pittcock, 23, Cecil Square, Margate – and has also signed and dated (1899).

George Mayris Pittock, M.R.C.S., F.R.M.S., M.B. Lond. (died March 1916, aged 84) was a surgeon, magistrate and an enthusiastic, but little known botanist, who lived for many years at his Margate address, next to the Post Office. He moved to Winton, Canterbury around 1905, not long after which his former house was pulled down to form part of an extended and rather magnificent Post Office (now a restaurant). In 1903, Pittock published *Flora of Thanet: a Catalogue of the Plants indigenous to the Island; with a few rare Aliens* in which he acknowledged the pleasure and benefit that he had derived from many excursions with the Margate botanist, geologist and archaeologist George Dowker (1828-99). It was Dowker's death, without having completed a projected Flora of East Kent, which prompted Pittock, with assistance of other friends, to assemble the *Catalogue*. This assistance Pittock regarded as essential, since he could not have ventured on preparing the *Catalogue* alone, due to the demands on his time of his medical practice. Although Pittock acknowledged the help of Frederick Hanbury in identifying some aliens, it is notable that Hanbury and Marshall do not acknowledge Pittock as a contributor. It may be that Pittock's correspondence with Hanbury post-dated the publication of the 1899 *Flora*, and that any previous records by Pittock were in company with Dowker, who provided them to the 1899 *Flora* authors (being acknowledged as a contributor in that work).



The *Catalogue* itself is a bare list of names, with no comment on the plants or their locations. Indeed, the lack of site details is deliberate, 'in order that rare and choice plants may not be extirpated by ruthless collectors, as have [sic] already been the case with many'. However, Pittock's copy of the 1899 *Flora* in many respects fills this gap, as his annotations include details of places he knew about. Generally, these are simply confirmation of sites already given in the 1899 *Flora*, but sometimes further information or additional sites are given. Generally, it is safer to assume that only records clearly in his handwriting or with his initials or those of known collaborators are those entered by Pittock. The book has input from subsequent ownership, as witness some annotated records from 1922, 1930 and 1935 (and John Badmin's, later)!

The annotated volume also contains evidence of Pittock's sources. Pasted into the book is an article 'Summer Wild Flowers of Thanet' by the Rev. Aubrey Moore, who was an Anglo-Catholic priest of high (but controversial) repute as having espoused Darwinism. This was published in September 1886 in Keble's Gazette (the first Isle of Thanet newspaper) and was the product of some three weeks' botanising on holiday at Westgate. It includes a list of 288 plants and on the reverse Pittock extended the list to 376 as a result of his observations and those of 'H.H.' and 'F.H.'. The *Catalogue* acknowledges the help of Mr. Hewett of Margate, and I have assumed him to be F. Hewett who has many Thanet specimens in the South London Botanical Institute. Some of these specimens were collected jointly with W.H. Hammond, and one may infer that he was the Mr Hammond of Canterbury whose help was also acknowledged, and perhaps to be identified with 'H.H.'. Another list is tipped into the book numbering plants 402 to 452 and marked 'Hewett'. There is also a list marked Dungeness August 1910, obviously not relevant to the compilation of the *Catalogue*.

One can only make a selection from Pittock's annotations in the 1899 *Flora*; these mostly relate to Thanet, but in some cases extend beyond.

Myosurus minimus (*Mousetail*): Fields between Canterbury and Sturry – G.M.P., H.H. [*Now probably extinct in Kent.*]

Ranunculus arvensis (*Corn Buttercup*): Nash Court 1901 – Hewett. [*So common then that no locations were given in the 1899 Flora except for the first county record. Now exceedingly rare.*]

Cardamine impatiens (*Narrow-leaved Bitter-cress*): Grows in my garden as a weed. A garden weed in Walmer GMP. [*As a weed, this has some affinity for botanists' gardens.*]

