# SUSSEX BOTANICAL RECORDING SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 1997

### CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

The Society was as active as ever in 1996 and we were able to welcome some new members. Sadly, however, we lost four members who all contributed to the success of the Society in their different ways - John Fisher, Miss Kneller, George Bishop and Basil Appleford.

For the information of all those who could not be at the November Get-together, we now have a display board which features the main activities of the Society as well as several of its achievements. This is available for Open Days and Exhibitions organised by bodies such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Local Authorities, local Natural History Societies and other voluntary bodies. I am in favour of publicising our activities so that as many individuals and organisations know that they can come to us for any botanical information and advice. The board is at present at my home, and providing I have reasonable notice, it should be possible to arrange transport to any part of Sussex.

Basil Appleford regularly attended our meetings with Kay. Although he was not an experienced botanist, he was always interested in what we were finding and played a useful supporting role, including working behind the scenes at our indoor meetings. His last outing was to Pulborough Brooks on a warm sunny evening in May 1995, and he features in a photograph of that meeting on our display board.

John Fisher was an active member of the Sussex Flora Society and until the last year or two attended most indoor meetings of the SBRS as well as some of the field excursions.

He was an Oxford graduate who had a career in journalism, particularly as a foreign and diplomatic correspondent in Europe and the Middle East.

Apart from dingy sailing in Chichester Harbour, his main love was of flowering plants. He travelled throughout Britain photographing these and wrote a book about the locations of some of the rarer ones, a reflection of his desire to encourage others to enjoy botanical pursuits. Among several other books of his is "The origins of Garden Plants", a most attractive publication which is a useful work of reference.

Rod Stern

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings for 1997 - and good wishes to all recorders for a rewarding year ahead, with many interesting new records and many old records confirmed. Through Alan Knapp's work in preparing a database for our Sussex records we have consolidated our current knowledge of the Sussex plants, and from this we will soon be able to identify those areas which are short of records to ask you to work on these for the new Atlas 2000.

It is amazing how interesting plants and new records continue to turn up even in such comparatively well-worked counties as ours. Some of these for 1996 were reported by Paul and myself at the Autumn Get-together - they will be summarised at the AGM in March and published in our next Newsletter. It is well worth looking and looking again as each year's differing seasons produce different surprise plants - and it is always helpful to know the numbers in a population of uncommon plants in any year.

In 1996 our good friends Breda and Ernie Burt moved from Sussex to live near their families in Worcestershire. I was able to see them in their new home and found them comfortably settled in a barn converted for them by their family on their grandson's farm. Their address is: Rotherdale Farm, Throckmorton, Pershore WR10 2JR. Tel: 01386-553776. They will be pleased to hear from you, and we wish them well in their new home.

In 1995 I asked the W.Sussex recorders to search for the rare Lords-and-Ladies Arum italicum ssp. neglectum during November and early December, when the leaves of the rare subspecies are already above ground and unfurled before the leaves of the common species have appeared. I had realised how few recent records had been sent in for the native rare Lords-and-Ladies, compared to the numbers of tetrad dots for this published in the Sussex Plant Atlas. My thanks to all the recorders who sent in records, many with locality details and population sizes, and above all to Ron and Beryl Clough and to Nick and Elisabeth Sturt, who took on this special survey with special enthusiasm. The survey is continuing this winter, but meanwhile their interim report, which adds much to our knowledge of this fascinating plant, is included in this Newsletter.

Mary Briggs

## OBITUARY: GEORGE BISHOP

There are some people who can let us all know what they are, without any effort at projecting an image. George was one such - instantly recognisable as a naturalist.

Everything he came across in the wild, and that included the garden, was examined closely, and with an enthusiasm which was infectious. His interests included both the plant and animal kingdoms, and particularly details revealed by his microscope. Unlike many dedicated enthusiasts, George always remained most agreeable company, happy to pass on his first-hand knowledge to anyone claiming a mutual interest.

Like many other front-line naturalists, George had the advantage of operating as a husband and wife team with Betty. There can be little need at the moment to dwell upon their full contribution to the current knowledge of the Sussex flora, but mention must be made of their involvement with the on-going, long-standing survey of the coppice flora of the Sussex Wildlife Trust's reserve at West Dean, and of their collection of raw data for the Public Inquiry on the future of Amberley Wildbrooks. There is little doubt that the data they submitted greatly strengthened the case against draining this unique area.

