

Kent Rare Plant Register

2015 Appendix

HABITAT WORKS



Compiled by Owen Leyshon and the Kent Botanical Recording Group
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Introduction

The purpose of this appendix is to provide the first in a set of regular updates, collating the practical habitat works targeted at Kent Rare Plant Register (RPR) species across the county of Kent in 2015.

It concentrates on actual 'hands-on' works and interventions for individual species and does not aim to capture the vast amount of effort across the county by landowners to enhance and monitor key habitats. So, for example, there are not included many grazing programmes, woodland coppicing works or ditch maintenance regimes, which may have general habitat benefits without necessarily targeting key RPR species.

The appendix also does not cover a number of habitat works on species which remain quite widespread across the county, such as namely *Melampyrum pratense* (Common Cow-wheat) and *Carlina vulgaris*, and also some works for the encouragement of species which might be uncommon in one end of the county but overall do not qualify for the Kent RPR, such as *Ceratocarpus claviculata* (Climbing Corydalis) and *Samolus valerandi* (Brookweed), where valuable actions are being undertaken, for example in the Bexley area.

A fully comprehensive account is not to be expected, and if any key work or individual actions do not appear here, then details (including photographs, if available) will be welcome, and also contributions for the 2016 appendix. **Please provide to the author, Owen Leyshon, owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk (work – 01797 367934).**

Many thanks to all the 2015 contributors, acknowledged below.

Species works summary

Ajuga chamaepitys (Ground-pine)

Ranscombe Farm - Areas of arable supporting this species, which would otherwise have been cultivated in spring 2015, were left undisturbed to avoid burying seedlings which had appeared over the previous winter. Previously to this, in spring 2014, rabbit-fencing and young scrub on the adjacent field margin were cleared using a digger, with the aim (amongst others) of disturbing the soil and stimulating germination of Ground-pine. A total of 157 Ground-pine plants were counted in September 2015. The area where they occurred was not cultivated until late autumn in order to allow later-germinating plants to set seed. Cultivation in the area occupied by Ground-pine was undertaken with a BCS 240 petrol-driven, two-wheeled tractor and rotovator attachment to allow precise targeting. (Richard Moyse, *Plantlife*).

Kitchen Field: fine tilth produced by rotovator



The Larches – Scrub removal in early winter 2015 on the chalkside banks has resulted in large increases in Ground-pine plants in 2015, as compared with previous years. (*Alison Ruyter, Kent Wildlife Trust*).

***Althaea officinalis* (Marsh-mallow)**

Holborough Marshes – *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed) has been cut on specific shelves to reduce its dominance and to aid the Marsh-mallow plants, which has also had benefits for the *Sonchus palustris* (Marsh Sow-thistle) populations at the same location. (*Steve Weeks, Kent Wildlife Trust*).

Dungeness RSPB Reserve – Seed has been collected from the RSPB reserve, propagated, and a total of 400 seedlings have been planted back in areas of wetland on the Dungeness RSPB reserve. (*Craig Edwards, Dungeness RSPB*).

Marsh-mallow propagation, 2015



***Arabis hirsuta* (Hairy Rock-cress)**

Stockbury Roadside Nature Reserve, A249. The small population is helped by an autumn cut, mow and then removal of the bankside vegetation by volunteers. (*Gill Tysoe, Kent Wildlife Trust*).



***Campanula glomerata* (Clustered Bellflower)**

Ranscombe Farm - Scrub clearance was carried out to double the size of the small patch of chalk grassland occupied by Clustered Bellflower. This involved cutting scrub of around 50 to 60 years of age over an area of approximately 850m², then grinding out the stumps using a tracked mulching machine, and scraping off the litter with a digger. The aim is to spread green hay from the immediately adjacent grassland after its annual hay-cut in 2016. (*Richard Moyse, Plantlife*).

Mill Hill grassland extension, Ranscombe

Upper Halling – There was a vegetation cut, rake and mow with volunteers for this roadside nature reserve. (*Gill Tysoe, Kent Wildlife Trust*)

***Centaurea calcitrapa* (Red Star-thistle)**

Darland Banks – Due to low germination rates and recruitment of this species at this site, a volunteer grows on seed from the population and replenishes the population each spring. The vegetation is cut around the population and scarified to encourage the species generally. (*Gill Tysoe, Kent Wildlife Trust*).