Alyssum maritimum [*Lobularia maritima, Sweet Alison*]: also at Broadstairs on cliff – GMP. [*An early record of this garden escape.*]

Medicago falcata [*Medicago varia subsp. sativa, Sickle Medick*]: on waste ground at S[outh] E[astern] R[ailway] Ramsgate – Aug./[19]00, GMP. [*Still only an uncommon casual in Kent.*]

Medicago scutellata (*Snail Medick*): found at Ramsgate by Hewett 1902 on waste ground nr SER Station (alien?). [*Rare casual, and, if correct, the only Kent record.*]

Coronilla varia [*Securigera varia, Crown Vetch*] – waste ground [near SER Ramsgate – 9/[19]00 0 GMP. [*Only appears as a late addition to the 1899 Flora.*]

Vicia gracilis [*Erville gracile, otherwise Vicia parviflora, Slender Tare*]: Sandhills nr Sandwich GMP / [18]99. [*Then a very rare Kent native; now gone.*]

Vicia hybrida [*Hairy Yellow-vetch*] found by Hewett at Ramsgate, May 1903 near S.E.R. station, on waste ground. [*This is a rare casual indeed; Hewett's specimen is in the South London Botanical Institute's herbarium.*]

Lathyrus hirsutus [*Hairy Vetchling*]: Ramsgate – Hewett, 1903. [*The second Kent record, specimen also at SLBI. To be made a rare plant register species.*]

Rubus occidentalis: – Thimbleberry (American) grows freely at Swarling Farm GMP 1911. Found in woodland Petham Swarling farm and cultivated in my garden at Canterbury GMP 1911. Petham – H.H. (Swarling farm) 1911. [*Presumably*

Pittock was intending this species and not the more usual Thimbleberry, R. parviflorus; there do not appear to be other UK records for the former growing wild in the UK.

Rubus spectabilis [*Salmonberry*]: Found in wood at Beverley Canterbury 1911 – HH, GMP also cult. in my garden. [*An American species capable of naturalising on sandy ground.*]

Potentilla palustris [*Comarum palustre, Marsh Cinquefoil*]: Minster Marshes found with Mr Tucker many years ago. [*Very rare, then and now, although the 1899 Flora gave Minster (Thanet) Marshes as a location listed by R.E. Hunter 1796, his records were not satisfactory, so this is useful confirmation. Minster Marshes also provided other interesting records for Pittock, but are now almost entirely arable, and habitats have clearly disappeared.*]

Cotyledon umbilicus [*Umbilicus rupestris, Wall Pennywort*]: Old wall at Barham, GMP. [*This is probably the same as referred to in Cowell's A Floral Guide for East Kent etc., 1839, and as may still (2014) be seen outside Digges Place.*]

Lythrum graefferi (Tenore) [*Lythrum junceum, False Grass-poly*]: Monkton Marsh near Sheriffs Court, Aug. 1903, P. & H., referred to Milton for confirmation. [*A rare casual in Kent, not in the 1899 Flora.*]

Smyrniolum olustratum [Alexanders]: Abundant in Thanet GMP. [*And still very much so!*]

Falcaria vulgaris [*Longleaf. Against Dowker's Wingham site in the 1899 Flora, Pittock has written:*] and in 1899, GMP (in flower). Found in plenty, in flower and seed, at same place Oct 1902 GMP. Roots long, & deep, like armoracia.

Ambrosia trifida [*Giant Ragweed*]: Hewett - potato field near Nash 1902. Found at Ramsgate among weeds on the railway bank near Hudson's Mill Aug 1903. [*An American casual, now known mainly as an oilseed- and soyabean-alien; I have not found evidence that the steam flour mill used anything other than corn.*]

Senecio squalidus [*Oxford Ragwort*]: Dungeness GMP. [*At that time it had barely arrived in Kent, and it was reported in 1875 as having been heavily collected from walls at Canterbury.*]

