
SURREY BOTANICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

October 2007

No. 11

AGM

SBS AGM - Boxhill Village Hall, Saturday 16th February 2008 starting at 2.0 pm.

Please make an effort to attend.

From the Hon. Secretary

Anthony Anderson

In spite of the 'dreaded knees' I have managed to attend about half the Field Meetings even if I haven't always managed the whole day! I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting members old and new and continued to marvel at the expertise of our real botanists. I am sorry that Jane McLauchlin had only three including herself and a non-member for her second recording session at South Hawke but the weather was pretty awful leading up to that day and, indeed, that morning. This series of recordings undertaken by the Society for the National Trust comes to an end next May and it will be interesting to see the final results. Jane has done a sterling job over 5 years, sometimes with little support from the rest of us. I hope she feels it has all been worthwhile and I hope the Trust appreciates her efforts as well as those who have supported her.

We tried an evening meeting again this year (see report on Page 12), and I feel it was a success and worth repeating even though the weather for a so-called summer evening in flaming June was less than helpful!

Our impromptu visit to Chobham Common as a very late replacement for the cancelled meeting at Compton/Hogs Back was a great success with a good turn-out of members enjoying the *Gentiana pneumonanthe* (Marsh Gentian). My apologies to members not on email, but I ran out of time for making another round of phone calls. An added bonus was meeting Andy Wragg, the local ranger who led us to some interesting areas and also explained the problems/solutions for conservation on the Common. This afternoon only visit seemed quite popular and could well be repeated next year.

I was pleased to show 3 members round Hedgecourt SWT Reserve in June and I am always happy to take folks around. We have other members who are also voluntary wardens for SWT reserves and maybe they could be used for more local meetings.

We look forward to another set of Field Meetings next year. Planning starts in September and I already have a tentative date fixed for a joint meeting with Hampshire B.S. next August.

Finally, we have had a very large influx of members this year. Some have quickly become regulars at field meetings and I hope all will continue their membership next year and enjoy the activities of the Society.

We have welcomed the following new members this year: Alison Bird, Ian Capper, Peggy Dawe, Dawn Edwards, John Edwards, Simon Elson, Janice Fisher, Tom Hawes, Jonathan Herbert, Subhashinie Kumari, Sarah Mackay, Susan Medcalf, Angeline de Meester, John Peacock, Tim Rodwell, Julie Russ, and Peter Sutton. We are also delighted to welcome back Jean Combes.

Thank you all for your support.

Field Meeting - Norbury Park - 8th September 2007**John Dicker**

As most of you will have heard, it was decided to use this last meeting of the season as a memorial to Ken Page, and I have to say that I was a little disappointed that we didn't have more people attending. As it was, there were 15 of us, so, as Ann Sankey is keen for us to continue monitoring the flora of this fine park of woodland and chalk grassland, we split up into three groups of 5. The areas that Ann had suggested were Fetcham Downs, Walnut Tree Clump and Keepers Grasses, so Paul Bartlett, George Hounsome and myself went off in our various directions with pencils poised (or in my case, dictation machine at the ready!).

We were not to see each other again until about 3pm having taken our lunches with us, and after a cold start, the sun came out. From the feed-back that I received, it would appear that everyone enjoyed the trip. It was certainly successful from a recording point of view, as although no spectacular finds were made, all 3 groups totted up over 100 species, which wasn't bad for September!

Then we took ourselves off to Juniper Hall where we were joined by a few more members. We had tea & buns, and jolly good it was too! Chairman Paul mentioned how much Ken had contributed to our Society over the years, and how much we missed having him around at our Field Meetings. Ann Sankey produced some Mapmate figures showing that to date we have entered onto computer no less than 21,290 entries with Ken's name on them, and we are nowhere near finished yet!

To Ken's name, Chairman Paul also added those of John Hodge and Roy & Noreen Sherlock who had all given over so much of their knowledge to the benefit of us all. We then closed the day by looking at a few pictures. Tony Mundell had kindly sent a CD showing some Field Meetings over the years, and we had fun in trying to put names to all the faces (and even some bottoms!). My wife Janet had arranged a small display of pictures of dear old Ken when we took him to Snowdonia back in May 1998, to which I was able to add a few slides. Happy memories!

Field Meetings – Times and Duration

There was one evening and one afternoon meeting this year, what do **YOU** think about this type of meeting? Please advise any member of the Committee of your views about the timing and duration of Field Meetings that you would like.

In the previous Newsletter, I appealed for someone more competent than myself to offer to take on the role of Newsletter Editor. I suppose that I should not be surprised that no one has, although I had hoped that a feeling of guilt over the fact that a newly joined member had had to step in to avoid the entire membership from going without a Newsletter would have brought forward a volunteer! I might also remind you that the very important post of 'Recorder' for the Society remains unfilled. Be warned, that unless this apathy towards serving the Society is reversed, it will collapse like so many others, for example, Local Residents Associations. Whilst having a moan, can I also remind you all to update the Secretary if you should change either your postal address, or more likely, with your new e-mail address if you should change this or your ISP (Internet Service Provider).

The Committee have decided that the Society needs a Vice-Chairman who will eventually take over as Chairman, so nominations for agreeing candidates will be required by the Secretary before the AGM in February.

I wish to thank an Editing predecessor, Peter Coxhead for providing me with his editorial notes for the production of Newsletter No 8. This has been of great assistance in my returning the appearance of this newsletter to a more recognisable form.

Note: It goes without saying, that my opinions are not necessarily those held by the Committee.

Errors and Corrections.

My apologies to all the members of the Sussex Botanical Recording Society (SBRS) for the error in the piece '**Possible useful Web-sites**' in our last Newsletter. Although the SBRS web address of www.sussexflora.org.uk was the correct web address, they were inaccurately named in the piece as the 'Sussex Flora Group'.
Sorry to all. Ed.

Plantlife Winter Working Parties**Dennis Skinner**

If members wish to receive details of Plantlife's winter work parties, would they please contact Dennis Skinner and they will be forwarded as soon as available. More about Plantlife further on.

