

FLORA GROUP NEWSLETTER



SPRING 1995

Dear Flora Group Member

We hope you enjoyed the events held during 1994 and look forward to seeing you on some of the training days and other events planned for 1995.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 4 March 1995 10.40am

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held at Weeke Community Centre, Winchester, on Saturday, 4 March 1995. The Community Centre is at grid reference SU 466312 and a location map is enclosed with this newsletter. The AGM will begin at 10.30am when coffee will be served. After the brief, formal part of the meeting, Dr Francis Rose (author of *The Wildflower Key*) will present a talk titled, "The Flora of Hampshire" which can be guaranteed to be interesting. After the AGM there will be an opportunity to visit Crab Wood Local Nature Reserve near Winchester. Bring a packed lunch.

If anyone would like to join the Flora Group Committee, please send nominations (together with names of proposer and seconder) before the AGM to Catherine Chatters, (Flora Group Secretary) at Ivy Cottage, Ashurst Bridge Road, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire SO40 7EA.

Sunday 2 April 1995 10.30am

Hybrid Water Buttercups

On 2 April 1888 a curious water buttercup was gathered from Setley Marl Pit in the New Forest. This was later to be described as *Ranunculus novae-forestae* by Dr Sarah Webster. To celebrate the 107th (!) anniversary of its discovery and to help us get better acquainted with these difficult plants, Dr Webster will join us on Sunday, 2 April 1995 at 10.30am at Setley Marl Pit (grid reference SZ304995) for a morning's walk.

Saturday 13 May 1995 2pm

Green-winged Orchids

(*Orchis morio*) at Headley Gravel Pit Nature Reserve

Headley Gravel Pit is renowned for its spectacular display of Green-winged Orchids; it is estimated that at least 5,000 carpet the ground each May. Come along to the Reserve (SU 513627) at 2pm on Saturday, 13 May 1995 to enjoy the orchids and explore the Reserve. Parking is recommended in Thornford Road (signposted Ashford Hill), then across the A339 and enter the reserve via the public footpath.

Sunday 18 June 1995 10.15am

Perham Down

Chalk Grassland Survey

Mike Wildish, of our North-West Area group, has kindly arranged for us to visit the Ministry of Defence grasslands at Perham Down. This part of Salisbury Plain grasslands lies just within Hampshire due east of Tidworth. The Salisbury Plain grasslands are distinctly different from the downs of the Island and South Hampshire and well worth a visit. Meet at 10.15am at circa SU245487, a layby off the Perham Down road. Bring a packed lunch if you wish to spend the day there.

Saturday 24 June 1995 10.30am

Coastal Grasslands

Bob Lord, Site Manager for North Solent National Nature Reserve, has kindly invited Flora Group members to study the botany of the coastal grasslands on his Reserve. The day will be led by Neil Sanderson and we hope to look at species-rich, brackish grazing marsh and old vegetated gravels. Meet at 10.30am at the sailing club car park at Needs Ore which is at grid reference SZ 427977. To find the meeting place, leave the public road near St Leonard's Grange and drive down the unmade-up private road at SZ 406981; follow this private track past Warren Farm and Needs Ore Cottages to the Sailing Club. Bring a packed lunch.

Saturday 1 July 1995 10.30am

Warnborough Greens

Warnborough Greens are part of the complex of habitats which form Bartley Heath and Warnborough Greens Nature Reserve. Warnborough Greens are chalky, lush meadows by the River Whitewater and the impressive list of plants which they support include Marsh Helleborine, Early and Southern Marsh Orchids and the rare Slender Spike Rush. The Greens have become somewhat derelict over the past few years due to a lack of grazing. However, Hampshire Wildlife Trust has managed to reinstate grazing management on part of the Greens and the aim of this event on 1 July is to compare the botany of the grazed and un-grazed sections. As well as this being an opportunity to see some interesting species, Neil Sanderson has offered to help people concentrate on identifying grasses, sedges and rushes. Park in North Warnborough village and meet at the Reserve at grid reference SU731521 - car parking is limited in the village, so you may need to walk a little way.

Saturday 29 July 1995 10.15am

Bramble Identification Training Day



Dave Allen, an expert on the identification of bramble (*Rubus*), has kindly agreed to lead a training day on Saturday, 29 July 1995. Meet at 10.15am at Bramley Station (grid reference SU656594). From there we will walk to Bramley Frith Wood and will spend the morning looking at different brambles around the edge of the wood. Afterwards we will travel on to Pamber Forest which is an important site for a wide range of habitats and species and should provide a variety of brambles to study. Details of the meeting place at Pamber Forest will be announced on the day. Bring a packed lunch.

Sunday 15 October 1995 10.30am

Wild Service-tree

(*Sorbus torminalis*) in New Forest



Neil Sanderson and Clive Chatters have agreed to lead a day studying the Wild Service-tree in the New Forest. The aims of the day are to enjoy the trees in their autumn colours, to describe the communities in which they are found and to describe the epiphytes which they support. Meet at 10.30am in the car park by the cricket pitch at Busketts Wood (grid reference SU 311111). Details of this event will also be given in our next newsletter but make a note of this date in your diary now.

REPORTS ON EVENTS

Sphagnum (bog moss) Training Day

Saturday, 29 October 1994

On Saturday, 29 October 1994, under the expert leadership of Dr Michael Proctor, 25 people turned out for the Sphagnum (bog moss) training day in the New Forest.

