

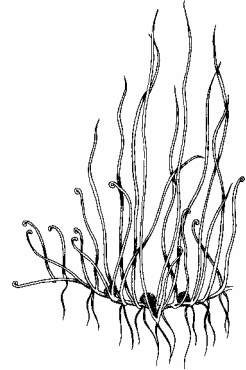
Flora News



Newsletter of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's Flora Group *Spring 2002*

Dear Flora Group Member

After a year disrupted by foot and mouth disease, let's hope that we can enjoy 2002 out in the countryside, exploring new places and recording lots of plants. Do join us at the events planned for the coming season and let Catherine Chatters (Flora Group Secretary) know of any ideas for future events – training sessions, practical conservation tasks or places to visit. Alternatively, please raise any suggestions at the AGM, which this year will be held on Sunday 26 May. If you are interested in joining the Committee, please contact Catherine whose address and telephone number are given on page 6 of this newsletter.



Pillwort *Pilularia globulifera*
(Illustration by Sarah Murphy)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 26 May 2002

10.30 am

**Linkenholt Estate and AGM
Leader – Peter Billingham**

Enjoy a spring walk through parts of the Linkenholt Estate not usually accessible to the public and help record plants in the north west corner of the county. Meet at 10 am at the road junction at grid

reference SU 372 586 to the north east of Linkenholt. Bring a picnic lunch. During the lunch break we will hold a brief and informal AGM.

Saturday 22 June 2002

10.30 am

**Highclere Estate
Leader – Neil Sanderson**

The Highclere Estate contains a wealth of varied and interesting habitats, some of which are not usually accessible to the public. The Estate has kindly given permission to Flora Group members to visit Burghclere Beacon which is a chalk grassland crowned by an Iron Age hill fort. This Site of Special Scientific Interest includes an extensive

stand of juniper and a rich herb flora including ladies' bedstraw, fairy flax, horseshoe vetch, kidney vetch, chalk milkwort and several species of orchids. We will also be visiting the fascinating habitats within Highclere Park, which has also been notified as a SSSI. The Park contains unimproved grasslands with mature trees, pasture woodland and lakes. The unimproved grassland supports a combination of calcifugous and

calcicolous species in close juxtaposition which is unique in Hampshire. Lime-loving species include dwarf thistle, common rock rose, salad burnet and large thyme whilst the lime-hating species include heather, purple moor grass, mat grass and tormentil. The Temple grasslands grade into swamp and fen vegetation. The bog flush communities support Sphagnum, marsh pennywort, marsh violet and lesser skullcap. The mature parkland and wood pasture trees support a rich and diverse lichen and moss flora; outside the New Forest it is one of the two richest sites known in the county for epiphytic lichens. Meet at 10.30

am at the public car park off the A34 at SU 464 575. Bring a packed lunch.

Saturday 20 July 2002

11 am

**Joint event in The New Forest
with the British Pteridological
Society**

**Leader – Jo Basil (BPS
Member)**

We have arranged a number of events focussing on ferns and their allies (horsetails), the latest being the fascinating day in the New Forest studying horsetails with Pete Selby. Members of The British Pteridological Society have suggested we spend another day together in the New Forest concentrating on ferns. We hope to see a range of ferns and fern allies including royal fern, pillwort and horsetails. Meet in the carpark at Crockford at grid reference SZ 350989. In the afternoon, we have kindly been invited to visit the "Spinners" specialist plant nursery and gardens at Boldre, where a number of unusual ferns can be seen and purchased. Bring a packed lunch if you would like to stay for the afternoon.

Sunday 27 July 2002

10 am–3 pm

North West Area Group visit to Porton Down

Leader – Peter Billingham

Peter Billingham has arranged a visit to Porton Down for the Trust's North West Area Group and has invited Flora Group members to join them. Numbers are limited to a total of 30 people. If you would like to take part in this event, please contact Peter on 01264 736359 or email him at peter@kealties.freemove.co.uk

Sunday 4 August 2002

10 am

Summer Ladies Tresses Hunt in the New Forest

Leaders – Pete Selby and Tony Mundell

We will search four historic sites (that yielded c. 200 herbarium specimens!) in the somewhat vain hope that it still lurks in the area. Bring a packed lunch and meet in the Clayhill Heath car park at SU 302 062.