Herbaria@Home**Ann Sankey**

I would encourage SBS members to look at those collected in Surrey but what I wonder how many of you have looked at the herbaria@home website? See links to this at: www.bsbi.org.uk. Helping with this project could be a pleasant activity for those long dark winter evenings. Basically it entails looking at herbarium sheets online and copying the details onto a form 'attached' to the sheet. Anyone can do this and it can be quite fascinating to see what was collected and when and where. Naturally ever you do, it all helps to document records of plant species.

The use of spreadsheets, digital cameras and the web has generated renewed interest in herbaria. During the recent updating of hybrid records, they have all been actively utilised. The table below shows the localities of herbaria that are either in Surrey or close to it.

Museum	Details
Natural History Museum	Vast – has for example, 80 sheets of <i>Phyteuma orbiculare</i> for VC17
South London Botanical Institute	150 000 sheets – not data-based. Many sheets are of local species
RHS Wisley	Holds some interesting local records
Haslemere Educational Museum	50 000 sheets of British specimens – 50% catalogued
Holmesdale Natural History Museum	Hand-written lists only of an important Surrey collection
Kew	Vast – has many Surrey records
Reading	Lousley's herbarium is held here
Wimbledon	Has a small collection, soon to be catalogued

How can you help?

Some of these museums need help in extracting the information contained on the herbarium sheets. For example, the NHM is seriously short of volunteers. It would be extremely interesting to have the information on our rare species held within these and other collections. This work is ideal for those who like to get out of the house in the winter and to be in company.

There is also quite a lot of information on the web – see the BSBI website for these. Some lists can be downloaded from this site. There is also the Small British Herbaria project and the amazing herbaria@home project. This latter involves photographs of the sheets being posted on this website and members of the public are invited to database the information on the labels. As the quality of the images is so good, it is possible to zoom in on the specimens and check critical details for correct identification. Some new VC records have been made this way. Although this project is based on the Manchester collection, do not think that the plants are only from the NW. The herbarium of Dr Eyre de Crespigny, who wrote *A New London Flora* in 1877, seems to be there. In addition, the activities of the Botanical Exchange Club seem to have ensured that specimens have been passed around the country. There are many there from Surrey. This work is ideal for someone who likes to work at home.

Other museums will supply spreadsheet data on discs. Help would be appreciated in sorting and checking these for spellings etc and adding grid references in some cases. It is almost as though there is a great ocean of information out there but really much of this is a winter occupation. However, I thought I would let you know about this and hopefully some of you will volunteer to help this winter. I have been sent a *selection* of records of our rare plants from NHM and Manchester, these are available if anyone would like to see what is involved.

Note: This article was held over from the last Newsletter. Ed.

It is with much regret that one records the death of John Hodge in December 2006, following a year of illness which he suffered with great fortitude.

Having worked in forestry for most of his life, he began plant recording for Surrey in 1987, and served on the Committee of the Surrey Flora Committee, now Surrey Botanical Society, from 1991 until 2006, when he was forced to resign due to ill health.

He was a much respected, enthusiastic and highly competent botanist, and contributed 7000 records with the greatest of accuracy. He also worked with Surrey Wildlife Trust, and other Natural History bodies for many years.

He had an old fashioned charm, was always friendly and courteous, and ready to help those in need to understanding the finer points of botanical identification.

He was a very private individual, perhaps a little shy and reserved, who appeared on the surface to have very few close friends, but clearly he was seen as a loved and valued friend by his many colleagues in his botanical work. Everybody speaks well of him, and praises his many fine qualities. Because he tended to keep himself to himself, little is known of other areas of his life by those who remain in SBS.

He is sadly missed by the Surrey Botanical community for which he worked so diligently and so long.

**Field Meeting - Norbury park, Mickleham Downs
And Box Hill - 25th February 2007****Paul Bartlett**

As I am always keen to help promote co-operation between the multitude of 'Green' bodies, this was a joint meeting of SBS and the London Natural History Society.

In spite of stormy and unsettled weather, some 23 persons ignored the forecast, anxious to get out at last after the recent winter. We started north from Box Hill Station, into the Norbury Park Water Meadows, where the bridge of the reinstated oxbow lake was impassable due to the turbulent, chocolate-coloured flood waters of the River Mole.

We passed some *Viscum album* (Mistletoe) growing in hawthorn, and entered the wood where *Allium ursinum* (Ramsons) was abundant, and some small clumps of *Galanthus nivalis* (Snowdrops) were seen, close to the water's edge. These, and other colonies along the Mole, are mentioned by Lousley, and appear to have originated from a large riverside colony, inundated over winter, near Brockham.

Some spectacular fungi were seen, including the bright red *Sarcoscypha coccinea* (Scarlet Elf Cap), together with *Phyllitis scolopendrium* (Hartstongue fern), *Polystichum aculeatum* and *P. setiferum* (Hard and Soft Shield Ferns).

We walked onwards along the spectacular river cliff, and passed Lodge Farm whose rubbish tip as so often, producing some interesting 'chuck outs'. On this occasion, some *Euphorbia lathyris* (Caper Spurge) and *Heleborus orientalis*.

Back into woodland, a few plants of the bright green, evergreen, *Cynoglossum germanicum* (Green Houdstongue) were examined growing with large numbers of plants of *Iris foetidissima* (Stinking Iris).

We crossed the busy road, and beginning to feel in need of a little sustenance, climbed passed the King William IV PH, 'blindfolded and strapped to the mast', and up a steep slope with many flowering plants of *Daphne laureola* (Spurge Laurel). The sun almost shone in a sheltered corner at the end of the Gallops, where lunch was taken. A nearby shrub, rumoured to be Fly Honeysuckle, was found to be the garden hybrid *Lonicera x. purpusii*, presumably planted, but when and by whom?

We progressed through the woods to the viewpoint looking over to Juniper Top, where a knowledgeable and enthusiastic LNHS member focused attention on ladybirds, in particular the new alien Harlequin Ladybird.

Along the woodland rides, surrounded by abundant *Buxus sempervirens* (Box) shrubs, we saw many plants of *Helleborus foetidus* (Stinking Hellebore), before a 'hands and knees' search revealed the skeletal remains of last year's *Iberis amara* (Candytuft). The search was a wasted effort since a little lower down we saw several plants of Candytuft in full flower, reminding me of the first time I went to look for the Hellebore some 25 years ago, also in February, when the Candytuft was in flower, but the Hellebore was not!

