No 9 Autumn 2018

The Dorset Heath

Newsletter of the Dorset Flora Group

Bob Gibbons

The Dorset Flora Group has had another busy year, with members recording up and down the county. But first I must explain why there was no *Dorset Heath* this spring. Essentially, I was many miles away from the combes and downs of Dorset and effectively missed the chance to do the newsletter before the field season came into full swing. I do apologise to all those who were waiting for their issue earlier in the year.

DERC has been excellent at making sure members have been kept up to date with the programme of field meetings and workshops. This year was almost the last full season of recording for the *BSBI Atlas 2020* and a series of meetings was held across the county, from Chase Wood in the north-east to Corscombe in the west. They have all been well attended allowing two or three groups to cover several 1km squares. We have discovered some lovely gems, such as small copses bursting with flowers, but also the inevitable fields sprayed to the edges, with their access blocked. I always feel that the discipline needed to record consistently across an area means that we cannot simply cherry-pick the best sites and have to record what we find. Botanists have been recording simple presence or absence of species in squares since the 1950s, and while this allows us to track major changes in distribution, it fails to pick up significant changes in abundance and subtle changes in communities. The BSBI is currently consulting on projects beyond the atlas, and is planning to develop schemes which can focus on these important elements. It is hoped that the Dorset Flora Group will play its part in this.

Andrew Branson

It is often the case that we trek across farms but do not meet the farmers. In the summer, I had the good fortune to meet a farmer that not only welcomed the fact that I was recording on his land but also pointed me in the directon of a plant that I had not seen in Dorset. In a rather scruffy section of largely secondary woodland by a stream I found several large populations of Small Teasel *Dipsacus pilosus*, growing with docks and nettles, clearly showing its leggy habit and delicate round flowerheads (see photo).

I do hope you have all had a great season in 2018 and look forward to seeing you over the next year.

Andrew Branson

Vice-county Recorder's notes for 2017

Robin Walls

The approach of 2020, the final date for records that will appear in the new BSBI atlas, has dominated the DFG programme this year. The numbers of species in each monad (1 x 1km grid square) downloaded from the DERC database are illustrated in Fig. 1. In November many of that season's records will not have been entered and verified, so the situation is better, although not enough to make a huge difference to the pattern. Fig. 2 looks at the situation in reverse to highlight areas where there are no records later than 2000. Clearly there is a lot more work to do and in 2018 the plan has been to continue to target the undercorded areas.

The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust has employed an ecologist, Jessica Brooks, to work on biodiversity in a 'farm cluster' in the AONB that includes Cranborne Chase. She has been finding some of our rarer arable species and entering them onto Living Record. It is hoped we might team up at some point and have a joint recording day in the Dorset part of her area (Fig. 3).

One species I have asked her to look for is the michaelmas-daisy *Aster pilosus* (the name has now been changed to *Symphyotrichum pilosum*), Fig. 4. The only record for this in the UK is in the verge of a track, but it has not been seen recently, despite some searches by Ted Pratt and David Leadbetter. It might be easy to dismiss as a mistake (these North American daisies require careful examination) except that the authorities believe the record is reliable.

Another interesting problem this year is the identity of our wild arums. Portland and Purbeck have populations of what we have always thought was the native

Figure 1. Numbers of species recorded in each monad since 2000. *DERC Database November 2017*

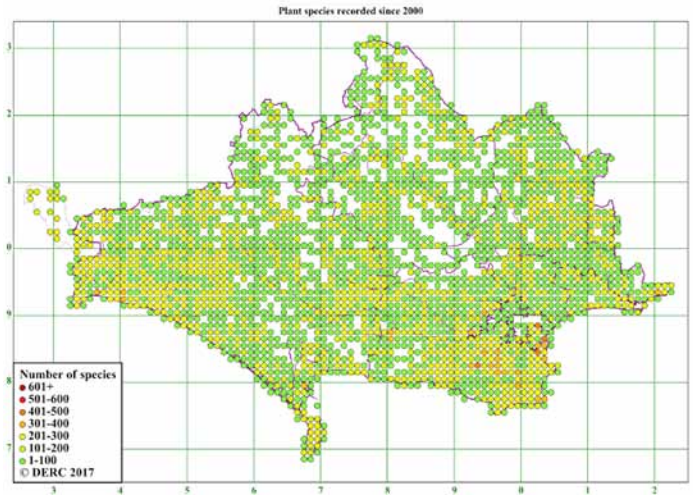
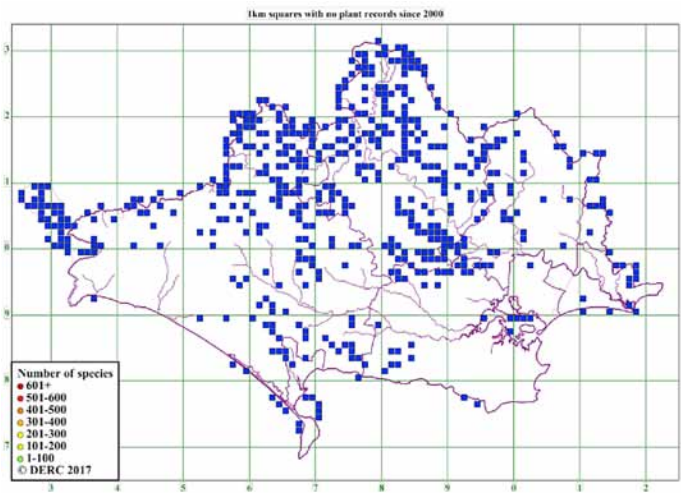


Figure 2. Monads with no records since 2000. *DERC Database November 2017*



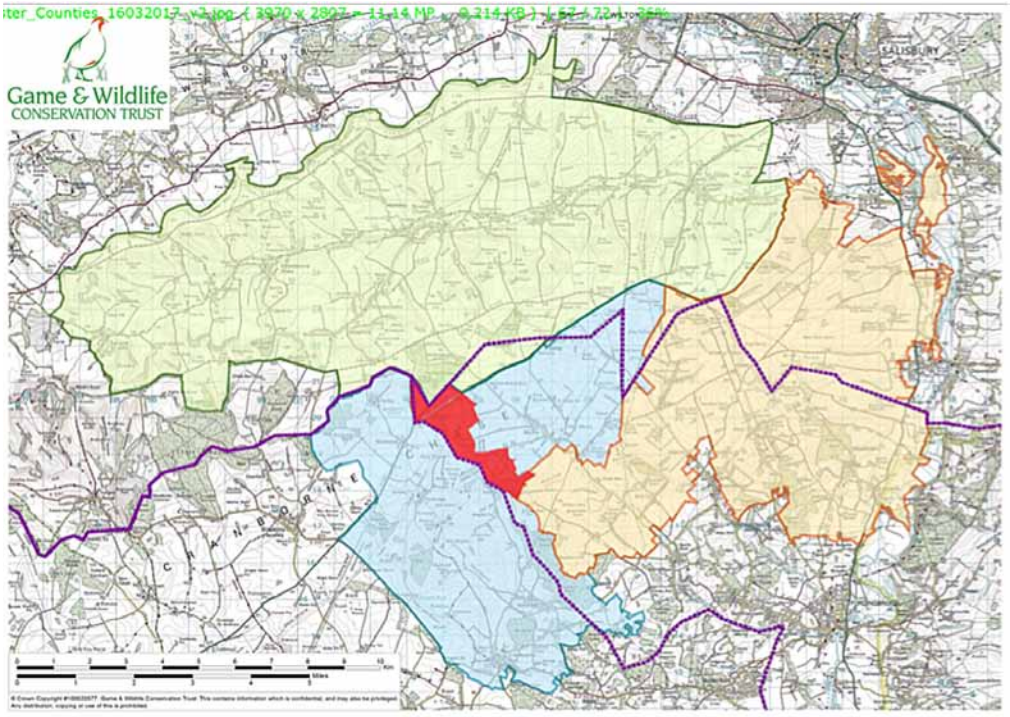


Figure 3. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

Figure 4. *Symphyotrichum pilosum*.