Centaurea solstitialis [*Yellow Star-thistle*]: Margate, GMP, in Lucerne. Between M.C.G. Stn. & All Saints' Church – at side of road, 1901 – GMP. In field just beyond Dunkins[?] (several plants) Sept. 1901. [*A casual introduction with clover and lucerne, presumably diminished by cleaner seed nowadays.*]

Crepis foetida: [*Stinking Hawk's-beard. Against the 1899 Flora's Walmer Castle to Kingsdown shingle site, Pittock has written:*] Found abundant there in July 1903 GMP. [*Then rare, since declined to near extinction in the UK.*]

Gentiana pneumonanthe: [*Marsh Gentian. Against the 1899 Flora's Goundhurst site, Pittock has written:*] + GMP. [*Unfortunately there is no date with Pittock's initials, but the chances are that this is the last known sighting of the species in Kent.*]

Limnanthemum peltoides [*Nymphoides peltata, Fringed Water-lily*]: in pond at Stourmouth – cult'd – GMP. [*This is before the species started spreading in Kent.*]

Cuscuta epithymum [*Dodder*]: on Furze, Teucrium, Broom at Dungeness GMP 1900. On Lucerne, grass, Thistle, Carrot, Yarrow, [...], plantain, fleabane, nipplewort, dandelion Sep 1901.

Orobanchaceae [*Bedstraw Broomrape*]: Folkestone Warren June 1900 GMP.

Lathraea squamaria [*Toothwort*]: Between Westgate & Margate GMP 1860. [*This is the earliest dated record by Pillock, and indicates an early acquaintance with the locality given that in 1855 he was still at Guy's Hospital obtaining his medical degree from the University of London and has not been traced in local directories as a medical practitioner in Margate until the 1880s.*]

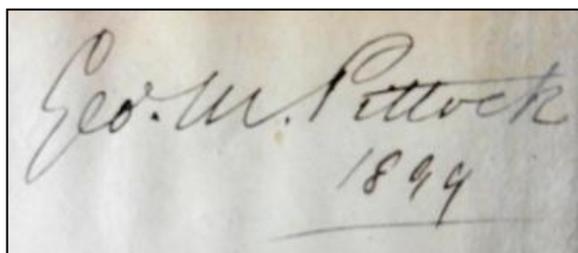
Teucrium botrys [*Cut-leaved Germander*]: found nr Petham 1905. Petham, Hammond. [*A specimen gathered by W.H. Hammond on the downs above Eggarton Manor (only the second Kent site for this rare species) is held at the Natural History Museum.*]

Atriplex pedunculata [*Pedunculate Sea-purslane*]: Saltpans GMP – 1899. [*Saltpans are a location frequently mentioned by Pittock, usually in association with Pegwell Bay. This species now appears extinct in Kent.*]

Thesium humifusum: Found near Petham - & at Swarling Farm – by Mr Hammond – 1906 – 1911. [*Last recorded in Kent in 1963.*]

Orchis hircina [*Himantoglossum hircinum, Lizard Orchid*]: Found near Wye by Mr. Hammond 1899. Fine specimen found July 1907 by Mr Harris & photo by Mr Hammond – at Olantigh near Wye – since carefully preserved. [*The species was then regarded as near extinction in the county.*]

Acorus calamus [*Sweet-flag*]: Pond at Stourmouth: Dowker (planted). [*Perhaps related to 1949-55 sightings along dikes south of Plucks Gutter, Stourmouth, which Francis Rose thought appeared native.*]



Thanks to John Badmin for the loan of his book. There are probably many other 1899 Floras around whose interest is enhanced by the annotations of their owners. I can speak for Francis Rose's copy, although the records in it are probably subsumed in his own manuscript Flora, still in course of transcription.