Some early flowering *Primula vulgaris* (Primrose) at the foot of Mickleham Downs gave a hint of pleasures to come.

Reaching the bottom of Box Hill, several members sloped off 'to spend more time with their families', while only the most determined completed the round by ascending the hill.

The weather conditions by now were somewhat surreal, with frequent, brief squalls, bright sunshine low on our right side, and a perfect double rainbow on the left, framing a leaden sky.

We hoped that a rosette of *Ophrys apifera* (Bee orchid) on the long slope of Box Hill would survive the member cavorting limbs to come later in the year, and noticed the dead stems of *Epipactis purpurata* (Violet Helleborine) in shelter at the top of the hill, that had survived to die down naturally the previous summer.

We descended down the steep zig-zag path with a little *Atropa belladonna* (Deadly Nightshade) and returned to the Station via the meadows under Box Hill river cliff. Here there was a good clump of *Ruscus Aculeatus* (Butcher's Broom) and we finished with murals on the walls of the tunnel under the road with imaginative paintings of Pasque Flower, Red Helleborines and similar delights.

Since reporting this plant on Croham Hurst, South Croydon, up to 2001 (*1), we have counted its numbers every year.

Although we reported in 2002 that the population was declining, the numbers on the Croham Hurst Golf Course have increased again in recent years. This corner of the golf course is an area of chalk grassland and scrub which provides a barrier between the golf course and Upper Selsdon Road. It is managed by strimming sections of the grassland and clearing scrub in winter to increase the size of the area. In July when we record the *Hypericum*, it comprises long grass and tall chalk plants, with some light shade under scattered scrub and small trees. This seems to suit the plant and agrees with other observations (*2). Although the numbers are still small enough for plants to be counted individually, the population now appears to have stabilised. The site is sheltered and we usually observe many insects including Marbled White butterflies *Melanargia galathea* and Roesel's bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii*.

The plants on the verge of Upper Selsdon Road, along the south side of Croham Hurst, declined to only occasional plants and we feared that the plant had disappeared. Until the late 1980s, Croydon Council mowed the steep verge right up to the railings, and whether the plants set seed was dependent on the timing of the mowing. However, growth of overhanging trees gradually reduced the mowing to the strip of grass nearest to the road, and the rest of the verge became shaded under the trees. In 2004, some of the trees were cut back and rough vegetation at the western end of the verge removed by Croydon Council and volunteers. Subsequently the *Hypericum* has flourished magnificently, with about 1000 plants in a 20 metre length of verge. The plant is spreading east along the verge from its original site. We recorded no plants at this end of the verge between 1998 (2 plants) and 2005, so the seed must survive in the soil for some years.

Numbers of *Hypericum montanum* on Croham Hurst

Year	On verge	On golf course
1991	152	90
1997	40	Not visited
1998	10	153
1999	6	113
2000	2	57
2001	0	25
2002	1	46
2003	0	28
2004	0	72
2005	c.1000	100
2006	c.1160	60
2007	c.1113	54

References

- (*1) Jane McLauchlin & Malcolm Jennings (2002) *Hypericum montanum* L., Pale St John's-wort on Croham Hurst. SFC Newsletter NS1: 11 – 12.
- (*2) Andrew Williams, Paul Losse, Rodney Burton, personal communications.

Brookwood Cemetery, situated about four miles west of Woking, was established by the London Necropolis Company in 1852 to solve the problem of housing London's dead. The vast tract of open heath on Bagshot Sands was landscaped by the architect William Tite and planted with exotic trees and shrubs to create an extravagantly spacious and peaceful cemetery, in sharp contrast to the overcrowded churchyards of the capital. By 1854, it was the biggest burial ground in the world with its own railway for the transportation of coffins and mourners. Over 150 years later, Brookwood Cemetery still provides burial space for those of every religion, denomination, nationality, guild, organisation, or sect you can think of, not forgetting actors, atheists, and, of course, the Military. If anyone is interested, by 2004 prices had reached £2100 for burial of a body, or £750 for ones ashes.

Fourteen of us met at Brookwood Station, one arriving over an hour early thanks, or no thanks, to National Rail Enquiries; indeed, those of us who came by South West Trains might be forgiven for wondering whether the Necropolis Railway provided a more efficient service. Emerging from the underpass from the station to the Cemetery, we paused to look at the plaque commemorating the Necropolis Railway and, out of reach behind some railings, what appeared to be *Geranium rotundifolium* (Round-leaved Crane's-bill). Having discovered that the railings gave way to shrubbery, an intrepid member emerged from the bushes clutching a sprig. A closer look at the unnotched petals and downy unwrinkled fruits confirmed that it was indeed *G. rotundifolium*. Growing conveniently close for comparison were *G. pusillum* and *G. molle* (Small-flowered and Dove's-foot Crane's-bill respectively).

The Cemetery is bisected by the Cemetery Pales and it was to the west of this road that we spent most of the morning advancing slowly as we examined the flora of the sandy, acid soil. For much of the time we were on hands and knees as it is difficult to spot species like *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird's-foot), *Filago minima* (Small Cudweed), *Myosotis discolor* (Changing Forget-me-not) and *Aphanes australis* (Slender Parsley-piert) from an upright position. Distinguishing between *Polygala vulgaris* and *P. serpyllifolia* (Common and Heath Milkwort) kept us on our knees as we looked for the opposite lower leaves of the heath species. We remained thus to examine *Carex caryophyllea* (Spring Sedge) and *Carex pilulifera* (Pill Sedge) but managed to cope with *Carex hirta* (Hairy Sedge) and *Carex ovalis* (Oval Sedge) whilst back on two feet again.