subspecies Italian Lords-and-ladies *Arum italicum* ssp. *neglectum*. Steve Povey from Hampshire is convinced his local plants differ from the populations in Dorset. John Winterbottom, Di Hall and I went over to see the Hampshire plants and we agreed there are differences. Ours are more marked than the example of a Hampshire plant show in Fig. 5, in which case our plants may be the garden plants *Arum italicum* ssp. *italicum*, reverting from hybridising.

Or, of course, the Hampshire plants may be the odd ones. The way to resolve this is to examine the type specimen, which is kept in the herbarium at the Natural History Museum. It has been scanned and is available as a pdf (Fig. 6.). This is more similar to the Hampshire plants, to my eyes, and if upheld by DNA work, might mean renaming most of our and the rest of the populations in Britain! Investigations are continuing.

Figure 5. *Arum italicum* ssp. *neglectum*, from near Petersfield.
Inset Figure 6. The type specimen of *Arum italicum* ssp. *neglectum* from Ventnor in the Isle of Wight.

Work on the Heath Lobelia site in January 2018. *Robin Walls*

One of the longstanding Flora Group projects has been the management of the Heath Lobelia *Lobelia urens* and establishing additional sites. Late in 2016 we agreed to collect seed from the population at Hurst Heath to scatter on a new site created by the restoration of the old Crossways quarry site as Silverlake by the Habitat First Group.

Our plans had been thwarted on our first attempt because deer had eaten the seeds before we got there. Habitat First supplied fencing to stop this and in late summer 2017 there was a good show of flowers. Throughout the autumn Annabel King and I went to collect seed, but hardly any ripened because something else was eating it as it ripened from green to brown. Our plan B is to transplant some of the many seedlings evident between the *Molinia* tussocks.

Figure 7. The hybrid selfheal *Prunella laciniata* x *vulgaris*. *Robin Walls*

Pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium* has similar habitat requirements to Heath Lobelia, although probably preferring damper soils. There is so much new land available at Silverlake that we are optimistic of finding a suitable site for a new population of this very attractive species. Unlike Heath Lobelia, Pennyroyal is a protected species and so a license from DEFRA will be essential before any such work takes place.

Finally, the National Trust's Purbeck surveying group followed up a recent find by Fred Rumsey from the Natural History Museum. After a lot of searching, he found a few plants of the much rarer relative of selfheal, Cut-leaved Selfheal *Prunella laciniata*. We spent one of our regular Thursday survey days making a full count of this species and its hybrid (Fig. 7) with the very common Selfheal *P. vulgaris*. We found good quantities of the hybrid, but very few *P. laciniata.* Subsequent recording in adjacent fields confirmed that it is only present in two fields on the wares.

Robin Walls

Some unexpected finds

Jean Smith

I have been recording in Dorset now for three years, together with my husband Tom, and 'square-bashing' has become one of our favourite activities and has helped improve our identification skills. Seeing the same species regularly helps with plant recognition, but it also then becomes easier to notice when something looks different.

Our patch (10km x 10km southern boundary covers north-east of Dorchester to Hurst Heath; the northern boundary covers Piddletrenthide to West Bagber Copse) is generally arable with woodland thrown in the mix, with a small area of heathland in the south-east of the hectad. Although most of the arable land is intensively farmed there are sometimes good headlands present around the field margins. These can contain some interesting species.

Mostly I'm recording ordinary plants such as Field Speedwell *Veronica persica*, Field Pansy *Viola arvensis* or Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, but occasionally I am delighted to come across a plant I do not see very often such as Field Gromwell *Lithospermum arvense*, Round-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia spuria*, both in the area to the west of Cheselbourne, Pale Toadflax *Linaria repens* at Dewlish, and probably Narrow-leaved Cornsalad *Valeranella dentata*. I couldn't be sure of this last species as I didn't have the seed to confirm its identity. Hopefully, next season I will be able to do this.

I have also seen Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus* at Cheselbourne, Pale Toadflax *Linaria repens* at Dewlish, Hare's-foot Clover *Trifolium arvense* at Duddle Heath, and Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum* at Pallington Heath.

The pastoral land is rarely interesting. Most unexpectedly, we stumbled across a good-sized area of chalk downland surrounded by fields at Dewlish Mill, where we saw typical chalk- grassland plants such as Salad Burnet *Poterium sanguisorba*, Burnet-saxifrage *Pimpenella saxifraga*, Squinancywort *Asperula cynanchia*, Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* and Stemless or 'Picnic' Thistle *Cirsium acaule*. In this area we also came across a good range of butterflies including the local Adonis blue (this was a new record for the area).

Some of the many hedged bridleways we walked on in 2017 also yielded some surprises, but this time with fauna rather than flora. South-west of Cheselbourne on a hot, sunny day we came across two grass snakes (an adult and a juvenile), who were as surprised to see us as we were to see them, before they slithered away.

Local to where I live in Crossways, I have come across some less commonly found species, for example, Yellow Bartsia *Parentucellia viscosa*, again this was within the headlands of an arable field.

None of these plants are rare, but it is such a pleasure to come across plants that are less common. *Jean Smith*

Round-leaved Fluellen. *Tom and Jean Smith*

Sir Maurice Abbot-Anderson and Flora's League

Peter and Margaret Cramb

In the Herbarium Room of the Dorset County Museum, stacked among many similar containers storing the Natural History Manuscript Collection, are two small, grey cardboard boxes marked 'NHMS VII and VIII Abbot-Anderson M.' The papers inside reveal the remarkable life of a man whose character combined charm and courtesy with determination and persuasive powers. After a distinguished medical career, Sir Maurice Abbot-Anderson turned his considerable talents and energy to the conservation of wild plants, founding Flora's League in 1925 and becoming a leading figure on the Wild Plant Conservation Board of the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

William Maurice Abbot-Anderson was born in January 1861 in Sandgate, Kent. He was the son of Major-General Edward Abbot-Anderson and his wife, Martha. He married first Maude Shaw in 1899 and, secondly, Muriel Porter in 1929. He studied medicine at University College, London and at Newcastle-on-Tyne, graduating as M.B., B.S. of Durham University. After various medical appointments he was appointed physician to the Princess Royal, Duchess of Fife (1867-1931), the daughter of Edward VII. For his services to the Duchess he was appointed M.V.O. in 1908 and received a knighthood in 1912; he was advanced to C.V.O. in 1925.