Although George published little himself, he has left a considerable legacy of most effective drawings and sketches. It would be a fitting tribute if some kind of publication was compiled of his works. Our deepest sympathy to Betty and to their daughter, Helen Swyer. He was a person whom I, for one, will never forget.

E.C.M.Haes

## OBITUARY: MISS 'NELL' KNELLER

Sadly, on 31st August 1996, Miss Kneller, known affectionately as 'Nell' to all her close friends, passed away at Seaford, having attained the grand age of 93. Until her last few years she was very active with her botanizing, had excellent health, and even in her late 80's frequently took long walks around the local countryside in her pursuit of plants and love of nature generally.

She became a member of the Sussex Flora Society soon after its inception in 1966 and remained a valued and active member. Over the years she made many contributions to our Society, providing records and keeping regular correspondence with fellow members, particularly in the period when the Sussex Plant Atlas was being compiled. In Seaford she was a stalwart of the Natural History Society with her knowledge of plants of the area, and for many years kept their botanical records up to date most efficiently, being a stickler for accuracy and always ready to give others the benefit of her local knowledge.

She lived life simply in her small flat in Seaford, and her undemanding, unselfish attitude, always cheerful and uncomplaining, was a great example to all about her. Most of her life was devoted to caring for members of her family, and those close to her will know she was always ready to help others even when it might be thought she herself needed help. I feel privileged to have known Nell. I am only one of many who miss her, and although perhaps many of the present members of the Society would not have known her well, those that did will feel that we have lost a valued friend who contributed so much and was a truly good person.

Dennis Vinall

# HENRY LEOPOLD FOSTER GUERMONPREZ 1858-1924

The windmill on Halnaker Hill near Goodwood is one of the oldest remaining mills in Sussex, having been built around 1750. It fell into disuse in 1905 & thus it is probable that when Henry Guermonprez happened upon white horehound Marrubium vulgare on the hill in the early years of this century the sweeps were no longer turning the machinery. Around 70 years later the mill still stands - and near it plants of the white horehound.

H L F Guermonprez was, in the words of Wolley-Dod, 'a botanist who should have been better known'. Of Belgian origin, his parents moved from Chelsea to Bognor in 1891 or 1892 & it was perhaps this translation to more rural scenes which intensified Henry's already well developed interest in the natural world. He became knowledgeable in almost every branch of natural history; in particular he was an observant ornithologist & a skilled taxidermist; & he spoke out strongly against shooting birds for sport. He amassed an important herbarium.

Although it is evident from his collections (now in the care of Portsmouth City Museums) that he was a most active naturalist, he published very little This fact helps to account for his relative obscurity, but in addition he seems to have been a retiring person not given to participation in the local societies of his day. On the other hand, he corresponded widely & we have an insight into this from the happy chance that he re-used postcards sent to him to label his specimens: here is an early example of a man mindful of the world's resources (as well as his own limited private income?) - indeed, with his small oval spectacles and generous facial undergrowth, his appearance resembles that of the media's image of the stereotypical 'Green'.

Yet Guermonprez was not entirely without fame in his adoptive county. On the death of Frederick Arnold in 1906, the editor of the West Sussex Gazette invited him to take over 'Selborne Notes', which invitation was accepted & he wrote the weekly column until his own death in 1924. The many & varied topics covered in the Notes testify to the extraordinary breadth & depth of his scientific knowledge.

In the list of subscribers published in the second (posthumous) edition of Arnold's Sussex Flora, Guermonprez is cited as ordering four copies. The two which are known to survive are in the possession of the SBRS; they are well worn and the pages contain a wealth of sketches and marginal notes which have been studied and transcribed painstakingly by Frances Abraham: these most interesting transcriptions are now available to members. H L F Guermonprez will deservedly become a little better known as a consequence.

Ref.: H L F Guermonprez 1858-1924: A West Sussex Naturalist by M D Crane. Portsmouth City Museum & Art Gallery 1974

Nick Sturt

(Ed's note: This is the first of an occasional series of articles on past recorders of the flora of Sussex)

## *ARUM ITALICUM SSP NEGLECTUM* IN SUSSEX

Following a good response to Mary's request at the 1995 Autumn meeting we now have 77 records for this plant in 31 tetrads. Many thanks to all those who sent in records, especially Elisabeth and Beryl for spending so many hours in the field in winter.