Continuing eastwards, we looked at grasses typical of this sort of habitat, including *Nardus stricta* (Mat Grass) with its one-sided spikes; the semi-prostrate *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath Grass) and, predictably, *Aira praecox* (Early Hair-grass). *Veronica officinalis* (Heath Speedwell), with spikes of lilac flowers from its leaf axils, was abundant and accompanied by three of its relatives: *V. chamaedrys*, *V. arvensis* and *V. serpyllifolia* (Germander, Wall and Thyme-leaved Speedwell). Pete Howarth had come equipped with a volume of the Journal of Bryology in which *Lophocolea brookwoodiana* was described. This liverwort had been discovered by Mary Clare Sheahan and Jean Paton at Brookwood in 2004 and named after the site where it had first been found. Trying to find it would have been like looking for a needle in a haystack but Pete did find its relative *Lophocolea bidentata*.

We kept our eyes peeled for *Teesdalia nudicaulis* (Shepherd's Cress) and were eventually rewarded, but found only a couple of plants. Other good records were *Trifolium micranthum* (Slender Trefoil) and *Cuscuta epithymum* (Common Dodder) but the highlight of the morning for many of us was *Viola canina* (Heath Dog-violet), a species identifiable by its straight, yellowish blunt spur and long pointed leaves and owing its decline as much to hybridisation as to loss of habitat.

After lunch we gradually made our way across the Cemetery Pales to the eastern side of Brookwood, pausing on the way to record, inter alia, *Salix repens* (Creeping Willow) and *Luzula multiflora ssp congesta* (Heath Wood-rush). Making our way past the Columbarium, where no-one was brave enough to take on the identification of a *Hieracium*, we headed for a shallow damp depression where *Dactylorhiza maculata* (Heath Spotted-orchid) and *Listera ovata* (Common Twayblade) were thriving, but there was no trace of the *Orchis morio* (Green-veined Orchid) that had been recorded here formerly. In another shallow depression we saw what we thought might be *Carex acutiformis* (Lesser Pond-sedge) but it seemed rather an unlikely site. Other suggestions were put forward, but having keyed it out, it did indeed turn out to be as first thought, *C. acutiformis*.

By this time people had started looking at their watches. Heading back to the station, we paused on St Cyprian's Avenue to look at the Orthodox Church and Monastery of St Edward the Martyr where the relics of the King and Saint are enshrined. As we were about to move on, a monk emerged and invited us to look inside the church: every vertical surface of the wooden structure was covered with icons and the only seating was around the walls. The monk explained that worshippers remain standing throughout services, which are chanted, and that only those unable to endure the strain "go to the wall", normally the young who are less accustomed to the rigours of Orthodox worship. The monk also explained that the Saint Edward Brotherhood of Monks had been established at Brookwood in 1982 and that two derelict chapels that had once served the London Necropolis Company had been extensively renovated to provide a monastic house and a thriving church for both Orthodox immigrants and British converts to Orthodoxy. With Sunday congregations numbering well over 80 and with many pilgrims and visitors needing accommodation, new premises are currently being constructed.

According to the monk, the Brookwood Cemetery site had formerly been four times as large but much of the land had been sold off for purposes such as housing. It had taken us a whole day to cover just a tiny part of what's left, providing plenty of scope for those inspired to make further visits - there are certainly many compelling reasons to return.

Churchyards and Cemeteries

Ann Sankey

In the spring 2007 I appealed for members to continue recording in graveyards as these often contain remnants of old grassland. A number of you have added to our list of surveyed sites. Thank to you all for doing this. Special thanks though must go to Gwyneth Fookes, who has looked at 23 graveyards this year, visiting most of them twice. This is in addition to recording in 22 other areas. This is an amazing effort for which we should all be really grateful. I am not sure how many more there are to do but we certainly have not finished, so next year please see how many more we can survey.

I met Ken Page almost 20 years ago on my way to my first Surrey Flora Committee meeting. I was a little lost and there he was, standing at the side of the road giving directions to a hidden car park. We chatted that day and got on well and later, when we got to know each other better, he became my friend and mentor. Like me he was self-taught and we shared the same love of plants. He was inspirational and encouraged my knowledge and enthusiasm. He helped me to appreciate the more difficult areas of botany including Willows, grasses and sedges; some of which I have still to get to grips with!

Ken was a very productive recorder, scouring the county looking at old sites and discovering new treasures. He also led many a meeting, usually looking at species that other botanists tend to shun. Willows were a specialty but I think he knew every bramble, hawkweed and conifer in the county together with any garden plant likely to nip under the garden fence.

A straight talking, no nonsense type of chap, Ken could be irascible and sometimes irritated by experts whom he felt should 'know better'. He and his great friend Joyce Smith often had to 'agree to differ'. However, he could also be very patient and was the font of all knowledge at SBS meetings where he was always willing to share his extensive knowledge of all things botanical. Field meetings were often late starting due to members presenting him with bits and pieces for identification. The meetings often ended late too, with a welcome mug of tea and a slab of his sister's home made cake at his place.

Prior to his retirement, Ken had worked as a gardener for the author Beverley Nichols who said "He comes on a motor bicycle looking rather fierce in a white helmet" He dedicated his book 'Garden Open Today' to Ken and wrote, "I am fortunate in having the services of Mr Page. Of all the gardeners I have ever had, he is by far the most knowledgeable, with a scholarly understanding of every form of British plant life and a keen inquiring mind"

That was Ken. We too were fortunate to have known him and to benefit from his knowledge. May he continue to inspire us all.

Ken's records:

Records by Ken so far entered in MapMate	21290	Ken liked alien plants. We have not yet made any attempt to enter these, so the total number of records he contributed will be much higher
Herbarium specimens	c5000	Not all of these will be of wild Surrey plants as Ken also collected specimens from gardens
Record files	About 12 files	Typed lists of records, in A-Z order, with native and alien species listed separately

Field Meeting - Hindhead, the Devil's Punch Bowl - 30 Sept. 2007 Ann Sankey

As a farewell to summer recording in 2007, I contacted members who have e-mail to arrange an informal meeting the Devil's Punch Bowl. Almost all our records for the site date from the 1987/8 period so an update was clearly needed. Eight of us, plus one honorary non-botanist met to make a start on this. We could not have had a scenically better place to botanise in, the views to the N from the top being particularly fine. "Is this Surrey?" one of us was heard to ask – well yes, and we must not forget what a fantastic county we live in. Work has already started on the Hindhead tunnel and when completed this area at least will be much quieter.