Sir Maurice Abbot-Anderson wearing his Flora's League badge.

Following his retirement from medicine, he devoted most of his time to organisations concerned with the preservation of the countryside and, in particular, wild plants. For much of his retirement he lived at Madeira Cottage on the seafront in Lyme Regis, where he became the first President of the Lyme Regis and District Preservation Society. He and his wife were involved with Lyme Regis museum, where they had a collection of native flowers of Dorset on display. He died in Bath on 3rd May 1938 after a short illness.

The need for protection of wild plants in Britain

From the earliest times in Britain wild plants were used for practical purposes such as the preparation of medicines and dyes, for household decoration and as tokens of love.

During the 19th century, however, they were also collected for growing in gardens or indoors, or to form herbarium collections. Some of the most active collectors were professional plant hunters who gathered large quantities for their customers. The growth of the railway network and other forms of transport made easy access to the countryside for these purposes available to much of the population. By the second half of the century several rarer species – often the prime targets for collectors – had become threatened. Ferns and orchids were particularly vulnerable to collecting, reflecting the Victorian enthusiasm for these plants. For example, the rare Killarney Fern was collected almost to extinction and even the relatively common but attractive Royal Fern was ruthlessly plundered. One colony in Sussex was raided regularly by professional collectors who travelled by train and removed large quantities on each visit.

Orchids were similarly targeted: collecting of the rare and flamboyant Lady's-slipper had started as early as the 17th century and by Victorian times the population was already severely depleted. Other rare orchids sought

Flora's League stall at a horticultural show.

after by collectors included Summer Lady's-tresses: local people in the New Forest sold roots for one shilling each. Even commoner species, such as Bee and Green-winged Orchids, were regarded as desirable, with substantial numbers sometimes being uprooted in a single attack.

Against this background, there was a growing feeling that wild plants should be protected. Many of the county field clubs established at this time included in their aims the protection of plants and other forms of wildlife. For example, The Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club, inaugurated in 1875 and the forerunner of The Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, included in its initial object that 'its influence is used to prevent, as far as possible, the extirpation of rare plants and animals'. This did not, however, prevent John Mansel-Pleydell, the club's first President and author of the first *Flora of Dorset*, from uprooting no less than 12 rare Bog Orchids from Morden Heath on one day in 1885 to add to his herbarium collection!

It was not until the Local Government Act of 1888 that limited provision for the protection of wild plants in public places was first enabled, allowing, but not compelling, local councils to adopt by-laws for this purpose. However, such by-laws appear to have had little impact on the problem owing to the difficulty of enforcement and lack of public sympathy with their objectives.

Flora's League – The Society for the Protection of Wild Flowers, Ferns and Trees

Sir Maurice's love of wild flowers led him to found Flora's League in 1925. He recognised that urgent action was needed to protect wild flowers from destruction due to excessive picking, uprooting and ill-considered development. He had no objection to moderate picking of common flowers if they were plentiful, but aimed through the League to persuade the public to enjoy plants in their natural habitat rather than destroy them.

By 1932, the League had 45 local branches and over 18,000 members, rising to over 21,000 by 1936. Members paid a shilling for an enamel badge, and a composite badge was available for 2d (later 1d) for children under 16. They were asked to abide by a set of rules concerning the right way to pick flowers, to minimise any adverse impact and to protect rarities. Initially, Sir Maurice and

Lady Abbot-Anderson ran the League from their London home and met all expenses themselves. After five years, supporters (who included Sir Edward Elgar) were invited to subscribe one guinea a year to a Propaganda Fund to meet expenses. The Council for the Preservation [later Protection] of Rural England (CPRE), which was founded in 1926 as a central council for various bodies concerned with the protection of the countryside and with which the League was affiliated, then allowed the League to use its own London address without charge for all correspondence and enquiries.

One of the League's main activities was to publicise the by-law forbidding the uprooting of 'ferns or other plants growing in any road, lane, roadside waste, roadside bank or hedge, common or other place to which the public have access'. In 1934, the Model By-law was amended to include 'primroses' after 'ferns' to ensure protection for all kinds of plants by referring to the two most commonly uprooted. Offenders were liable to a fine of up to 40 shillings for a first offence and £5 for a subsequent offence. By 1934, the by-law (or an adaptation) had been adopted by all but nine counties and sub-counties. It is doubtful whether many convictions arose from contravention of this by-law, but it made the public aware that such behaviour was unacceptable, thus acting as a deterrent.

The League was also much concerned with the education of children and was actively supported by many teachers and Directors of Education. In schools, it enrolled members, ran essay competitions, distributed posters and gave lectures accompanied by lantern slides. These lantern lectures were also popular with adult audiences throughout the country. The League had stalls at horticultural and agricultural shows to distribute literature and enrol members, and was also successful in getting much support and coverage in the press and through the BBC.

Flora's League had links with similar organisations in Commonwealth countries, sharing experiences and ideas.

Flora's League and the Wild Plant Conservation Board of the CPRE

Sir Maurice was very keen to bring together and work in close cooperation with all societies and organisations concerned with the protection of wild plants in order to avoid duplication of effort and expense. Flora's League was among those responsible for the establishment in 1931 of the Wild Plant Conservation Board (WPCB) under the CPRE to decide on action and policy concerning all aspects of wild plant conservation. The 28 organisations represented on the WPCB included the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the British Museum (Natural History), the Royal Horticultural Society, the National Trust, the Linnean Society, The Botanical Society and Exchange Club of the British Isles and the Wild Flower Society. Flora's League was represented on the Board and on its Technical Advisory Sub-committee and Sir Maurice was chosen to represent the WPCB on the Executive Committee of the CPRE, demonstrating his central importance to its work.

The activities carried out by the WPCB included attempting to extend the by-law protecting wild plants from uprooting to privately-owned land; preparing schedules of plants needing special protection for the 31 county councils requesting them; urging councils to regulate the cutting of roadside verges to favour wild flowers rather than destroy them; recruiting countryside wardens (with persuasive powers only) throughout the country from members of the various organisations affiliated to the CPRE; promoting the establishment of nature reserves managed as sanctuaries for wild plants; and opposing the intensive picking and sale of wild plants.

The effectiveness and legacy of Flora's League

Towards the end of his life, Sir Maurice was becoming despondent that various initiatives of the League and the Board were failing to progress as quickly as he would have liked. In 1937, he published an article entitled *Good Manners towards Nature* in which he addressed the effectiveness of Flora's League's activities to date. Among his concerns were the lack of government funding for the work; the limited value of the by-law against the uprooting of wild plants; and the lack of evidence that county councils used the schedules of plants needing special protection.

Despite Sir Maurice's rather pessimistic assessment in this article, there can be no doubt that the League was successful in drawing attention to the need for protection of wild plants, obtaining widespread support for its objectives, particularly in schools and local authorities, and working with other organisations with similar objectives. He gave a more positive assessment of the League's effectiveness in a letter drafted in March 1938, only a few weeks before he died, which was to have been sent to each member of the Council of Flora's League. This included the following:

'Flora's League has accomplished its purpose. It has helped to set the ball rolling in the interests of the protection of plants in the wild, and I firmly believe it will roll on for ever, gaining force as it goes. The

formation of the Wild Plant Conservation Board, under the aegis of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, has admitted the necessity of the object for which we and others have striven for years past, and has centralised the efforts of all bodies interested in the preservation of our wild flora.'