**Minutes of the Kent Botanical Recording Group
Annual General Meeting
2.00 p.m., Saturday 6 April 2019**

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 especially Richard Moyse from Plantlife's Ranscombe Farm who had kindly agreed to give a talk after the AGM on the future for disappearing arable plants. Geoffrey also thanked Sue Buckingham for agreeing to take the minutes and Alison Riggs for helping with the room hire arrangements. The AGM was to be illustrated with slides for the reports and Geoffrey thanked David Steere, Liam Rooney, Owen Leyshon, Stephen Lemon, Sue Buckingham and Sue Poyser for use of their photographs.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE had been received from Jan Armishaw, John Badmin, Danny Chesterman, Sandra Darling, Judy Hollis, John & Claire Horder, Alex Lockton, Rosemary Pavis, Joyce Pitt, Helen Proctor, Chris Rose and Judith Shorter.

3. MINUTES OF AGM held on 7 April 2018 which were published in Newsletter no. 11, circulated to all members in October and published on our webpage were accepted by the meeting as a true record.

Matters arising:

- As promised Geoffrey had circulated the recording maps used to illustrate the AGM report.
- Also as promised, he had given information in the newsletter about implications for Kent of the final volume of the Sell & Murrell Flora of Great Britain.
- In response to a request at the 2018 AGM for start times of meetings to be set back from 10.00 am to 10.30, Sue Buckingham had questioned those who were at the last four field meetings in 2018 in order to get a general idea of members' preference. The

outcome of the survey showed the preferred time to be 10.00 am. However, those weekend meetings which are included in the Kent Field Club programme would start at 10.30 in order to avoid confusion.

4. REPORTS

Membership. The chairman reported that membership had continued to rise and was now at 139, a net increase of 8 members from last year. He said that people were finding out about us by recommendation, by way of invitation to try out one of our meetings, by finding the website and also there was evidence that field meeting reports encourage people to take an interest. He added that the number of people who had chosen to join us since we formed had far exceeded his expectation.



Meetings. In 2018 there were 16, including some with invitations extended to other societies such as BSBI, Kent Field Club, Surrey Botanical Society and Sussex Botanical Recording Society. Some had particular objectives, to boost records in poorly recorded areas but also to improve identification skills for willows, grasses and glassworts. Geoffrey reported that in the current year we have 15 meetings planned and he put up a slide showing the spread of 2019 meetings in the county. Some of those had been arranged with Surrey and Sussex and also with BSBI, Wild Flower Society and British Pteridological Society. Meetings had been arranged on willows, ferns and glasswort identification. He thanked Owen, Sue and the meeting leaders from both last year and the current one.

Publications. Geoffrey continued his report by listing everything that had been written and circulated to members and/or published on the website since the last AGM:

- Newsletter no 11
- Kent Botany 2018
- A further instalment of the transcript of Francis Rose's unpublished flora of Kent which now included all of the monocotyledons except for grasses.
- More rare plant register species accounts. Geoffrey had written these since the last AGM and they included accounts for newly discovered *Arum italicum* subsp.

neglectum (Italian Lords-and-Ladies) and the insertion of *Radiola linoides* into Part L because it has been re-named *Linum radiola* and of *Senecio aquaticus* into Part J because it has been re-named *Jacobaea aquaticus*. He had added 17 new accounts in Part P and 10 in the first section of Part Q and R, giving a total of 30 new accounts. In addition to writing the new accounts, Geoffrey had updated all of the old ones (there are now over 750 pages of register to update!) with new records, updated maps, changes to the 'at risk status' and changes to plant names resulting from the recently issued 4th edition of Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles*.

With regard to the new Stace names, Geoffrey said that we would continue with the old ones until our current Mapmate recording programme is updated. He added that he had put the new names in the updated rare plant register list which had gone out to members and was on the website.