We made our way down to the source of the first stream to emerge in the Bowl to look for the leaves of *Viola palustris* (Marsh Violet). Unfortunately as none of us had Wellingtons, we had to tread rather gingerly around the edge of the wet area! We did not see any *V. palustris* but were very pleased to find here and in the other wet flushes, healthy populations of both *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel) and *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort). Brian Spooner had recorded a patch of the former in 2006, the first record since the 19th century and the latter is a new 10km record. I suspect that both had always been there but were lurking as relic populations under gorse and willow.

In line with many conservation organisations, the National Trust [NT], who owns the site, has introduced a grazing regime, in this case using Highland cattle and Exmoor ponies. These animals are doing very good work in opening areas, both on the drier slopes and alongside the streams. Whilst we were having lunch, a few plants of *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird's-foot) were found. This species is characteristic of dry acid grassland, a habitat that is set to increase here with the grazing but had not previously been recorded in the Punch Bowl. Another species to benefit is *Drosera rotundifolia* (Round-leaved Sundew), which Steven Ettlinger spotted on the wet clay exposed by the animals' hooves. This species had not been recorded here since 1965. The cattle and ponies have quite catholic tastes; this is good for keeping the vegetation open but not for recording sedges in the autumn. We decided to wait until next year before making positive identification of species such as *Carex laevigata* (Smooth-stalked Sedge), a species for which we have very few recent records anywhere in Surrey.

We found our way to the Youth Hostel to search for *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern). David Baldock had reported finding it near here in 1992, another first record since the 19th century. Current county records show that this is also a diminishing species. We were thrilled to see two plants. This find buoyed us up for the long climb back to the car park at the top. The vision of cups of tea also helped considerably. The tea and cakes at the NT café were excellent. It is always very pleasant to sit down together after a day in the field. Some of us enjoyed similar occasions this year at Frimley and at the Travellers Rest PH in the Chipstead Valley after the Fames Rough meeting. **A hint to those organising meetings next year!**

The Devil's Punch Bowl is a large area and we were only able to look at a small portion of it this time. Return visits are clearly needed and I hope to arrange more in the coming season(s).

13 members ignored the threat of rain and gathered at 6.30 pm in the NT car park by Steer's Field for a 'summer evening stroll' along the Downs. Hardly summer weather but at least the rain held off until we were returning to our cars around 8.40 pm.

The group moved into Steer's Field and turned eastwards towards a super chalk-based meadow. The target here was *Thesium humifusum* (Bastard Toadflax). Ignoring various chalk grassland plants either in flower or just about to flower, the group plunged down the quite steep slope of the Downs, eventually finding the Toadflax in very abundant amounts. Your Secretary risked his dodgy knees to descend and see this pretty little plant and contrast it with *Linum catharticum* (Fairy Flax), also in flower. We also admired *Plantago media* (Hoary Plantain), very attractive in full flower. *Melanargia galathea* (Marbled White) butterflies were also very abundant and some were already settling for the night on the Hoary Plantain flower heads. Two butterflies on one flower head made a good subject for the photographers.

We then backtracked to Steer's Field and continued west along the North Downs Way through the woods to find *Helleborus viridis* (Green Hellebore), long since past its flowering season. Nearby we found *Bromus ramosus* (Wood Brome) and *Polystichum setiferum* (Soft Shield Fern).

Dropping down from the woods we returned eastwards along the grassy hillside. The path was edged by *Verbena officinalis* (Vervain) and *Thymus drucei* (Wild Thyme), the latter heavily infested with a gall, name unknown? As we walked along, first encountering a *Lampyris noctiluca* (Glow-worm), *Gymnadenia conopsea* (Fragrant Orchids) and *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchids) appeared and increased in size. We also found a few *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchids) but failed to find *Aceras anthroporum* (Man Orchid) in its 'usual' spot.

Back up the hill to Steer's Field and the cars just in time to beat the rain. In spite of the weather a very pleasant evening enjoyed by all present and definitely to be repeated next year.

Another joint meeting, this time with Plantlife, designed to harness the forces of the two bodies to assess the results of striping of all the ground cover from 29 one or two metre square plots. This had been carried out in foul weather the previous November by 'Plantlife' and 'Old Surrey Downs Project' volunteers. On this occasion, Katherine Stewart from the Plantlife Office and four Plantlife members (two from South Wales, one from Berkshire, and one from Salisbury), joined us for the morning.

We counted and recorded all the species found, but especially looked for *Ajuga chamaepitys* (Ground Pine) and *Teucrium botrys* (Cut-leaved Germander) as both of these have diminished in number here over recent years. A total of 14 *Ajuga* (7 in one plot) and 9 *Teucrium* were found in 6 of the plots. In addition, a further 2 plants

of *Ajuga* were found elsewhere on the slope, with a large colony of about 40 plants of the *Teucrium* rather lower down.

After lunch, whilst the bulk of the party went to Hill Wood Field, Ann Sankey and 3 others went to the hay meadows lower down in Chipstead Valley. A good selection of chalk loving plants were seen, though with no great rarities, but including *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling), *Vicia hirsuta* (Hairy Tare), and *Picris hieracioides* (Hawkweed Ox-tongue), *Pimpinella saxifraga* (Burnet Saxifrage) amongst others. A large colony of *Rhinanthus major* (Greater Yellow Rattle) was found by the Car Park.

Field Meeting – Hill Wood Field - 4th August 2007 (pm)**John Dicker**

After lunch at Fames Rough, Ann Sankey suggested that we might like to do some recording in a nearby field known as Hill Wood Field, Stagbury Downs, and as Roger Hawkins had pencil & paper to hand, and I had my little dictation machine, we took on the task between us of noting all that was seen. As there was about a dozen of us, we split up, Roger's team recording the top of the field, whilst my group took on the bottom, with both teams venturing into the middle as & when we could. This was not always possible due to it being somewhat overgrown, particularly with some fine *Pastinaca sativa* (Wild Parsnip); all very well, but with the sun shining, we didn't wish to end up covered in blisters like the boy who stood on the burning deck!