Sir Maurice, through the League and the WPCB, addressed the threats to wild plants which he saw at that time, especially uprooting and indiscriminate and excessive picking. In most circumstances, he believed that the needs of development and farming, although sometimes harmful to wild plants, should take precedence over the need to protect them. He could not have predicted the scale of the threats which would arise after his death from large-scale building and industrial development, changes in farming practices detrimental to wild plants, and the use of marginal land for timber production.

Nevertheless, he and his fellow campaigners helped to lay the foundations for many of the later conservation successes. For example, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 created Sites of Special Scientific Interest to provide some protection for areas outside reserves and set up the Nature Conservancy. The Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 (as amended) prohibited, except under licence, the intentional picking, uprooting, destroying or sale of protected wild plants listed on a schedule, reviewed every five years. The legislation also prohibited the uprooting of plants not on the schedule on public land. Sir Maurice would have been delighted!

Flora's League continued for a short time after Sir Maurice's death as a memorial to him, with Lady Abbot-Anderson as President, but it appears that it was suspended after the outbreak of the Second World War and was not subsequently revived.

Sir Maurice Abbot-Anderson was buried in Lyme Regis cemetery in a grave lined with bluebells, ferns and foliage. On his gravestone is the following citation:

'In dear and happy memory of
SIR MAURICE ABBOT-ANDERSON
C.V.O., M.B., B.S., M.R.C.S.
(The Beloved Physician)
Knight of Grace of St. John of Jerusalem
Founder of Flora's League
1861-1938
He went about doing good'

followed by these lines by the nature poet James Thomson (1700-1748):

'And here his gentle spirit lingers still
In yon sweet vale on this enchanted hill,
Bidding us prize the favour'd scene he trod
And see through nature's beauty, nature's God'

Acknowledgements

The authors are very grateful to the Dorset County Museum for kindly allowing them to use the material concerning Sir Maurice Abbot-Anderson in their Natural History Manuscript Collection as the basis for this article and for giving permission for the above photographs from the collection to be reproduced.

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Peter & Margaret Cramb

Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* at Golden Cap Estate 2014-17

Autumn Lady's-tresses was recorded in field 27 Ridge Goyle SY3888002847 on 11th September 2008; confirming a 1981 record of Judith Nall (Lister & Foster 1996, by Jon Campbell and John Newbould (JAN)). Subsequently, 15 spikes were recorded in an adjacent area and 50 spikes in the above place when JAN undertook a quick walk-over survey on 1st September 2014. He also recorded Autumn Lady's-tresses in nine further fields mainly adjacent to the south-west coastal footpath. In 2015, with the help of Dorset Flora Group, a more detailed survey was undertaken covering 13 fields.

The results of the flowering spike count for 2014 – 2017 are shown below.

The variations in numbers during the annual survey are in line with a report by Tony Leach over a longer term count at Gresham's School, Holt, Norfolk (Leach 2017).

Autumn Lady's-tresses is a rhizomatous orchid usually found on chalk or limestone pastures, but also on coastal grassland, sand dunes, lawns and occasionally on acid grassland. It can persist for many years without flowering and may appear in hundreds when grazing or mowing ceases. With the exception of a small number of sites on the Magnesian Limestone in Yorkshire and on the Cumbrian coast, it is mainly confined to the south of England (Preston *et al.* 2002). Bowen reports its presence in 78 of the 185 tetrads in Dorset (Bowen 2000).

Grid Ref	Field name no	2014 count	2015 count	2016 count	2017 count
SY382929	Field 12 Hatchett Plot	0	230	16	1[$]
SY383928	Field 13 Dairy's Mead	100	500	80	18
SY383927	Field 15 Water Mead	20	200 plus	18	3
SY385929	Field 16 Great Mead	n/s	16[+]	126[+]	n/s[$]
SY385931	Field 17 Sydling Close	2[+]	20[+]	26[+]	47^
SY386926	Field 18 (west) Cowleaze	16	40	0	0
SY387926	Field 18 (east) Little Midlands	0	1,000	18	4
SY386926	Undercliff south of field 18	0	20	5	2
SY385928	Field 19 (west) New Mead	0	1000	0	n/s
SY387927	Field 19 (east) Long Strap	0	300	0	n/s
SY386929	Field 20 Boiling Close	n/s	35	1	n/s
SY386930	Field 21 Little Hod	4	70	0	n/s
SY387932	Field 22 Furzey Hod	0	35	7	0
SY386936	Field 23 Midland	7	70	36	9
SY388933	Field 25 Great Hod	14	57	84	13
SY388927	Field 26 Wheat Close & Elms Close	20	70	400	n/s
SY389928	Field 27 Ridge Goyle	65	600	168	132[&]
SY389931	Field 28 Great Pitlands	n/s	n/s	395	882
SY390929	Field 29	n/s	n/s	14	n/s
SY392931	Field 30 Little Pitlands	n/s	n/s	n/s	482
SY£91925	Field 48	n/s	n/s	100	100?
SY390927	Field 49	n/s	n/s	430	684
SY321929	Field 50	n/s	n/s	70	623
SY392939	Field 53	n/s	n/s	60	120
SY392930	Field 54	n/s	n/s	42	200
SY397924	Field 61	n/s	n/s	24	100
SY406923	Field 80	n/s	n/s	11	11
SY401925	Field 86	n/s	n/s	10[§]	8
SY400926	Field 87	n/s	n/s	100[§]	1
SY402906	Field 88	n/s	n/s	100[§]	0

Notes

[+] In September 2015, 2016, 2017, fields 16 and 17 had been closely mown before the survey and were being grazed by cattle. There was evidence of some plants losing their flowering spikes. There were very few flowering herbs as a result.

n/s Not surveyed.

[$] In 2017, Fields 12,14,16 and 17 were still being cropped for hay in late August 2017.

^ In field 17, tenant left a 'butterfly bank' along the north margin, which also allow Autumn Lady's-tresses to flower.

[§] The results in fields 86, 87 and 88 for 2016 were anecdotal from a holiday maker.

[&] Cattle grazed on 29th August 2017, whereas the field was shut up in previous years.

Bob Gibbons

Hill *et.al*. (2004) give Ellenberg Indicator values of 8 for light (i.e. a light-loving plant), 8 for moisture (i.e. mainly on moist or constantly damp, but not wet soils), a value for reaction (pH) = 6 (weakly acid) and nitrogen 3, requiring a less fertile site. Stroh *et al.* give an IUCN rating of Near Threatened showing a 27% decline since the 1964 BSBI Atlas. August 2015 was one of the wettest for many years. Was this metrological factor influential in the successful flowering season that year?