Cephalanthera damasonium (White Helleborine)

Ranscombe Farm - Over the last two to three years, thinning of tree cover by around one-quarter to one-third has been carried out in areas where White Helleborine occurs at Mill Hill Wood. The aim is to reduce shading slightly and encourage increased flowering. In secondary woodland around areas occupied by White Helleborine, Ash and Sycamore have been thinned with the aim of encouraging spread of Beech and therefore hopefully securing long-term spread of White Helleborine. Where White Helleborine occurs under Beech and Hornbeam just to the north of Kitchen Field, the trees have been included in an area which was subject to cattle grazing in autumn 2015. This appears to have successfully grazed-off bramble which might otherwise be expected to spread as a result of shading being reduced to the south as part of grassland restoration. (*Richard Moyse, Plantlife*).

At Roadside Nature Reserves at Stockbury, Eynsford, Stalisfield, Blue Bell Hill, Gillingham and Upper Halling there has been work to enhance the habitat for this species. (*Gill Tysoe, Kent Wildlife Trust*).

Cladium mariscus (Great Fen-sedge)

Dungeness RSPB Reserve – The patch of *Cladium* which is within one of the fossil pits behind the Dungeness VC Car Park grows with *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed), which is dominating the pit; and due to the high watertable and small size it is difficult to graze and temporary fence-off with the right animals. The reed was hand cut around the *Cladium* patch in autumn 2015 by volunteers.



Reed cutting at Dungeness

Clinopodium calamintha (Lesser Calamint)

Lesnes Abbey ruins - The population has been maintained by cutting and removal of bramble around it. (*Chris Rose, Lesnes Abbey Conservation Volunteers*).

Cuscuta epithymum (Dodder)

Bedgebury Pinetum - Work has been carried to mow and cut around the Heather and Dodder populations by the Forestry Commission. The Dodder is expanding through specific habitat management around this bank. (*Forestry Commission*).

Dianthus armeria (Deptford Pink)

Farningham Wood - The landowner leaves a margin to the wood and the *Dianthus* plants are able to spread out into the margin where there is also some disturbance by agricultural machinery into the edge of the field. (*Kent Wildlife Trust / Natural England*)

Galeopsis angustifolia (Red Hemp-nettle)

Dungeness B Station - EDF Energy employed a contractor (Freedom) who manually disturbed a shingle area behind the delivery depot near to the roundabout into the Dungeness Nuclear Power Station compound. This was to encourage an existing Red Hemp-nettle population to germinate and grow away from the perimeter fence lines. Vegetation was hand dug up, using forks in the shingle. A total of 83 Red Hemp-nettle plants were recorded in summer 2015.

Helleborus foetidus (Stinking Hellebore)

Detling and Dover - Roadside Nature Reserves were managed with a cut and rake on these two sites. (*Gill Tysoe, Kent Wildlife Trust*).

Himantoglossum hircinum (Lizard Orchid)

Lullingstone Park - The chalk bank on the golf course at Lullingstone Park is managed specifically for the plant by Kent County Council. The vegetation was cut and removed in autumn 2015.

Roadside Nature Reserves at Boxley, Cliff Promenade and Lydden were specifically managed for this species by a cut/mow, rake and removal. (*Gill Tysoe, Kent Wildlife Trust*).

Iberis amara (Wild Candytuft)

Cherry Garden Upper Works, Folkestone Downs - A one day session in January 2015 with four volunteers cleared 5-10 year old Ash regeneration and also effected some removal of Cotoneaster and Dogwood on a very steep chalk slope within a wood on Folkestone Downs. A search in June 2015 for any *Iberis* plants produced a negative result. (*Owen Leyshon, White Cliffs Countryside Partnership*).

Lithospermum arvense (Field Gromwell)

Ranscombe Farm - The area where Field Gromwell was found at Ranscombe in 2015 was carefully cultivated in late autumn 2015 using a BCS 240 petrol-driven, two-wheeled tractor and rotovator attachment. (*Richard Moyse, Plantlife*).

Malva setigera (Rough Mallow)

Ranscombe Farm - One of the field margins where Rough Mallow occurs was carefully cultivated in autumn with a BCS 240 petrol-driven, two-wheeled tractor, using a rotovator attachment where the ground was only lightly vegetated, and rotary plough attachment for the grassy extreme margin. The machine was steered carefully around plants which had germinated during the previous season and not yet flowered. (*Richard Moyse, Plantlife*).

Ophrys fuciflora (Late Spider Orchid)

Creteway Down West, Folkestone - Further bramble and scrub has been cleared by volunteers around the population of Late Spider Orchids in November 2015. (Alfie Gay, *White Cliffs Countryside Partnership*).