Between us we managed 98 species which wasn't bad. There was nothing particularly unusual, although we had just about finished before we notched up *Bellis perennis* (Daisy)! Interestingly, a fair number of the *Centaureum erythraea* (Common Centaury) plants seen were white flowered, and Roger's group found some galls on the *Linaria vulgaris* (Common Toadflax) plants. Roger subsequently did some homework and ascertained that these were made by the gall *Gymnetron antirrhini*.

Plantlife**Ann Sankey**

Paul Bartlett and I recently had a meeting with Dominic Price, the Plantlife Officer responsible for their 'Back from the Brink' species in the South East. The aim was to facilitate a closer working relationship between Plantlife and SBS.

Plantlife's remit is to foster the conservation of certain endangered rare species and it organises both surveys of these species and work parties to improve their habitats.

SBS's principle aim is to accurately record species and to promote their conservation. Thus there is considerable overlap between the two organisations and it seems sensible for us all to work closely together. I know that some SBS members already do this on an individual basis but a more formal approach would be beneficial to both. An example of this was the very enjoyable recording meeting at Fames Rough. In addition, perhaps more solely Plantlife members could be encouraged to join SBS and more SBS members might like to take part in Plantlife's recording schemes and with work parties. (See item on Page 3).

We have always exchanged data on the distribution of certain species and this is likely to increase in the future with the increase in the number of BAP species – see the note on Surrey Rare Plant Register (P.18) for details of these. I have been asked

by Plantlife to prepare a report on the Surrey woodland species now included in the new BAP Priorities List.

Woodland Trust

Ann Sankey

Having just received a copy of the latest Woodland Trust [WT] Directory, I thought it would be interesting to see how many of their Surrey woods have been recorded by us and when. The table below shows the results of my search of our MapMate database. As can be seen, there are some woods for which we have no records and others for which updates are due.

I mention all this now as suggestions for those who would like to continue surveying for the rest of this year, and for those who would like a clearly defined area in which to record in 2008. Ideally sites need to be visited three times in a year to be sure of listing all the species present. Two visits, well-spaced, is acceptable. Details of each wood should be available on their website, www.woodlandtrust.org.uk by following the link to woods. Another useful winter activity is to take part in the ancient tree hunt, see: www.ancientreehunt.org.uk. The Woodland Trust is a major supporter of this survey.

Woodland Trust sites in Surrey – order as per their Directory

Site Name	Central Grid Reference	Date of most recent survey(s)	Recorder(s)	Access
Knaphill, Barley Mow Wood	SU966593	17 Apr 2006	Hounsome, G.	Open
Chipstead, Chiphouse Wood	TQ260570			Open
Effingham, Clamp Rough & Gallows Grove	TQ103560			Open
Dunsofold, Durfold Wood	SU997326	06 May 1998	Leslie, J. F., Page, K. W. & Smith, J. E.	Open
Charlwood, Edolphs Copse	TQ236425	19 Jul 2004 & 18 Apr 2007	Follett, P	Open
Charlwood, Glover's Wood	TQ227407	14 May 1998 & 08 Sep 2001	Hoare, A. Follett, P.	Open
Limpsfield, Great Earls Wood	TQ407486	22 Aug 2001	Leslie, J. F., Page, K. W., Smith, J. E.	Open
Effingham, Great Ridings Wood	TQ104539	1999	Leslie, J. F., Page, K. W., Smith, J. E.	Open
Newdigate, Hammond's Copse	TQ212441	13 Aug 2001 & 01 Apr 2002	Follett, P.	Open
Brook, Heath Hills	SU931382			Open
Tadworth, Holbeche Corfield Copse	TQ241557			Open
Dorking,	TQ171473			Open?

Holmwood Park				
Puttenham, Lascombe Walk	SU919470			Open
Oxted, Little Earl's Wood	TQ406489	10 Aug 2000	Leslie, J. F., Page, K. W. & Smith, J. E.	Open
Woldingham, Great Church Wood	TQ3754	1998	McLauchlin, J. & Dolbear, P.	Open
Woldingham, Marden Park Woods	TQ373541	1998	White, P.H.	Open
Abinger Hammer, Oxmoor Copse	TQ097467	26 Sep 2007	SBS SW Surrey Group	Open
South Nutfield, Philpotes Wood	TQ311488	16 Aug 2000 & 20 Jun 2001	Leslie, J. F., Page, K. W. & Smith, J. E.	Open
Charlwood, Ricketts Wood	TQ230429	2001 & 29 Apr 2002	Leslie, J. F., Page, K. W. & Smith, J. E. Follett, P.	Open
Oxted, Staffhurst Wood	TQ413487	22 Aug 2001	Leslie, J. F., Page, K. W. & Smith, J. E.	Open
Hindhead, Vanhurst Copse	SU893384	19 May 1999	Leslie, J.F., Page, K.W. & Smith, J.E.	No public access
Ewell, Nonsuch Park, Warren Farm	TQ232629	2003	Parker, R.M.	Open

Ravesbury Park, Morden

Jovita Kaunang

I really want to encourage everyone to visit Ravensbury Park and enjoy the 'paddling pool/play area' near the Morden Road side of the park, before the bulldozers start arriving. I've just received a letter from Merton Council saying that permission has been granted for a major building development that will replace that part of the park. I, and many others, fought hard since 2004 to stop this, especially as it's public open space/parkland.

Back in July 2005, Ken Page and John Dicker went with me to the park - this was a return visit for Ken and together we marvelled at the 16m high *Umbellularia californica* (Californian Laurel), the second tallest in the UK on a single stem. Other trees include a fine specimen of *Cephalotaxus fortunei* (Chinese/Fortune's Plum Yew), *Acer ginnala* (Amur Maples), *Parrotia persica* (Persian Ironwoods), a *Albizia julibrissin* (Cut-leaved Alder), *Ostrya carpinifolia* (Hop Hornbeams), and Silk Trees etc. etc. All in all, a good collection for a park in an urban setting. This new development should involve preservation of the two key species i.e. Californian Laurel and Chinese Plum Yew, however the buildings and their construction will I fear, cause them a slow decline. Please visit this park before it is too late to see these wonderful trees and shrubs.