David Leigh comments:

> 'I believe this orchid is significantly influenced by the weather, particularly in July and August. If both months are hot, and particularly if they are dry, then few plants will flower that year. Flowering time depends on rain – if it were to rain, even just heavily for one night, during August/September then they will be in full flower just one week later. If there is no significant rain at all then numbers will be drastically down. (Brewis *et al.* 1996).
>
> The rosette of leaves grows in the summer and autumn and overwinters. As the flower spike starts to grow the leaves wither so by the time it flowers the spike appears to come straight out of the ground. At the same time a new rosette starts to form alongside the flower spike. This produces the flowers the following year if the weather is favourable. Sometimes, if conditions and location are particularly favourable then two rosettes may grow from the rhizome at the base of a single spike, and then all being well there will be two spikes next year, growing very close to each other from the same rhizome. In time, this may turn into a clump of several spikes.
>
> We found several clumps on 22nd August 2017, all in the same location (Field 61) – presumably old plants growing in a favourable spot. On 29th August 2017 most of the spikes counted were single – maybe younger plants or a less favourable spot?
>
> As an aside the flower spikes can spiral either way – left or right. There seems to be both everywhere. I have found two spikes, joined below soil level so from the same rhizome and so the same clone where one was right and the other left. Also, tight clumps with a mixture of both; Jacquemyn & Hutchins, (2010). So, if it's not genetic, then what determines which way the flower spirals?'

Pollination

The species requires a pollinator for successful pollination and fruit set. At Westhay Farm, the orchid was most successful in fields where pollinators could visit other pollen-bearing flowers, in particular Autumn Hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis*, the clovers *Trifolium pratense* and *T. repens*, Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* and occasionally Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. Una Garland commented in 2015 that she observed various bees, including red-tailed bumblebee *Bombus lapidarius*, the grass moth *Agriphilla straminella* and a sawfly visiting the orchids' flowers, whereas in fields 16 and 17 there were few orchids and no secondary pollinator flowers. In 2016, Gemma Baron noted several common carder bumblebees *Bombus pascorum* foraging on the flowers. Jacquemyn & Hutchins (2010) consider that only three species of bee are actively involved in pollination, but did not name the species involved. Typically, we looked for the yellow composite flowers to find the orchids. In addition, the Autumn Lady's-tresses were in fields where there has been no recent grazing or mowing. Experiments to determine, the dispersal of seeds using seed traps showed a maximum dispersal range of 135cm. Once germinated, the plant develops a tuber in association with micorhizzal fungi in the soil. Flowering generally occurs in the 13th or 14th year after germination. Once seed has set, the plant develops a rosette of leaves, which provide the energy required to develop a new tuber for the subsequent year's flowering. The rosette dies away in May each year.

The poor results for the Westhay Farm fields in 2017, when each year, the survey was conducted on the first week in September is puzzling. However, on Wednesday 30th August, we had heavy rain, followed by heavy rain on Sunday 3rd September. Many of the flower heads were going 'over' by Monday 4th September possibly because of rain damage. There were also fewer composites in flower ranging from Autumn Hawkbit to Common Fleabane. Common Bird's-foot trefoil and Red Clover also appeared to be less common than in previous years, which may reflect a changing grazing pattern.

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John Newbould Volunteer Specialist Ecologist based with the West Dorset team.

David Leigh Volunteer Ecologist specialising in orchids based with the West Dorset team.

Gemma Baron National Trust Property Ecologist. Gemma.baron@nationaltrust.org.uk; National Trust, Filcombe Farmhouse, Muddyford Lane, Morecombelake, Bridport DT6 6EP

Field meeting reports 2017

Compiled by John Newbould

This section includes some of the meetings of the Dorset Flora Group and also those organised under the auspices of Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society. At the Annual General Meeting in September 2017, the Council of the Society announced that they would no longer be sponsoring field meetings. I had been Field Secretary since 2002 and it is a considerable disappointment to me that such an action was initiated.

22nd April, 2017
Worth Matravers for Winspit Bottom, Seacombe Bottom, Seacombe Cliff and Dancing Ledge

A circular walk covering four 1km squares SY9776, SY9777, SY9876 and SY9877. Six people turned up for this survey.

Square SY9777 was mainly on the edge of the built-up areas of the village, with just 17 species recorded there was little of note until Winspit Bottom in SY9776. The footpath in square SY9776, follows a stream in the valley bottom with scattered scrub and a small copse. With arable land to the west, there are Strip Lynchets on East Man on the west-facing slopes to the east. Much of the scrub recorded was mainly Hawthorn, with plenty of old established Traveller's-joy and the rarer Guelder-rose. There was an area of Wilson's Honeysuckle and a berberis *Berberis wilsoniae* near Winspit Cottage. Verge plants included Crosswort, a plant which is mapped in Bowen (2000) more often in the Purbecks than the rest of Dorset, Cow Parsley, Ransoms (in wet areas), Green Alkanet *Pentaglossis sempervirens*, Hart's-tongue fern and Alexanders. Winspit quarry had 12 Early Spider-orchids. The wooded valley had garden warbler, yellowhammer, wheatear, stonechat and chiffchaff. We also recorded a single violet oil-beetle.

At Winspit, the party turned east, walking along the coastal path towards Seacombe Quarry. The chalk grassland slopes from the north, but all the interest is where walkers trample the grass short. The National Trust appears to be unable to get sufficient grazing here and it was only along the footpath where we found Early Spider-orchid in small numbers. The cliff edge had Wild Cabbage. Other herbs associated with the chalk grassland included Carline Thistle, Greater Knapweed, Wild Carrot, Mouse-eared Hawkweed, Horseshoe Vetch, Hoary Plantain and Common Bird's-foot-trefoil.

At Seacombe Bottom, the small party split with David Leigh leading three people to Dancing Ledge where there were good numbers of Green-winged Orchid and Early Spider-orchid. Phillip Johnson and I opted for Seacombe Quarry where Peter Hatherley had first shown me Early Spider-orchid just after I moved to Dorset Here we found around 20 flowering spikes on the quarry floor and up against the cliff edge. Phillip and I then had the walk back to Langton Matravers along the wet and wooded valley bottom where Water Mint and Cowslips were added to the list.

Early Spider-orchid at Seacombe Bottom. *J. A. Newbould*

29th April 2017
Forestry Commission woodland at France Down

Located just south of Bushes Road between Pimperne and Stourpaine, the party I was with surveyed in 4 1km squares, although ST8808 only included its north-east corner. The principal interest here is that the site is used by Butterfly Conservation and the Forestry Commission as an 'arc site' for the barberry carpet moth with marked places where plants of native barberry *Berberis vulgaris* are introduced as the food plant

Members of Dorest Flora Group recording at France Down. *J. A. Newbould*

Flowers of Barberry.
J.A. Newbould

for this moth. Mark Parsons reminds us that this is a protected species and best looked for around September when the larvae should be seen feeding on the bushes (pers. comm.). Barberry has been removed from many hedges over the decades as the bush is an intermediate host for a rust which infects many grasses including cereal crops.

Much of the day was spent surveying a Beech plantation along forestry roadways and I was surprised to count 78 species in monad ST8809, including Hornbeam, Buckthorn, Spindle, with the leaf gall *Stenacis convolvens* and the fungal gall *Melammpsoma epitea*; many old Box had the gall *Monarthropalpus flavus*. Wild Strawberry, one of the DERC under-recorded target species, and Common Gromwell were also seen. The monad ST8708 was also recorded, where 71 plant species were noted, but also a dormouse nest, barn owl and the leaf mine *Entyloma ficariae* on Lesser Celandine. There were a few typical woodland herbs, including Sweet Violet, Bluebell, Dog's Mecury and Wood Millet.