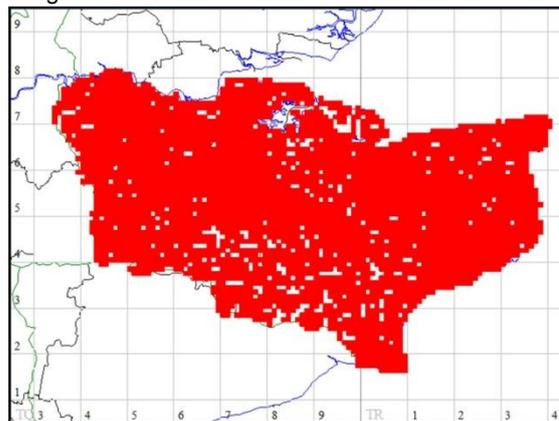
Finances. Our position regarding finances had remained unchanged throughout the year, with no subscriptions, no bank account, no expenditure and no income. Members gave freely of their time, BSBI provided our website free and Kent Wildlife Trust had continued to provide the classroom at Tyland Barn free of charge and for that Geoffrey thanked all those concerned. However we had been informed that KWT had changed its policy regarding room hire and that although there was no charge for the current meeting, the classroom would not be free of charge for any future AGM.

Geoffrey pointed out that payment which had been quoted by KWT for Tyland Barn at £25, would require financing and he reminded that in the early years there was distinct reluctance by the group to have a formal constitution with officers such as treasurer. Assuming that we continue to take that approach he suggested that in order to fund room hire we invite a donation from those attending future AGMs for refreshments. He then asked for any views, at which there was a general acceptance by those present that KBRG should proceed by way of such donations to cover the cost of room hire in order to minimise formalities. This arrangement would be re-affirmed at the next AGM. (**Action:** G. Kitchener.)

Recording. Geoffrey informed everyone that up to the end of 2018 43,000 records were added to the Mapmate database. Twenty four plants were found new to East Kent, West Kent or both, and half of those by Liam Rooney and Danny Chesterman. Geoffrey showed a county map with the 4,013 one-kilometre squares visited since 2010 shown in red and the remainder in white.

Chris Cook had boosted the red squares by sailing the Medway estuary to make records from otherwise inaccessible islands. Records were from meetings, ours and five other societies and there were 63 individuals credited with records. Contributions varied from singletons such as Kent

heritage plant, *Chaenorhinum organifolium* (Malling Toadflax) naturalised by Westbere church, to many thousands per recorder. Sue Buckingham was the most prolific recorder with nearly 11,000 almost entirely in East Kent, then Dave Steere with nearly 6,000, Geoffrey and Sarah with about 5,500 and Sue Poyser and Doug Grant with over 3,000. He emphasised that it was only a proportion of records which come from the prolific recorders and we now have a wide base of contributors who are all to be congratulated.



Rare plant Register. We had just over 1000 rare plant records for 2018. The number of listed plants had risen to include *Arum maculatum* subsp *neglectum*, refound by Stephen Lemon after 56 years without a record. Geoffrey said he had intended to add *Arabis turrita* (Tower Mustard); also *Erophila majuscula* (Hairy Whitlowgrass) but the latter's records have since been withdrawn. With the 30 new rare plant register accounts, 255 of the 327 accounts are now written and Geoffrey said that he hoped the latest were interesting and as such would stimulate members to go out and try to find some of the old records.

Conservation activities. Owen Leyshon said that in future his report on Conservation Activities would cover a three to five year period which would allow sufficient time for landowners and land managers to produce their summary reports on the good work they had done to improve habitat and conditions for our rare plants. Originally the report was intended to be produced annually but the amount of feedback Owen had been receiving was patchy and had proved insufficient for him to compile a meaningful report each year.

Specimens were exhibited of what was then feared to be an alien plant *Proserpinaca palustris* (Mermaid Weed) which had recently been discovered spreading over more than a kilometre stretch of the Government Drain which runs alongside the Military Canal at Kenardington. [Fortunately, as the plant later grew and developed, it transpired not to be this after all, contrary to initial appearances.]