We have had another enjoyable year's recording in the south west of the county. This area I loosely consider to be the SW quartile of VC17 and it is a large area to look at in any detail. Membership of the group is open to all SBS Members, irrespective of where you live. This is just as well, as there are still relatively few members in the SW. We usually meet on a Tuesday or Wednesday, with some weekend meetings to accommodate those of you who work. Sometimes we are only out for half a day.

There have been many highlights. It started by our practising 'micro-botany' on the dry acid grasslands of Abinger Roughts and Shere Heath and they were dry this spring. Perhaps we should have knee pads as part of our gear? We did not re-find *Potentilla argentea* (Hoary Cinquefoil) on the Roughts but were pleased to find a few plants of *Hypochaeris glabra* (Smooth Cat's-ear) on the Heath. Having highlighted the paucity of records for *Polygala serpyllifolia* (Heath Milkwort), it was pleasing to find a few plants of it amongst a relic population of *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather) in the centre of a Wealden wood. A vivid memory was standing in the middle of a marshy area at Shalford whilst a small suckler herd of Highland cattle cantered around its perimeter. Fortunately for us, they became distracted by an unconcerned fisherman and we were able to continue our searches unmolested. We had though, chosen a time after much rain and there were many areas under too much water for us to search for some of the rarities here.

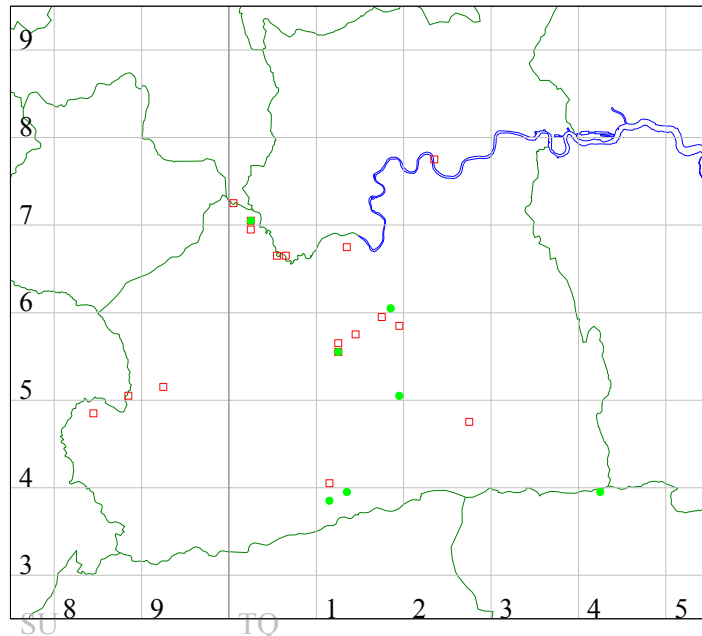
One Sunday we searched in vain on Thursley Cricket Field and Recreation Ground for *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Bird's-foot Clover) but did find *Potentilla argentea* amidst a sea of *Senecio* (Ragwort) in the Parish Field, an area of acidic grassland surrounded by the burnt acres of Thursley Common NNR.

In August, we met to look at Lowerhouse Lane and Buildings Wood near Walliswood. Almost halfway along this BP, an old lane that fortunately missed being tarmaced, we came across a field that made us say "Wow". With a FP along its southern edge, we were able to compile a good list of species, including *Achillea ptarmica* (Sneezewort), fruiting spikes of a *Dactylorhiza* (Spotted-orchid), *Lychnis flos-cuculi* (Ragged-Robin), *Stachys officinalis* (Betony) and *Succisa pratensis* (Devil's-bit Scabious). Then we found a patch of *Silaum silaus* (Pepper-saxifrage). Although Lousley (1976) states that this species is frequent, we have relatively few records for it. The accompanying map (P.17) shows this, though there are still a few older records to be added. It was frustrating to be only able to record from the FP, as it looked as though there could be some more interesting species further in by the small stream. A few days later, one of us contacted the owner to ask permission to record in the rest of the field. His response was "there was no point as he intended ploughing it." As can be imagined, this provoked quite a response from me and I contacted him directly to explain the importance of his field, etc. I also made some enquiries elsewhere and discovered that the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations are still in place. These require consent before ploughing or re-seeding a semi-natural habitat. Application of herbicides or fertilisers is also included in these regulations. Natural England has a Damage Prevention Team to administer these. I contacted one of the team and he has written to the owner to explain the situation. All farmers will know of these restrictions but private

landowners may not. Hopefully all will be well, but we need to keep an eye on the area. SBS members are ideally suited to keeping an eye on such precious areas. Please do let us know if you think similar areas or other important habitats are likely to be lost. More details of the EIA Regulations can be found at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environmental/land-use/eia/index/.htm>

Map showing the distribution of Pepper-saxifrage in Surrey, mapped at 1km square level.

Symbols:
 open square - pre 1999
 solid circle - post 1999



Of course, good areas can be lost by neglect or mismanagement and we recently came across a field where ditches had been put in to drain a field and the grass had been cut and left lying. In June 1995, 80 species were recorded in this area, including over 100 spikes of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid) and a good population of *Galium uliginosum* (Fen Bedstraw). This time, in September, we were only able to find a few plants of the latter. I need to discover the owner of this field.

The last meeting that we had was at Abinger Hammer. The aim was to look at Oxmoor Copse – see ‘Woodland Trust’ (P.14) in this Newsletter, and nearby footpaths. This small copse proved to be species poor but we were able to look at the nearby stream before crossing the road to an old FP and then across a maize field where we found good populations of *Filago vulgaris* (Common Cudweed) and other arable plants around the edges. Rad Lane proved to be too dark for most species but we made a fair list of species in the marsh by the Tillingbourne. Although sunny, we had really felt the effects of a cold north wind so most of us sought the haven of the Abinger Arms for some hot food as a counter-balance.

Unavoidably losing the whole of June, I feel conscious that there are many areas to the more extreme SW that have not been visited. Even so, we had about sixteen meetings this year. All were interesting and some important records were made on most occasions. In addition, we all learn something. Membership is open to all – beginners or the more experienced. Please contact me by e-mail next year if you would like to join us. Better still, why not also start a group in your area? Electronic communications make this easy to do.