The morning was spent at Hatchet Pond and after lunch we went to Crockford Bridge. We began this difficult subject with relatively easy to identify specimens and progressed to the more difficult ones as the day went on. Some of the Sphagnum mosses identified included *Sphagnum papillosum*, *S capillifolium*, *S capillifolium var rubellum*, *S auriculatum*, *S tenellum* and *S subnitens*.

Dr Proctor handed out pamphlets containing the following information:- stylised diagrams of Sphagnum stems, stem leaves and branch leaf arrangement. Dr Proctor had also produced a key to New Forest Sphagnum species; this was a very useful teaching aid which was appreciated by all and especially by the beginners in the group.

To add to the interest of the day we saw various other mosses, liverworts, fungi and even a grass snake; the latter posed beautifully for the camera.

A big thank you goes to Dr Proctor for coming so far to introduce beginners to the wonders of Sphagna and increasing the interest of the others in the group.

Joan Cocksedge

NB: If anyone would like to receive a copy of the key to New Forest Sphagna together with the glossary of Sphagna terms, please send a large stamped addressed envelope to Catherine Chatters at Ivy Cottage, Ashurst Bridge Road, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 7EA.

Holly Pollarding

January 1995



Despite filthy weather, Neil Sanderson led the group of members who turned out to cut Holly in Busketts Wood, New Forest. The area chosen was the centre of the New Forest *Parmelia* populations, and the only place in the world where the species bears fruit. We were able to enjoy the plant in all its glories. On the well illuminated ancient trees the lichen was clearly far more healthy than in the dense Holly shade. By cutting the Holly we were able to release a substantial number of superb ancient lichen trees from dense shade. As in other areas where we have cut Holly, we discovered healthy growth of the next generation of Oak and Beech saplings. The cut Holly was eagerly eaten by Forest ponies as we were cutting. The value of Holly as fodder is increasingly appreciated by Forest commoners and we hope this mutual benefit will help to reinforce the revival of this ancient management practice.

NEWS

Quinquennial Review

Once every five years the list of protected plants is reviewed by the government. Wildlife charities have been asked by the government to suggest changes. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust is co-ordinating the response of the Wildlife Trusts throughout the UK. If you are aware of any "plant" (be it flowering, fern, lichen, bryophyte or fungi) that requires and would benefit from special legal protection, please do let me know. Remember this can be any species, anywhere in the United Kingdom. Please drop me a line with details at the Trust office.

Clive Chatters

1994 Records

The 1994 season produced some interesting new records. A substantial new colony of the Hay-scented Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris aemula*) in the New Forest [Dave Winsland], an abundance of Mousetail (*Myosurus minimus*) as a farmland weed near Beaulieu [Ian Ralphs] and large colonies of Fen Stitchwort (*Stellaria palustris*), Mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*) and Round-headed Rush (*Juncus compressus*) [John Rowe] have been found in a private estate on the Dorset borders. Are other areas in Hampshire, or the Island, also turning up new records - ? Please do let us know.

The Trust and Recovery

English Nature's Recovery Programme has assisted the Wildlife Trust in various research projects. In 1994 these projects have looked at the conservation, status and needs of various rare plants.

On the Island, Sue Telford found over 3.5 million Early Gentians across the Island's Downs. Whilst this plant is undoubtedly in its world stronghold on the Island, it does appear to have been lost from various sites. Members were able to enjoy the Gentian, and to meet Sue, on our truly drenched field meeting on Afton Down in June.

Also on the Island, Heather Winship looked at the recent history and conservation management of Wood Calamint. This plant is still, as always, confined to a single valley in the central Downs. By looking at the documented, and recalled, history of the valley, Heather has shown how it has changed over the last century. The Hazel woods, much beloved by Red Squirrels and Dormice, have greatly expanded. This expansion has resulted in the bare-ground, woodland edge habitats of the Calamint being confined to a tiny roadside area. We now need to find ways of revitalising the habitat in a way that fits the requirements of a private sporting estate, and does not harm the Squirrels and Dormice.

The English status of Slender Cotton-grass was also the subject of a study by Heather. This plant of fens and rich valley bogs has declined catastrophically over recent decades in England and elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Europe. Of the 11 sites for it in

the New Forest, only 2 persist. Both of these surviving sites are in need of conservation management; one being threatened by erosion caused by land drainage, and the other by invasion of scrub. The winter work of cutting Sallow in February 1995 is part of the result of this study and we hope we can find the appropriate way to manage these sites and thereby secure and maintain the species.

In July 1993 the Flora Group visited Micheldever Spoil Heaps Nature Reserve to monitor Cut-leaved Germander. Our survey suggested the plant had declined as scrub had spread and bare ground colonised. This survey prompted a study in 1994 to review the national status of the species and its habitats. This confirmed the great scarcity of the plant throughout England and its need for vigorous management to maintain bare ground. This study now means we can progress conservation management at Micheldever Spoil Heaps with confidence. With the continued support of English Nature Recovery Programme and the Sunley Foundation, we hope to undertake the necessary, and rather dramatic, clearance of scrub.

Angular Solomon's-seal

The Group's visit to the New Forest in May 1994 to search for this elusive plant proved a great success. Dr Roger Veal found a clump of the Solomon's-seal within Holly and Oak wood pasture. This appears to be a native colony and the plants with which it is associated in this New Forest site, are very similar to those elsewhere in England. The habitat is, however, radically different from normal limestone crags. A full account of the find is in the Wildlife Trust's 1994 autumn magazine.

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ISLE OF WIGHT
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TRUST



Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
8 Romsey Road, Eastleigh SO50 9AL
Telephone 01703 613737

Reg Ltd Company No 676313 Reg Charity No 201081