5. LOOKING AHEAD

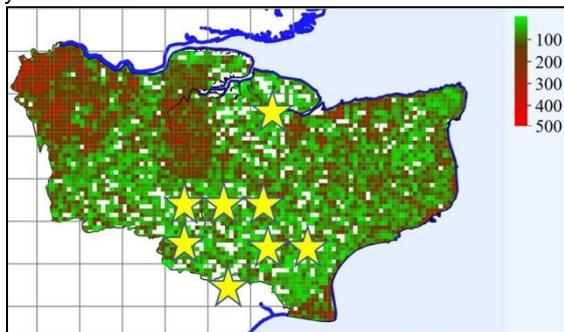
Botanical developments in 2019. Geoffrey was pleased to say that publication of David Johnson's book *Wild Orchids of Kent* should be taking place soon and David confirmed that it was currently with the printer for cost estimation.

Geoffrey said that the 4th edition of Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles* had given us not just new names to learn but also changes to the way we record and one of the most difficult of those would be *Rosa canina agg.* We were getting used to a situation where what used to be called *Rosa canina* is a hybrid, *Rosa x dumalis*, and many of us were now able to recognise that. Sometimes we have recorded one or other of the four groups into which *Rosa canina* is has been divided: *Lutetianae*, *Transitoriae*, *Dumales* and *Pubescentes* although we haven't bothered much with that. In future, though, we would need to bother because *Rosa canina* will only cover the first two of these groups. The other two would become species in their own right, *Rosa squarrosa* (Glandular Dog-rose) and *Rosa corymbifera* (Hairy Dog-rose). Geoffrey said that wasn't something we could discuss at the meeting but he offered to write a note in the October newsletter as he had before for roses. His offer was gladly accepted. (Action: G. Kitchener.)

Recording plans for 2019. Geoffrey reminded everyone that 2019 would be the last year of recording for the BSBI's national plant atlas and the last year of one of the ten year cycles for making comparison with earlier recording cycles, so planning ahead was for a one year period only, which by coincidence was also the tenth recording season for KBRG.

Our recording strategy had been to seek good overall county coverage for the ten year cycle which was coming to an end and which Geoffrey said, we had already achieved. We had also been filling in gaps in national plant atlas recording and Geoffrey proposed that we continue on that basis for the rest of the year.

In order to give an idea where records were needed Geoffrey showed a map with the intensity of recording indicated with red for over 300 species recorded per monad, pale green for less than 100 and white with less than 10. The Weald was showing a lot of white and pale green, along with some areas between Rainham and Sittingbourne and most conspicuously white was Sheppey where we might address some of the gaps with our meetings, which were mapped onto the slide with yellow stars.



Geoffrey agreed to circulate the map to members. (Action: G. Kitchener.)

With regard to what we might record, Geoffrey said the great priority was to establish whether any of our rare plant register species lack recent records in places where they used to be and whether they might still be found there. To emphasise this he

used as an example *Ranunculus hederaceus* (Ivy-leaved Water-crowfoot) with a map which shows it in only one 10 kilometre square since 2010, in two more between 2000 and 2010, but in many more in the 1970s. Geoffrey said it would be worthwhile chasing to see if it really has disappeared. The recently published rare plant register account gives details of where it used to be.

6. INTRODUCING PLANTS DELIBERATELY INTO THE WILD

Geoffrey introduced this topic as potentially a wide one with a variety of views but he explained that it was included in the agenda to establish members' views on a fairly narrow aspect. It wasn't, he said, about residents planting in the wild patch at the end of their garden, or about people dumping invasive plants on roadsides or in ponds. It was about conservation bodies with responsibilities for land wanting to 'wilden it' with quick results. The example he gave was of KWT's recent take-over of an extension to the Polhill Reserve where the intention is for arable to revert to chalk grassland which is the vegetation of the rest of the reserve. In February an e-mail was sent to KWT members which said "what we can see at Polhill Bank at the moment is nature taking its first steps towards making a comeback". Then a picture, which Geoffrey showed, of people planting up or sowing the former field with the caption "Of course nature does sometimes need a helping hand". Geoffrey apologised if he might be treading on volunteers' toes but he said that the field would have reverted quite naturally, given time. For comparison Geoffrey showed a picture of a 2013 KBRG meeting at South Foreland on National Trust land which was left to revert naturally and next a slide of more National trust land nearby at St Margaret's which was also left to revert naturally in 2013, photographed in 2018. With nothing added and nothing sown, it was filling up naturally with wild flowers including the rare plant register species *Silene nutans* (Nottingham Catchfly).