There are quite a number of Atlas tetrad records that have not yet been rediscovered and we intend extending the survey for another season before issuing a final report. A list of these tetrads with possible locations is attached.

Although *Arum italicum ssp. neglectum* is not considered native in East Sussex there are four records in the Atlas. These colonies may still be extant and perhaps have spread so any information on these would be appreciated.

The current distribution of the plant is similar to that in the Atlas with records on the North scarp of the Downs from Hampshire to the River Arun and generally off the Downs between the River Arun and the River Adur. The present survey has produced additional records (seven tetrads) on the northern scarp of the Downs but fewer records on the coastal plain between Lancing and Sidlesham.

On the coastal plain sites have been lost to urban development but it is likely that the apparent increase on the northern scarp of the Downs is more a result of diligent searching than an increase in frequency of the plant.

The typical habitat for *Arum italicum ssp neglectum* West of the Arun seems to be the base of the North-facing scarp of the Downs, particularly in the folds or 'combes'. In some of these places such as below Beacon Hill, Elsted plants are to be found scattered right around the steep sides of the combes towards the bottom. in or near the edge of woodland and scrub.

There is thought to be a moisture requirement; sometimes this is visible, as at Rook Clift, Treyford where the Arum grows just above the spring which gushes from the chalk; but in most of the sites covered there is no visible wetness on the soil surface. Not every combe supports a colony of the plant, a number of apparently very suitable locations having been searched unsuccessfully. It is often absent where man has changed the slope by removing material; perhaps alterations to the natural drainage are as much to blame in these cases as the physical destruction of the plants. The use of powerful tractors to plough steeper gradients has probably been responsible for many putative losses. In the surviving sites the relative abundance in some places (For example Sun Combe, Cocking) and the relative scarcity in others is not easily explained.

The 'neglect' of ssp. neglectum West of the Arun is possibly more easy to account for, since when the leaves appear in late Autumn the sunless and bleak scarp of the Downs is not an inviting area for a walk; and there is also the fact that the rights of way tend, not unnaturally, to avoid the steep-sided combes.

At the Eastern end of the vice-county the plant favours sites off the Downs with concentrations in the Steyning, Sompting, Ferring and Arundel areas and here it is often to be found on steep laneside banks in shade on Ivy covered ground as in most of the sites around Steyning, but sometimes on open shallow roadside banks as at the Southern end of Titmore Lane east of Durrington. The association with Ivy covered ground is quite frequent.

Although sites are known to have been lost to urban development the plant is apparently able to persist in quite small colonies in urban areas and it could prove worthwhile to look out for it on roadside verges, garden edges and where odd patches of land or hedgerows have been left alone. This is particularly so for the area between Lancing and Rustington where many *Sussex Plant Atlas* records have not yet been rediscovered.

Identification

Compared with the Common Lords & Ladies, ssp. neglectum is generally a larger plant, the leaves thicker, dark green with the veins paler. The leaf shape is similar but with the leaf lobes usually more divergent, but at some stages can be overlapping. The leaves tend to be held more horizontal than *A. maculatum.* A yellow spadix alone is not a reliable character for determining ssp. neglectum, being fairly frequent in the Common Lords & Ladies.

*Arum italicum ssp. neglectum* occasionally has spotted leaves. If spots are present they are rather small and not always easy to see. Plants with spotted leaves invariably have anthocyanin spotting on the spathe although this is much paler than the spotting on *Arum maculatum.*

The most reliable character is the time of leaf appearance, green leaves first appearing from late September for ssp. neglectum and early December for *A. maculatum.*

This year, which may not be typical, *Arum maculatum* came into flower in early May and *Arum italicum ssp. neglectum* in late May.

Confusion with *Arum italicum ssp. italicum* is unlikely due to the usually distinctive venation in this ssp. but some plants do have the appearance of intermediates.

Ron Clough & Nick Sturt June 1996

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

A.G.M. at Staplefield Village Hall - **8th March 1997 at 1.30 p.m.** There will be an opportunity for members to show their slides after the meeting. Tea and biscuits will be served at the end of the meeting.