Saturday, 5 October 2002

10.30 am–4.30 pm

Moss Identification Training Day

Leader - Rod Stern

Following the instructive and enjoyable moss training session led by Rod Stern in March last year, Rod has kindly agreed to lead another training day based in Andover. Last year we had hoped to visit Anton Lakes Local Nature Reserve in Andover to look for mosses but due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease the reserve was closed. Hopefully in October we will be able to spend some time in the morning at Anton Lakes LNR studying mosses in their various habitats. In the afternoon we will use the microscope and laboratory facilities at Cricklade College in Andover to help us identify the specimens. Meet at 10.30 am at Cricklade College,

Andover. Bring a packed lunch. For further details and a location map of the College, which is in Charlton Road, Andover, please send a SAE to Catherine Chatters.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Isle of Wight Flora

Work is now well advanced on the production of a new Isle of Wight Flora to be published by the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society in late summer 2003. This will be a much more substantial work than the current Flora of Brevis, Kettell & Shepard (1978) and will include bryophytes, lichens and charophytes in addition to vascular plants.

Chapters are being contributed by authors on geology and climate, paleobotany, historic botanists and habitats.

Inevitably since 1978 there have been many changes to our flora, both losses and gains, and survey work carried out post-1978 for Atlas 2000 will form the basis for the new Flora. However, reviews of historic data have also been undertaken and the descriptions of species will attempt to encapsulate the sum total of our knowledge of species on the Island. There will be distribution maps at 1 km square for many of the vascular plants.

There is, of course, no ideal time to have as a cut off for publication but I think that very considerable advances have been made in our understanding of the Island's flora since 1978. I am extremely grateful to the many Hampshire botanists who have submitted records to me. I would very much like to continue to receive

additional records and will endeavour to incorporate them. However, as far as the Flora is concerned, I will only be able to include significant records made over the forthcoming season.

We are anticipating that more information on the book, its contents and pre-publication offer should be available early 2003.

Colin Pope

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Bentley Station Meadow – a Butterfly Conservation nature reserve

Located 'next door but one' to Bentley Station, Butterfly Conservation's reserve is deservedly a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

It is a wonderful site that was well known to botanists and lepidopterists well before Butterfly Conservation bought the 8½ acre site in 1991. Lady Anne Brewis visited the meadow on 18 July 1983 and compiled a list of 111 species of plants. The botanical records were updated by Alton Natural History Society in 2000 and one of our members, Mrs Sue Clarke of Froyle, takes a keen interest in the site and has been able to add a few more records.

Bentley Station Meadow is an unimproved small remnant of wet meadows. A tree-lined stream runs along the meadow's western edge, with wet flushes occurring. The meadow was little grazed or tended for many years resulting in a scrub problem and development of secondary woodland. It is a rare landscape and habitat locally for a few reasons. The River Wey itself has a broad valley and big fields so there are few similar meadows locally. The meadow inclines both south to north and east to west thus

giving a hydrology gradient. It is on gault clay and the proximity to the junction with the greensand belt means there are numerous springs in the meadow and a high water table.

Old anthills are present and Lady Anne found a number of ancient meadow indicators. Notable species include *Achillea ptarmica*, *Lathyrus montanus*, *Polygala vulgaris*, *Senecio erucifolius*, *Silaum silaus* and *Stachys officinalis*.

Visitors are able to enjoy the spectacle of sheets of flowers according to season. In spring, primroses, cowslips and false oxslips are predominant in one area of the reserve. In 2001 the common spotted orchids were particularly plentiful. By mid summer the purple of knapweed is very striking in the northern meadow and this is soon overtaken by sheets of yellow fleabane interspersed with the purple flowers of mint. Even walking through the reserve in the middle of winter, the smell of crushed mint is discernible.

Tree species include willow *Salix caprea* – an important species for the purple emperor butterfly which is known to breed here, oaks – where purple hairstreaks can be seen, a spectacular wild cherry that is a lure to peacocks and red admirals when in blossom. There are a few wild crabs whose fruit is sought after by the cattle and autumn butterflies like the comma.

Blackthorn abounds providing good cover for nesting birds like warblers and gold finches. Tangles of honeysuckle might be used occasionally as a breeding place by white admirals from the adjacent Alice Holt Forest or by broad-bordered bee hawk-moth *Hemeris fuciformis*. Another of the reserve's rare moths is the large

red-belted clearwing *Synanthedon culciformis* and this feeds under the bark of birch trees. Newly emerged adults have been found on stumps of cut trees in May and June. We have planted numerous buckthorns to encourage brimstone butterflies.



Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*
(Illustration by Charlotte Matthews)

Management is undertaken by scrub clearance both by paid contractors and volunteers and cattle graze the reserve from September to December each year.

Lynn Fomison, Butterfly Conservation Reserves Officer

Events organised by Butterfly Conservation in their nature reserve at Bentley Station Meadow

Monday 6 May 2002
10.30 am

Lynn Fomison, Reserves Officer for Butterfly Conservation has invited Flora Group members to join her on a stroll through their Bentley Station Meadow nature reserve and the adjacent woodlands. The visit will focus on spring butterflies, flowers and tree-lore. Children are welcome but Lynn has asked that dogs stay at home please. The event will last for approximately 1½ hours. Meet in the car park at Bentley Station (SU 792 432).

Sunday 20 July 2002

10.30 am

Leader: Peter Beale and Lynn Fomison

Butterflies For All

Peter Beale (Reserve Warden) and Lynn will be leading an annual walk around the reserve for approximately 2 hours. Meet in the car park at Bentley Station at 10.30 am (SU 792 342).

POSITIVE CONSERVATION STORIES

The following two notes were written to illustrate that not all is doom and gloom in plant conservation.

Large Scale Scrub Clearance at Holmsley Mire from Former Fen

As many members will be aware, the Flora Group has carried out several tasks clearing recent scrub of willow and alder that has spread across base enriched mires in the New Forest. Some of these were carried out at former *Eriophorum gracile* sites where this species was thought to have been lost to the spread of such scrub over what is now called 'Transition Mire' in European Habitats Directive language. This idea originated from studies by Andy Byfield and the author on the historic records and current ecology of a former area of open fen near Holmsley Station in 1993. Here willow and alder had spread across open mire since the 1860s, with *Eriophorum gracile* recorded from 1893 through to 1952.

The open transition mire habitat itself had, by 1993, been reduced to a few square meters. The characteristic associated species, *Carex lasiocarpa* and *Carex limosa*, just survived, but no *Eriophorum gracile*. At this time an ambitious proposal was made to clear about 2 ha of recent woodland over what was very wet

base enriched peat. This site was too big to be tackled by the Flora Group, so we carried out our smaller clearance tasks on other similar areas of encroachment. We needed to answer two questions: would good quality transition mire habitat regenerate, and would the ponies browse these sites and stop the scrub coppicing and rapidly shading the cut area? If neither of these happened, the large-scale clearance would not be worth it. Our clearance work, however was very successful, as previously reported, with both rich, high quality habitat regenerating and the ponies doing a remarkably good job on very wet and soft peat.

As a result, funded by the Environment Agency, the Trust was helped by Forest Enterprise who cleared about a quarter of the area proposed for clearance in the winter of 1999/2000. This work was monitored by the author in detail in 1999 and 2000 and examined in less detail in 2001. Further clearance work is planned, but a gap of a year or so was intended to ensure that the initial work was successful. So far the result has been very impressive. The dominant sallow has been totally suppressed by grazing with a scatter of alder stools surviving as coppice. This was expected from the trial areas, and the alder stools are not close enough to seriously shade the site. They will, however, need occasional re-coppicing, as happened in the past. The vegetation has diversified to three very different habitats from the original shaded uniform vegetation. High mounds are dominated by Bogmoss *Sphagnum* poor fen, while low, very wet areas support developing transition fen communities with characteristic species such as *Carex rostrata*, *Potentilla palustris*, *Potamogeton*

polygonifolius and *Sphagnum teres* appearing. No *Eriophorum gracile* as yet but the habitat looks very promising. The dominant community however is a unique one for the Forest, a true, tall, rich fen dominated by Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata* with species such as Reed *Phragmites australis* and a great deal of flowering *Lysimachia vulgaris*. The ponies do get into this habitat, but do not graze the tussock sedge hard, allowing a taller fen community to survive. The example of our smaller clearances suggests that the best results are seen by year three, with new species of plant germinating from buried seed starting to appear by then, and it is to be hoped that 2002 will produce some surprises.

Habitat Translocation on the Woolmer Link Road

The southern edge of the firing ranges on Woolmer Forest is marked by a road built on the former bed of the old military railway. This railway was cut through the heathlands here in the early 20th century. This disturbed corridor had since become a focus for a number of declining species, characteristic of open sandy parched grassland including *Vulpia ciliata*, *Hypochaeris glabra* and *Teesdalia nudicaulis*. As part of a scheme to reduce through traffic in the village of Greatham to the east, upgrading this road was proposed in the late 1990s. Francis Rose pointed out to Hampshire County Council (HCC) that this would damage an area of particularly rich, parched, acid grassland. The author was then involved in assessing this impact, planning mitigation measures and monitoring the results for HCC as part of the consultancy, Ecological Planning and Research.