New rabbit fencing and some cages have been installed over rosettes on the 'old' Late Spider Orchid population at the bottom of Creteway Down West as well in March 2015. (Alfie Gay, *White Cliffs Countryside Partnership*).

[Cheriton Hill](#) [bramble/scrub clearance](#) [volunteers](#)

Ophrys insectifera (Fly Orchid)

Four Roadside Nature Reserves were managed for this orchid at **Lynsore Bottom, Stockbury, Upper Halling and Blue Bell Hill** by a range of cutting, raking and removal of the vegetation. (Gill Tysoe, *Kent Wildlife Trust*).

Orchis purpurea (Lady Orchid)

Three Roadside Nature Reserves at **Lydden Hill, Barham and Lynsore Bottom** were managed for this species through vegetation cutting and removal. (Gill Tysoe, *Kent Wildlife Trust*).

Peucedanum officinale (Hog's Fennel)

Tankerton Slopes – Parts of the bank is managed with a spring strim to reduce the large stands of Alexanders, to help the Hog's Fennel which flowers later, in the middle of the summer. (Mark Tuson, *Kent Wildlife Trust*).

Platanthera chlorantha (Greater Butterfly-Orchid)

Two roadside verges managed for this orchid at **Stalisfield and at Kenardington** with volunteers. (Gill Tysoe, *Kent Wildlife Trust*).

Rosa spinosissima (Burnet Rose)

Ranscombe Farm - Spread of this species has been encouraged simply by deliberately avoiding annual cutting of part of the small grassland patch where it occurs. (Richard Moyse, *Plantlife*).

Rumex maritimus (Golden Dock) and *Rumex palustris* (Marsh Dock)

Elmley Nature Reserve (NNR) have created another 2 kilometres worth of rills and in-field wet features like seasonal scrapes. They will be rapidly colonised with *Rumex* as they were hand-spread with dock seeds from adjacent scrapes. (Gareth Fulton, Elmley Trust).

Salvia pratensis (Meadow Clary)

Ranscombe Farm – Looking back a few years in 2013 and 2014, ground scraping (using a mattock to remove the sward to depth of around 5 cm) was carried out around existing patches of this species, resulting in significant germination of new plants. This was not carried out in 2015. All existing Meadow Clary is now within a fenced field of around 8ha, first established in 2013. This field has been topped once or twice a year since, and in December 2015 was grazed for the first time by cattle, which have already poached the soil in a way which we hope will encourage further germination in 2016. In one key area, localised poaching was encouraged by placing a container of mineral supplements there, having first estimated the radius of poaching generated around the container at a different site. (Richard Moyse, Plantlife).

Silene conica (Sand Catchfly)

Littlestone Greens – A roadside bank was mown by contractors (New Romney Town Council own the Greens) in early spring and then it was left till the late autumn and then mowed again. The roadside bank area was then scarified with rakes by hand to create a shorter sward in November 2015. (Owen Leyshon, Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership).

Greatstone Dunes – Cut and treated Sea Buckthorn re-growth in the north section of the Greatstone Dunes, next to the Littlestone Lifeboat Station/Varne Boat Club, specifically around the *Silene conica* (Sand Catchfly) colonies in February and again in June 2015. (Owen Leyshon, Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership).

Sonchus palustris (Marsh Sow Thistle)

Holborough Marshes - The populations are being encouraged by the specific reed management for *Althaea officinalis* (Marsh-mallow). (Steve Weeks, Kent Wildlife Trust).

Crossness (Erith Marshes), Deptford Creek and London Wildlife Centre (Barn Elms) - Plants which have been sown and transplanted are being managed by bramble removal and vegetation cut (Chris Rose, Bexley Environment Forum/Thames Road Wetland Project).

Spiranthes spiralis (Autumn Lady's-tresses)

Long Pits, Dungeness – A lawnmower was used in an area south of the Long Pits, Dungeness to mow the turf in mid October 2015 and some of the adjoining footpaths amongst the Willow scrub to encourage the orchids. The population is reasonably small and declining. (EDF Energy / Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership).

Mowing for Autumn Lady's-tresses



***Stachys arvensis* (Field Woundwort)**

Ranscombe Farm - When cultivating areas for Ground-pine and Field Gromwell in Kitchen Field, several plants of Field Woundwort were found. These were in flower, so were carefully avoided in order to allow them to set seed. (Richard Moyse, *Plantlife*).

Stachys arvensis, surrounded
by cultivated soil.