If you have any nominations for Committee Members please let me have them by **22nd February 1997.**

Please remember that the subscription is due at the beginning of March. If you are attending the A.G.M. Trevor Lording, Treasurer, will be available to take it. The subscription will be the same as last year i.e. £3.00 per person or £4.50 for two at one address. If you are unable to attend the A.G.M. please send your cheque, made payable to SBRS to Trevor Lording: 17 Hill Rise, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 2DH

Autumn Get-Together also at Staplefield Village Hall - **15th November 1997 at 10.00 a.m.** The Speaker will be Mr Patrick Coulcher who will talk on the Cuckmere Valley. Soup and potatoes in their jackets will be available for lunch as usual followed by tea and cakes later in the afternoon. This is also an opportunity for you to "Bring-and-Buy" plants or books.

Louise Matcham,
Hon. Secretary

# *ARUM ITALICUM SSP NEGLECTUM*

Records with a dot in the Sussex Plant Atlas but not yet rediscovereed

| | |
|---|---|
| TQ 00 ? | Pre 1955 record "Brookpits nr. Littlehampton" (Brookpits Manor/Kents Fm) ? |
| TQ 00A | South of Climping (known at Climping Church). Possily the same record as above |
| TQ 00K<br>TQ 00L | South Rustington<br>North Rustington |
| TQ 00Q<br>TQ 00R | East Preston<br>East & West Preston |
| TQ 00X | South of Clapham (Clapham Common, Titmore Wood ?) |
| TQ 01S | Parham/ Cootham ? |
| TQ 01F | South Stoke (pre 1955 record) |
| TQ 10C | West Durrington. (Upper part of Titmore Lane ?) |
| TQ 10D | East of Clapham Village (pre 1955 record for Holt Farm) |
| TQ 10G | West Worthing/Tarring (gone from Tarring Church) |
| TQ 10H | Salvington - urban but possibly surviving Cemetery/Recreation Ground |
| TQ 10I | High Salvington (pre 1955 record) |
| TQ 10N | Lynchpole Hill ? |
| TQ 10R | East Worthing (Brooklands area ?) |
| TQ 10T | North of Sompting |
| SU 90F<br>SU 90K | North/South Bersted<br>South Bersted/Felpham |
| SU 90I | Aldingbourne |
| SU 91T<br>SU 91X | East of Duncton/Barlavington<br>Sutton/Bignor |
| SU 80F | Appledram area |
| SU 80M | West Chichester |
| SU 82R | Stedham/Woolbeding |
| SZ 89I | North & West of Siddlesham |
| SZ 89N )<br>SZ 89P )<br>SZ 89S | Area between Sidlesham, Birdham & Earnley<br>Church Norton |

RIC 1996

EAST SUSSEX FIELD MEETINGS 1996

The first meeting, at Brightling, began with a brief visit to the churchyard, where three species of Asplenium were recorded. Unfortunately the weather was both wet and cold, so much so that lunch was taken on the move. Plants typical of the area included Sedum telephium, Silaum silaus and Ballota nigra.

In contrast, at Dungeness, a joint meeting with Kent Field Club, there was brilliant sunshine and a very strong wind. In the morning, Eric Philp showed us all the shingle plants, including Lathyrus maritimum. Because it was not possible to visit the Lydd ranges, in the afternoon we went to Littlestone; on a small building site there were several Trifolium species and plants on the dunes included Calystegia soldanell Eryngium maritimum, Euphorbia paralias and many garden-escaped Gallardia plants.

A total of 317 species was recorded at Ashburnham Place in habitats that included the terraces around the house (Asplenium trichomanes), the lake, ponds and woodland. In one small pond Callitriche hamulata and C. platycarpa were identified, and Alchemilla glabra was re-found near the bridge by the lake. A feature of one woodland ride was the abundance of Carex strigosa.

In Buxted Park there is a small area of unimproved acid grassland (now an SSSI) with patches of Carex spicata, Briza media and Danthonia decumbens; down by the lake at the end of the storm-damaged lime avenue there was Scutellaria galericulata and one of the best specimens in the country of Quercus frainettii, the Hungarian oak. Among the plants new to the tetrad was Lathyrus nissolia (and two extinct ones are now Hottonia palustris and Veronica scutellata).

The Cuckmere meeting was joint with London Natural History Society whose members somewhat outnumbered those of the SBRS. Up on the head-land finds included Teucrium chamaedrys in two places, Thesium humifus and several spikes of Spiranthes spiralis. On the estuary there were c. 30 plants of Limonium binervosum, and Ruppia cirrhosa was plentiful in the brackish water.