The road widening was eventually designed to avoid the SSSI to the

north of the road, but, as is not unusual, much of the high quality parched grassland was found on the south side of the road outside of the SSSI. This included areas of loose disturbed sand rich in spring ephemerals including *Vulpia ciliata* and more stable areas rich in lichen species. It was decided to translocate these to the new road banks, the former by topsoil translocation and the latter by turf translocation. Further complications were the finding of wild chamomile *Chamaemelum nobile* in the area proposed as the top soil storage site, so this was moved. As well as these areas, wide new verges were created out of conifer plantation. These were not given any special treatment, and although tree planting was unfortunately more extensive than EPR would have liked, much new open habitat was created.

The road was widened in 1997 and has been monitored since. The topsoil translocation proved to be very successful in conserving the *Vulpia ciliata*, which has not thrived on any other treatment. *Teesdalia nudicaulis* failed to appear in the topsoil translocation but thrived on the shifted turfs. The lichen rich community moved very well but has since suffered slightly as the rabbits that grazed the original railway bank vacated the site for a few years. This led to ranker grass swards and a loss of some diversity but the sward is still patchily rich in lichens and the rabbit grazing has now returned. *Hypochaeris glabra* has responded well in both treatments and has also colonised along the new untreated verges. These have been particularly striking with *Crassula tillaea* turning up, a species which has also increased massively in neighbouring parched grasslands on the MOD estate in the last few years. The new verges are heavily rabbit grazed and have rapidly

developed into high quality parched grassland and, as well as the *Crassula*, support the local rarities *Cerastium diffusum*, *Trifolium ornithopodioides* and *Viola tricolor*, along with more widespread characteristic species such as *Erigeron acer*, *Erodium cicutarium*, *Filago minima*, *Filago vulgaris*, *Myosotis ramosissima*, *Ornithopus perpusillus* and *Trifolium striatum*.

The upgrading of the road has actually resulted in more high quality parched acid grassland than existed before the works. This successful mitigation work is unusual. Most valued habitats are the result of long periods of stability on complex undisturbed soils and cannot be so easily encouraged. Here in contrast, was a characteristic flora originally associated with heathland tracks and shifting cultivation on heathland fringes, which was surviving along an existing communications corridor cutting through heathland.

This parched grassland flora is threatened by the under-management of heathlands and, if anything, the over protection of this habitat. An increasing challenge in the future will be how to recreate the sometimes gross disturbances that have periodically diversified our heathlands. These were a characteristic of heathland cultural landscapes. It should not take the upgrading of a road to achieve an expansion of this community! In particular, the author finds the frequent description of heathland as 'fragile' a bit disturbing; my feeling is that heathland is a rough, tough, fighting habitat that quite likes being knocked about a bit. Just as long it is given a good rest between rounds.

Neil A Sanderson

Daffodil Key

If you would like a copy of the key to daffodils, referred to by Pete Selby in the section of the newsletter relating to VC 11 records, please send a stamped addressed A4 envelope to Catherine Chatters. Please mark your envelope "daffodils".

Reminder to Surveyors

Please can I remind Flora Group members that when they are out botanising they should either keep to public rights of way or seek permission from landowners before going on to their land. Hampshire County Council has recently been in touch with a landowner who has a population of rare arable weeds on his land. He was very annoyed that people were walking across and bringing vehicles onto his land to search for these plants.

Rare plants and the habitats in which they occur will often depend for their survival on the goodwill of the landowner. If a landowner experiences difficulties as a result of having these species on their land they have a disincentive to carry out sympathetic management. Without appropriate management, species are likely to be lost from sites. Of course, it is important to identify the location and distribution of rare species but it must be done with due care to avoid antagonising landowners. Please be aware of these issues when you are out in the field. Thank you.

Helen Lancaster

Grassland Fungi

A colourful leaflet on grassland fungi has been produced by the Countryside Council for Wales. It contains photographs of fairy clubs, earth's tongues, dung fungi, waxcaps, liberty caps and fairy rings and gives brief advice on

their conservation. To obtain a copy contact the Countryside Council for Wales at www.ccw.gov.uk.