1st May 2018
Golden Cap estate for Green-winged Orchid

Once again, the public were entertained with a visit to the stunning hay meadows to see Green-winged Orchids. David Leigh has estimated that two fields have around 100,000 flowering spikes, but they are also found in lesser numbers in other fields. Peter Cramb added one of the camping fields to our list, whilst on the day I noted about a dozen flowering plants in a new field.

Green-winged Orchids at the Golden Cap estate.
J.A. Newbould

12th May 2017
Hillfield, High Stoy, Telegraph Hill and Penn Wood

A field meeting to celebrate a route described by Thomas Hardy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* when Tess walked from Plush to Beaminster to find her beau.

Laurence Taylor and Katherine Barker in Penn Wood. *J.A. Newbould*

This is an area of history, literature and mystery. First, we visited the Cross-in-Hand, a column reputed to be the place where a priest from Batcombe lost the vessel containing the last sacrament he was taking in a storm to an old shepherd. Retracing his steps, he saw a light which led him to the spot where the vessel had fallen. The shepherd received his last sacrament and the priest marked the spot with the stone (Harte 1998). At the county council parking place there was a large area of Wild Strawberry. From here, we walked east and had a brief look at the upper slopes of the DWT reserve at Hendover Coppice, attracted by some old hedgerow Ash. I noted one pollard of 1.1m diameter classed by Defra as truly ancient and a 3m part coppice, part laid Ash of 3m in the hedgerow. A glade of Hazel coppice was thick with Bluebells. Also of interest was Town-hall-clock and a single bush of Red Currant.

We then walked north from Telegraph Hill to Penn Wood in monad ST6405. The hollow-way through the wood forms part of the old Stoverush Drove Road running from Holnest towards Cerne Abbas. The short walk revealed 56 species of plants including: Toothwort and Twayblade. Sweet Woodruff formed large patches, with Yellow Archangel. Ransoms was abundant on the lower north slopes and in drier places there were Bluebells. Woody species here included Field Maple, Ash, Dogwood, Beech, Grey willow, Wild Gooseberry, with Traveller's-joy festooned over the trees.

With many footpaths criss-crossing the area, both north and south, the area is worth exploring in spring.

7th June 2017
Crook Hill (National Trust)

Hedges

The roadside hedge has a number of standard Pedunculate Oak and a single standard Holly at the eastern end. Field Maple, Sycamore, Goat Willow, Hawthorn and a standard Ash are found at the western end. Ferns found in this hedge included Male-fern, Broad Buckler-fern, Hart's-tongue and Intermediate Polypody. At the wetter eastern end, Marsh Horsetail was seen. Other herbs present in the hedge bottom include Ransoms, Dog's Mercury, Greater Stitchwort, but Cow Parsley was scarce; there were also Bush Vetch and Lesser Celandine. The western hedge was very shaded and mainly consisted of Hawthorn and Hazel.

The roadside hedge looking east from the entrance gate. *J.A. Newbould*

Woodland and scrub

The NVC W10 oak woodland found on the north-west boundary extends into Flaxley Coppice to the north. The southern boundary of Flaxley Coppice is mapped as ancient woodland. Sycamore woodland is found on the eastern side of the property. The steep north-facing bank has little ground flora and is mainly Hazel coppice with an occasional Holly.

The south-facing slope has an area of NVC W25 Bracken – Bramble scrub, with a few Gorse buses on the margin. There are a number of Pedunculate Oaks, which were less than 50 years old. The ground flora here includes Foxglove, Bluebell and Yorkshire-fog. To the east there is an area of more open Silver Birch and Hazel woodland (see photograph), with an occasional Gorse bush and Yorkshire-fog, Wood Sorrel, Red Campion, Yellow Archangel, frequent Primrose, Common Dog-violet and Bluebell. Honeysuckle was found climbing some of the trees. It is probable that removal of Bracken would open up a small area of acid grassland, evidenced by Tormentil on the western slope.

Oak woodland on the north-west of the property, with Gorse and Bracken on the south-facing slope to the west. *J. A. Newbould*

Silver Birch and Hazel woodland on the more eastern slopes with an Yorkshire-fog and Bluebell ground flora. *J. A. Newbould*

Grassland

The small area of sandy soils on the north-west slope supports Tormentil, Early Forget-me-not and Wall Speedwell. Here there were many molehills.

The grassland to the east appears to be of a more neutral nature typical of the clayey soils found in the Corscombe parish forming typical NVC type MG10 where Yorkshire-fog is frequent but Soft Rush is scarce. Cuckooflower was scattered across the meadow, together with its associated butterfly, the orange-tip. Docks such as Broad-leaved Dock were frequent, many supporting the beetle *Gastrophysia viridula,* which is typical of docks in west Dorset in May. Common Sorrel was frequent. Bugle was found on the western lower slopes.

10th June 2017
Langton Herring led by Laurence Taylor

It was with considerable disappointment that only the leader and John Newbould turned out to see two very fine fields to the south-west of the village. The fields contained some good examples of NVC MG5 grassland seemingly not protected by a statutory designation. The fields in monad SY6082 had three species of orchid – Pyramidal, Bee and Southern Marsh-orchid – Yellow-rattle, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Cat's-ear, Water Figwort, Common Knapweed and Quaking-grass. I did not make an exhaustive list as Laurence had previously submitted the records for the BSBI mapping project. Nine species of plant gall, including the rarely seen gall on Yarrow, *Rhopalomyia milefolii,* where the flower buds are transformed into irregular spongy multi-chambered hairy galls. A mass of White Bryony in a hedgerow suffered fascination. Skylarks were calling and we also noted willow warbler and house sparrow in the village. There were many six-spot burnet moths, mainly on Common Knapweed, and common blue butterfly.

There were 40 mute swans on the Fleet with little egret, oystercatchers. A kestrel was seen hawking over Rodden hive.

15th July 2017
Creech Heath
Led by Carolyn Steele and Naomi Ewald

Naomi Ewald searching for medicinal leech in the ponds at Creech Heath. *J. A. Newbould*

This was a joint meeting with Pondnet (Freshwater Habitats Trust) to look for the IUCN Near Threatened medicinal leech *Hirudo medicinalis*.

The first pond surveyed to find the leech was searched by Dr Naomi Ewald using a pond net in the shallow mud at the pond edge in Marsh St. John's-wort and Common Spike-rush habitat . The pond itself was mainly NVC type A7 White Water-lily community. Hill *et al.* suggest that a pH of 6 suits the

environment for this species. The technique to attract the leech being to pull the net up and down to disturb the mud within the Marsh St. John's-wort area. In drier areas Purple Moor-grass merged in with the Scots Pine, Silver Birch and willow of the adjacent heathland. There was also Pale Butter-wort, with bog bush-crickets hopping about. The pond itself was surrounded by Gorse on its margins.