Our grateful thanks go to Paul Harmes, Paul Maurice and Rachel Nicholsc for leading these meetings.

Pat Donovan

**SBRS meetings in W.Sussex in 1996**

Our first meeting of the year near Benbow Pond, led by Frances Abraham on a beautiful warm spring day, produced an excellent crop of spring annuals including Teesdalia nudicaulis and Moenchia erecta (for both of which we found new sites in the area) together with Viola canina. We were not so lucky with our proposed evening meeting at Pulborough Brooks which was canceled due to appalling weather - heavy rain and a temperature of only 4 ° C! As a replacement some of us returned later in the year to survey some hay fields on the reserve and were rewarded with many sightings of Butomus umbellatus and the usual vast quantities of Potamogeton acutifolius in the ditches.

The evening meeting at Bines Green added a number of new records including Carex caryophyllea, C.nigra and C.ovalis but we still missed seeing the Dactylorhiza x grandis in full flower (in bud this time). A plant not yet in flower caused considerable discussion with Pat Donovan's view that it was Myosoton aquaticum being later confirmed when she took some away and grew it on. Among the finds on Arthur Hoare's meeting in St. Leonards Forest were Carex curta, Carex laevigata and two patches of Valeriana dioica.

Our two meetings in NW Sussex led by Tim Rich and Nick Sturt also produced records for Carex laevigata, other finds were a very large patch of Hypericum elodes beside Folly Pond, and not far away Geranium pusilum by a sandy track. A bonus on Nick's meeting was a superb display of butterflies gathered on a Buddleja bush. The meeting lead by Beryl & Ron Clough to examine ditches in Henfield Brooks was made more challenging by the presence of the farm dog who felt it his(her?) duty to dive in and try to eat any grapnel thrown into a ditch. This did not prevent us finding both Potamogeton pusillus and Zannichellia palustris in flower and seeing superb displays of Sium latifolium in several places.

Once again many thanks to all our leaders.

Alan Knapp

# SBRS Field Meetings 1997

**Please note that all those taking part in SBRS field meetings do so at their own risk.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Sunday April 27th<br>Dawn Nelson | Survey in SU72. Meet in layby at S side of A272 opposite entrance to Durleighmarsh Farm (SU784235). Note - we may move on from here. |
| Sunday, May 18th<br>Alan Knapp | Survey of area around Camber Castle for spring annuals. Meet in layby on W side of road through Winchelsea Beach where footpath leaves road at W side (TQ916170). |
| Sunday June 1st<br>Pat Donovan | Recording a series of unimporoved meadows on the Beech Estate, N of Ashburnham From Wood's Corner crossroads (TQ666194) take road S. At TQ668176 turn onto lane going NE. Park at TQ688175 |
| Sunday, June 8th<br>Nick Sturt | Survey in SU71. Meet in Walderton. Park in area between minor road and river just next to junction with B2146 at SU787105. |
| Saturday, June 21st<br>David Lang | Survey of chalk escarpment above Offham. Meet in lane between church and level crossing at TQ403122 |
| Saturday, 5th July<br>Frances Abraham | Survey of Badlands Meadows, The Mens. Park on minor road at TQ027223 where there is a large field adjacent to the W side of the road. Meet at point where footpath leaves road at TQ028224. |
| Saturday, July 19th<br>Paul Harmes | Survey in TQ81, Brede Levels. Meeting place to be decided. Please look in the May newsletter for details |
| Sunday, August 10th<br>Arthur Hoare | Survey of TQ12. Meet in car park at Southwater Country Park (TQ160256). Note - we will return for lunch and leave again at 2:00p.m.. So, if you cannot make it for the morning, join the meeting for the afternoon. |
| Saturday August 23rd<br>Rachel Nicholson | Survey in TQ63, near Bewl Water Reservoir. Meet at TQ684311 in lane at TQ684311 in lane just SE of Three Leg Cross, N of Ticehurst. |
| Saturday, Sept. 13th<br>Alan Knapp | Survey in TQ13, meet in parking place in Spring Lane near old railway station in Slinfold (TQ113310). Note - if you have a copy of the BSBI Rose Handbook please bring it along as we will look out for roses as well as doing a general survey. |

**Note:** Meetings all start at **10:45**.

If you have any queries please contact Pat Donovan (E.Sussex meetings) or Alan Knapp (W.Sussex meetings).