Important Fungus Areas

Plantlife, ABFG and the British Mycological Society have published a document titled "Important Fungus Areas: A Provisional assessment of the best sites for fungi in the United Kingdom". Copies, priced at £5 (including postage and packaging), are available from Plantlife Bookstore, Summerfield Books, Main Street, Brough, Cumbria, CA17 4AX (telephone 01768 341577).

Wiltshire Botanical Society

The Wiltshire Botanical Society welcomes Flora Group members to its meetings. If you would like a copy of the events being arranged by the Society in summer 2002, please send an A4 size SAE (marked "Wiltshire") to Catherine Chatters.

The Sussex Rare Plants Register

This new publication, edited by Mary Briggs, has been compiled by members of the Sussex Botanical Recording Society. It covers scarce and threatened vascular plants, bryophytes, charophytes and lichens. The book gives details of the status and changes in distribution of 400 rare wild plants in Sussex on a species by species basis. Copies are available from the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre. To order a copy send a cheque for £10 (payable to Sussex Wildlife Trust) to SxBRC – Rare Plant Register, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woodsmill, Henfield, West Sussex, BN5 9SD.

Flora English Nature

English Nature has produced the winter 2001 edition of "Flora English Nature" which contains

articles on a range of issues of interest to Flora Group members, including pennyroyal, red helleborine, species recovery programme and progress on conservation of fungi through Biodiversity Action Planning. If you would like a copy, please send an A4 SAE marked "Flora EN" to Catherine Chatters.

Flora News Autumn 2001

Erratum

Chris Hall has alerted us to an error which crept into his article on *Lycopodiella inundata* when it was re-typed for inclusion in the last edition of Flora News. The old record stated as at "Hartforsbridge 1920" should read "Hartfordbridge Flats 1920". The hamlet of Hartfordbridge is by the River Hart and is unlikely ever to have had suitable habitat; Hartfordbridge Flats is the heathland plateau some two kilometres to the east. The difference is significant should anyone use the article as a reference in the future.

Chris has received a response to the article, from a botanist not even based in Hampshire. He comments that *Lycopodiella* has been known to reappear at sites after an absence of decades. This may be so but Chris emphasises that it does not excuse the damage to habitats listed in his article, nor does it justify neglect that continues on so many lowland heathlands to the detriment of numerous species.

Sussex Botanical Recording Society

The Sussex Botanical Recording Society welcomes Flora Group members to attend events. If anyone would like information on the events planned in 2002, please send an SAE marked "Sussex meetings" to Catherine Chatters. Flora Group members might be

interested to know that the SBRS is organising a visit to Chichester Harbour on Saturday 31 August 2002, led by Alan Knapp. The event will concentrate on saltmarshes with *Atriplex longipes* in mind. Meet at Fishbourne Church SU 842 045 off the A259 west of Apuldram Lane, having left the A327 Chichester by-pass at a large roundabout.

Welcome back to Andy Byfield

Many Flora Group members will know Andy Byfield who helped set up the Flora Group back in the 1980s. Andy, who used to work for the Nature Conservancy Council, has been based in Turkey for the past ten years employing his botanical and horticultural skills to excellent use. He is now back in Britain, working for Plantlife on the "Bank to the Brink" project. Andy is based in Hampshire so we welcome him back and hope to see him at some of our events.

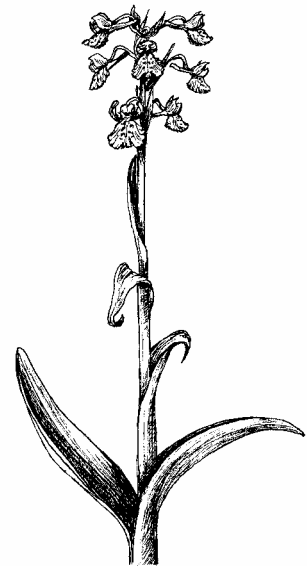
Million Pound Grant to Kew

Kew Gardens have won £1.14 million from the Treasury to install a new computer system that will make their extensive plant information available to the world via the internet. The new computer system will be a comprehensive digital plant information service, known as the electronic Plant Information Centre (ePIC).

Do you live near Hazeley Heath?

John Collman, a keen naturalist, who lives in Hartley Wintney is keen for enthusiastic local botanists to help with species recording and habitat monitoring at Hazeley Heath. The Heath has been notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and John is encouraging local people to take an active interest in the site and its

conservation. If you live locally and are interested in helping, please contact John direct on 01252 843893.



Green-winged orchid

Green-winged orchid
Orchid morio

(Illustration by Sarah Murphy)

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