During the summer, I sent out spreadsheets by e-mail of the existing records for many of the Red Data Listed Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable species that occur in Surrey. These are all included in the draft list of species being considered for inclusion in the Surrey Rare Plant Register [SyRPR]. My aim was to encourage members to survey the sites where these species had been found so that the records could be updated to post 1999 records. Some of you responded well to this appeal – thank you for doing so. Next year, I aim to send out records of further species for you to look out for. Meanwhile, I would welcome comments about these lists and I do hope more of you will make use of them in 2008.

During the winter, the SBS MapMate Group will be entering the existing paper records for the remaining species on the draft list. This is hard work and I thank the members of the group in advance for this. Without them, we would be way behind in the SyRPR project.

One consequence of the publication of the new Red Data List for Vascular Plants in 2005 has been the review of the Biodiversity Action Plans [BAPS] for the United Kingdom. There has been an increase in both the number of taxa listed and the number of habitats. The Surrey vascular plant species to be prioritised as BAP species will be shown on a revised version of the draft list of the SyRPR species and this will be sent to members in time for the 2008 season. Further details can be viewed on www.ukbap.org.uk.

The Records Committee have already started on the Species Accounts for the SyRPR and two samples are shown (1.) below, and (2.) on Page 19.

(1)

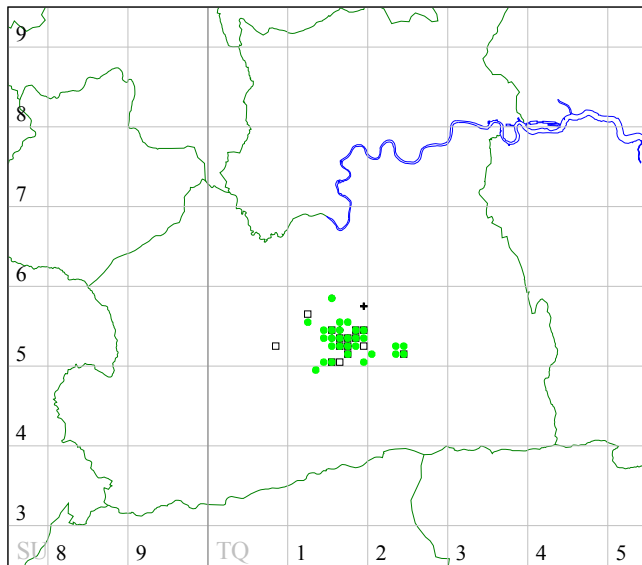
Herminium monorchis L. Orchidaceae
Vulnerable

Musk Orchid
Native

This orchid is a short, tuberous perennial and is confined to short calcareous grassland. Its active period of growth is in August and it is vulnerable to summer drought. The two largest populations in Surrey are where there is some protection from intense heat, either from trees or from a N-facing site. Numbers at the two other sites can be very low. It has been lost from three sites since 1950 due to scrub development. Herbarium records suggest that it was once more widespread. Now only four sites are extant. It remains vulnerable to dense grass and scrub encroachment. Rabbit grazing may also be a major threat. It is declining elsewhere with BI New Atlas recording only 32 10 km², all in the south.

Site	Gridref	Site	Date	Recorder	Comment
White Downs	TQ1249	SAC	2007	Phillips, B.W.	Population stable
Box Hill,	TQ1751	SAC	2007	Sankey, P. A.	Population stable
Zig Zag Valley Area					
Headley Warren	TQ1853	SAC	2007	Jeffcoate, G. & Sankey, P. A.	None seen; perhaps suffering from overgrazing by rabbits
Dawcombe Nature Reserve	TQ2152	SAC	2006	Humphreys, S.	None seen; vulnerable to the effects of drought

A biennial or very short-lived perennial, the abundant fruit of this species is dispersed by animals but the seeds have very little dormancy. It occurs in mixed yew woodland, almost solely on the chalk. The Mole Valley has always been its main centre of distribution, with most populations in Norbury Park. Since the storms of 1987 and 1991 created open spaces within woodland, it has expanded considerably, on both sides of the valley and beyond. New populations continue to be found but it does not always persist in some of its new localities, perhaps as the vegetation closes in. This species needs monitoring to check on the long-term trends. Surrey supports almost the entire BI populations, with just two sites outside the county.



Scale: mapped at 1km square

Symbols: cross - pre 1987
open square - pre 1999
solid circle - post 1999

These written accounts are quite brief. I appealed for volunteers to help with the writing of these and two members came forward. Thank you for this. Please do get in touch if you would like to help with this important project.

SBS Newsletter No. 12 – Copy Date

Editor

Would all those intending to send contributions for inclusion into the next SBS Newsletter note that they should be sent to the Editor by the end of March 2008 to enable production and distribution to take place by the end of April.

In order to maintain some consistency between the various articles, could I ask you to put the Latin names first and (if included) the English names following and within brackets. Thank you.

Elizabeth Norman

It is with much sadness that I have to tell you of the passing away of another member, Elizabeth Norman, who died in September. Our condolences go to all her family.

SBS Subscriptions 2008

Members are reminded that Subscriptions for 2008 Membership should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer by January 2008. The Subscription rate remains at £5.00 per annum, and her address can be found below. A few still have not sent their Subscriptions for 2007 despite reminders. Would they please either send them now, or advise her of their resignations. Thank you.

From 2008, the preferred method of paying the £5.00 p.a. subscription will be a payment of £15.00 (payable in advance) to cover three years.

2007 Annual General Meeting of the Surrey Botanical Society

Please make a note in your diaries of the date of the AGM:

Date: **Saturday 16th February 2008, at 2.0pm**

Location: **Boxhill Village Hall, Boxhill Road, Boxhill, Surrey.**

Nominations (with agreement of nominee and preferably with a seconder) for all posts including the new position of Vice-Chairman, should be sent in advance to the Hon. Secretary.

A full Agenda for the meeting will be sent to all members in Jan. 08.

Surrey Botanical Society Contacts:

Chairman: Paul Bartlett

Hon. Secretary: Tony Anderson

Hon. Treasurer: Caroline Bateman

Newsletter Editor: Dennis Skinner

Chairman, Records Sub-Committee: Roger Hawkins

Other Committee Members: John Dicker, John Montgomery

VC Recorder for BSBI: Ann Sankey