Geoffrey asked what the recording group would do if it visited the Polhill Bank extension this year where the assumption would be that everything growing had been put there. Anything planted is treated by BSBI with its status qualified and many people do not record plants that are obviously planted, their significance being quite different to that of plants which arrive naturally. Geoffrey said that as recorders we may be particularly sensitive to this, when we contribute our records towards identifying plant distributions, and he had brought the issue before the meeting in case we might wish to make any representation to KWT. He said that others had expressed similar concerns to him and Joyce Pitt had asked if her concern could be reflected as well.

Discussion followed relating to plant introductions, difficulties over assessing plant status and more relevantly if KWT might consider monitoring the outcome of planted versus natural reversion on their land. A member asked if we had attempted to establish the reason behind the planting at Polhill and Sue Buckingham said that she had heard from a KWT officer that the project funder had wanted

quick results. Geoffrey knew of a recent case where KWT had lost a bid for funding from a charity because their policy of deliberate plant introduction was becoming known and this might be a limiting factor for them. Alison Riggs gave assurances that KWT was not planning to use planting at a landscape scale and Jenny Gibb asked if we had considered expressing our concerns in a letter to KWT and also to Maureen Rainey, KWT Wild about Gardens Advisor.

It was generally agreed by the meeting to make representation to KWT along the lines that while recognising valuable work of KWT in maintaining the habitats of its reserves, this group suggests that KWT considers carefully the appropriateness of planting or sowing wildflowers in the countryside and giving the public the impression that this is desirable. (**Action:** G. Kitchener.)

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OR COMMENTS

Priscilla Nobbs had a list of the new plant name changes for members to copy from. Sue Poyser also said that the Wild Flower Society had produced a list which she could pass on.

Doug Grant informed members that the National Trust had removed trees from the well-known *Helleborus viridis* (Green Hellebore) site along the Greensand Way near Ightham Mote and he was concerned for the future of the population.

Jenny Gibb said that the well-known KWT-protected roadside verge with its large orchid population close to Tyland Barn had recently been bulldozed as part of drainage improvement to the A229. KCC and KCC Highways dept. had failed to inform KWT in advance of their intention and apparently failed to inform the contractor of the protected verge. Jenny asked members to write to KCC as concerned conservationists and express their dismay at this action.

8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT AGM

Members were asked if they wanted to stay with Tyland Barn or try the more expensive Brogdale or Lenham village hall as an alternative, but there was general agreement that we should remain with Tyland Barn.

The next AGM, subject to availability will be Saturday 4 April 2020 at Tyland Barn.

[It since transpires that this date is not available for Tyland Barn, and the AGM is re-scheduled for Saturday 21 March 2020.]

With no further business, the formal part of the meeting closed at 3.20 pm. There followed a refreshment break with tea and cakes kindly provided by Sarah Kitchener. Then followed a well-received presentation by Richard Moyse of Plantlife, entitled *Ranscome and beyond: what's the future for disappearing arable plants?*

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.

Contributions and photographs for the next newsletter will be welcome!

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

Thanks to all who led meetings in 2019; to Joyce Pitt, Liam Rooney, Owen Leyshon, Stephen Lemon, and Sue Buckingham for writing or contributing to the meeting reports to which their initials are attributed, and to the latter also for the AGM minutes; to Sarah Kitchener for reviewing this newsletter; and to the photographers credited above.

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