The second pond we visited was a complete contrast and unexpected. On the acid heathland, I did not expect to find a pond covered in Water-soldier. A plant of a neutral to alkaline pH (Hill *et al.* 2004) I have only experienced Water-soldier in the dykes of the Norfolk Broads grazing meadows. It was also in flower, which I gather is rare at this pond. I can only assume that the pond is fed by calcareous spring water. The plant is a free-floating submerged perennial rising to the surface at flowering time by shedding calcium. Once again, Naomi failed to find the medicinal leech. Naomi also searched for, and found, the rare Broad-leaved Pondweed leaf-hopper *Evotettix cyane*. There was also another NBAP S41 plant, Pillwort *Pilularia globulifera* and Lesser Bladderwort *Utricularia minor*, a plant requiring a pH of 4.

Odonata included golden-ringed dragonfly, brown hawker, large red and azure damselflies and emerald damselfly, which favours the heathland mires.

20th July 2017
Morden Bog NNR led by Laurence Taylor

After many attempts to arrange a date to visit Mordon Bog, I was delighted to join around a dozen people, mostly residents of east Dorset and Purbeck to visit this stunning site, which once again Laurence Taylor had methodically researched and recorded. I was also immeasurably grateful to be accompanied by Dr Malcolm Storey who was able to answer those identification questions from past and present at which I could only wonder.

The easiest access is from Sherford Bridge SY91959260 following the footpath east to the bog area, including Old Decoy Pond and Decoy Heath. In addition to the NNR designation, the area is also a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated by the EU for the Dorset Lowland Heath.

A pool at Morden Bog. *J.A. Newbould*

Laurence has undertaken detailed plant recording for the BSBI 2020 Atlas. Highlights included Marsh Clubmoss (six good locations) IUCN Endangered (England) Stroth *et al.* (2014), also a S41 NBAP species; Small Cudweed, Bird's-foot, Lesser Bladderwort and Dodder IUCN Vulnerable.

There was an impressive list of Odonata including: common blue damselfly, emerald damselfly, azure damselfly, small red damselfly emperor dragonfly, keeled skimmer, black-tailed skimmer and four-spotted chaser. Malcolm Storey introduced us to the raft spider *Dolomedes fimbriatus*. Moths included the rosy footman and vapourer. I recorded the grayling butterfly (three records), silver-studded blue twice, small heath and common blue.

29th July 2017
Lulworth Cove

Rock Samphire, with Golden-samphire beyond, at Stair Hole. *J.A. Newbould*

The original plan was walk round the cove, using the steps on the east side to ascend the cliff and walk to Mupe Bay searching for chalk carpet moth and Lulworth skipper. However, with a grim weather forecast we decided to cut our losses and explore Stair Hole until the rain came, which it did on time. The wet cliffs down to the sea at Stair Hole are one of my favourite places to see coastal plants in a small area. Highlights included Strawberry Clover IUCN Vulnerable, Sea Arrow-grass, Golden-samphire, a sea-lavender, Rock Samphire, Lesser Centaury, Wild Carrot, Lady's Bedstraw, Horseshoe Vetch, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil and Buck's-horn Plantain.

16th September 2017
Turnworth Common

This was a joint meeting with Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society. It was really good to see old Hazel coppice left alone in the traditional Welsh manner with crevices developing in the old stems forming potential bat roosts and

Unhealthy looking Ash trees at Turnworth Common. *J.A. Newbould*

The gall *Aceria fraxinivora*. *J.A. Newbould*

good invertebrate habitat. The new flowers were already supporting the rare gall *Phyllocoptruta corylii*. It was a somewhat disappointing visit for galls. The rare gall on Common Rock-rose was not present nor the fungal galls on eyebright and Salad Burnet. We only saw four common oak galls, against nine last year. Rarely seen was the Diptera gall *Wachtliella stachydis* on Hedge Woundwort and an anthill covered in Wild Thyme had the mite gall *Aceria thomasi.* Buckthorn had the gall caused by nymphs of *Trichochermes walkeri,* whilst Spindle had the mite gall *Stenacis convolvens* causing leaves to roll upwards.

A number of Ash in the valley bottom were leafless and showing signs of stress. There were few Ash keys and on one Ash (ST 8140108537), the keys had turned brown probably due to the gall *Contarinia marchali,* but this was only observed through binoculars. Many of the Ash illustrated left had fruits that were infected with small amounts of the gall *Aceria fraxinivora*. Typically, all the unhealthy-looking Ash were in the lower (valley bottom) areas e.g. ST81450849, which were wet. The trees on the 'hill-tops' were all healthy. Jez Martin (the Poole BC Ecologist) looked at the trees and using the FC website checked for Ash dieback. There were no lesions or black runs on the trunks. I have seen this in Swaledale in July, caused by *A. fraxinivora* (illustrated left) and the following year all was well. However, the situation needs monitoring. Rob Rhodes tells me that there are problems with honey fungus on the property, which is a real shame as there are some stunning old Pedunculate Oaks and Ash.

Most of the chalk grassland flowers were over, but Devil's-bit Scabious and Small Scabious were still in flower. We also found a wasp spider in the vicinity of dark-green bush-crickets and meadow grasshoppers.

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John A. Newbould, Stonecroft, 3 Brookmead Close, Sutton Poyntz, Weymouth DT3 6RS

Wareham Forest Arboretum

Members of Dorset Flora Group, sometimes with Forestry Commission working parties, have been engaged on a long-term project of restoring this former Forestry Commission experimental area since 2011. There are about 50 different species of tree and shrub. So far nearly 150 specimens have been labelled with a numbered tag, in preparation for fuller signage later.

Last winter there were three working party days, one jointly with the Forestry Commission. The chief task is the removal of a large number of self-sown Western Hemlock-spruce *Tsuga heterophylla*, together with smaller numbers of self-sown Lawson's Cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* and Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*. We pull or cut small specimens ourselves. A forester fells larger ones, and we enjoy cutting and piling up the brash for removal. When we started I estimated that it would be a ten-year task. My present estimate is 15 to 20 years!.

Edward Pratt

Dorset Wild Flower Week reports 2017

Compiled by Ted Pratt

Saturday 27th May

Cogden Beach

A low sea mist blanketed the area at first, but by the end of the walk the 13 of us taking this short beach walk were in warm sunshine.

There is a good range of common grasses, herbs and sedges to be found at this site, as well as some less frequent species. Herb-rich neutral grassland on the coastal slope and behind the beach has a scattered stand of Southern Marsh-orchids, and there are several plants of calcareous soils such as Yellow-wort. Grass Vetchling occurs in longer turf while in glades in the scrub edges are plants of Common Gromwell. Very short turf at the back-slope of the shingle has, among the various trefoils, a good stand of Rough Clover. The beach flora is striking, with Thrift, Sea Campion, Yellow Horned-poppy and huge mounds of Sea Kale. Present, but less abundantly, are Rock Samphire, Sea Sandwort and Sea Couch, and there is the odd bush of Duke of Argyll's Teaplant.

Jim White

Brackett's Coppice

Fifteen of us found our way to this remote DWT reserve, north of Corscombe and not far short of the Somerset border, and it was certainly worth the effort! The site is a mix of ancient woodland and stream, hay meadows, wood pasture, together with species-rich acid grassland.

There are large stands of Heath Spotted-orchids, allowing comparison with the more scattered Common Spotted-orchids. The herb-rich hay fields have a colourful flora with much Corky-fruited water-dropwort and a population of Adder's-tongue Fern. Most woodland flowers were past their best but Bird's-nest Orchid was in full glory. The damp acid grasslands have many nice plants, such as Lousewort, Dyer's Greenweed, Bitter Vetch, Meadow Thistle, Pignut and several sedges including Carnation, Tawny, Pale and Flea. Betony, Saw-wort and Devil's-bit Scabious are abundant though yet to flower, the latter supporting one of the few wet grassland sites for Marsh Fritillary butterfly, obligingly flying well in the warm sunshine.

Jim White

Sunday 28th May

Durlston Country Park

Despite the forecast of rain, ten people came on this walk. Only a few drops fell. We started by seeing a number of garden escapes, such as Green Alkanet, by the road up from the castle. Crossing the car parks we got down on our knees to look at Knotted Hedge-parsley and other species by the kerbs. In the field beyond the Learning Centre there was a good showing of Common Spotted-orchids, and one Southern Marsh-orchid near

Sea Kale and Yellow-horned Poppies on Cogden Beach. *Jim White*

the path. Then we saw a hybrid between them; the first time one had been seen in the fields open to the public.

Beyond that, in the area near the shallow quarry, the downland vegetation included Chalk Milkwort, Horseshoe Vetch, and a few Early Spider Orchids going to seed. On a hump of quarry spoil beyond the next gate a sharp-eyed member of the group spotted a few Dwarf Spurge.

At the side of Ox-eye Field we saw Grass and Yellow Vetchlings, the latter not to be confused with the much commoner Meadow Vetchling. Sainfoin and Common Broomrape have arrived in this field. We heard a Cuckoo!

On the way back a new colony of garden Gladioli caught the eye. Finally, at some of the walkers' request, most of the group entered the wooded area by the reservoir to see some splendid Twayblades.

Edward Pratt

Monday 29th May

Kilwood

The low mist and overnight rain made for a rather damp morning at Kilwood, but six hardy souls were prepared to go for it. The flora of the track (based on imported chalk) includes Rough Hawkbit, Goat's-beard, Pale St John's-wort (not yet flowering) and Downy Oat-grass, with patches of Glaucous and Grey Sedges. Another anomaly under scrub beside the track is a clump of Star-of-Bethlehem, still with a few flowers showing.

The damp, heathy field has big stands of Jointed Rush and shorter patches that are grey with Carnation Sedge and Meadow Thistle. Other leaves include Betony and Devil's-bit Scabious, but already flowering were Tormentil and stands of Heath Spotted-orchids and a few Early Marsh-orchids (ssp. *pulchella*). A return through woodland passed fine veteran Pedunculate Oaks over extensive patches of Wood Melick, with Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage along the stream. Ferns include Broad Buckler, Male, Lady, Hard and Soft Shield-fern. With the abundant mosses on the woodland floor, tree trunks and branches there is a sense of great lushness and humidity.

More recently deposited clay banks provided a strong heath element to the flora, with plants of Ling, Cross-leaved and Bell Heather, and clumps of the typical heath lichen *Cladonia portentosa*.

Jim White

Jim White with walkers at KIlwood.

Stonehill Down

The morning's low mist persisted into the afternoon so the promised spectacular view from the top of Stonehill looked doubtful, but six keen flower-spotters were prepared to make the climb. In the event we were rewarded with a partial view, but always with the threat of the low cloud base returning to envelop us.

The short-grazed turf has plentiful Bulbous Buttercup and, at the eastern end, occasional Hairy Rock-cress in a sparse turf of Meadow Oat-grass, Sheep's Fescue and Quaking-grass. There were also a few first flowers of Small Scabious and, minute in the short turf, tiny pink stars of Field Madder.

The steep north-facing downland slope has lots of Salad Burnet

Jim White with walkers later in the day at Stonehill Down.

and the rosettes of Cowslip (already over) and Stemless Thistle (yet to flower). There are occasional Common Spotted-orchids, along with blue, pink and white forms of Common Milkwort and dainty spikes of Fairy Flax. The even steeper south slopes have an abundance of Horseshoe Vetch (supporting many brilliant Adonis Blues) and the papery yellow flowers of Common Rockrose.

The road banks between Stonehill and Kilwood have a good woodland flora, including much Nettle-leaved Bellflower, again yet to flower.

Jim White

Tuesday 30th May

Corfe Barrows Nature Park

Twenty-two people including myself walked a route around the newly established Corfe Barrows Nature Park, which gave walkers a chance to see the areas acquisitioned through The Great Heath project and for me to talk about the Nature Park concept. The meadows are relatively new in their management and so are not as diverse as they could be – again an opportunity for me to talk about management.

Some nice plants along the way included: Common Knapweed (ready to flower), Lesser Trefoil, Red Campion, Hedge Woundwort, Dog's Mercury, Lesser Stitchwort, Greater Stitchwort, Cut-leaved Crane's-bill, Pink-sorrel, Tutsan, a lovely bank of dense Dog-rose, and Elder in flower.

There were also speckled wood butterfly, common blue butterfly, maiden's blush moth, roe deer, and two emperor dragonflies

Katie Wilkinson

Brownsea

The guided walk on Brownsea Island was led by David Leadbetter. After a short introduction by the public hide, the group of seven went across the boardwalk to look at Southern Marsh-orchids in a wettish area. Some time was then spent on Church Green to examine small species, such as Slender Trefoil, Lesser Trefoil and Bird's-foot, as well as the towering trees of False Acacia, Indian Horse-chestnut and Red Oak.

A short walk was then taken to see the unusual American Skunk-cabbage before the group was led into the DWT reserve. The main interest along the path near the hides was a number of Common Spotted-orchids protected by small cages, with one hybrid between this and Southern Marsh-orchid.

After stopping to watch a Red Squirrel near the Villa (home to the DWT warden), the last part of the walk was through Venetia Park (an old arboretum with many planted trees) and up to St George's Hill, which has now regenerated with birches following the 1990 storm when several hundred Scots Pines were blown down.

During the walk, David pointed out the three main pine species on Brownsea (Scots, Monterey and Maritime) and the differences between them.

David Leadbetter

Wednesday 31st May

Kingcombe

Twenty-five souls gathered at the Kingcombe Centre on May 31st for an outing across the meadows, led by DWT West Dorset Conservation Officer Nick Gray. Hot on royal heels (HRH Prince Charles had visited Kingcombe earlier in the month to celebrate 30 years since the reserve was acquired by DWT), we encountered many of the archetypal inhabitants of species-rich neutral grassland, including Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Lousewort, Oxeye Daisy, Cat's-ear and, notably, Hairy Lady's-mantle.

Owing to the cold spring, pastures had been grazed hard as the animals searched for grass, which meant that flowers like Pignut and the common orchids were more prominent. Incidentally, this appeared to have a knock-on effect later in the season with many agreeing that it was one of the best years for wild flowers that Kingcombe has seen for a long time.

In the hay meadows, slow grass growth also resulted in a fine display of composite species, Pepper-saxifrage, Common Knapweed, Yellow-rattle and that Kingcombe favourite, Corky-fruited Water-dropwort.

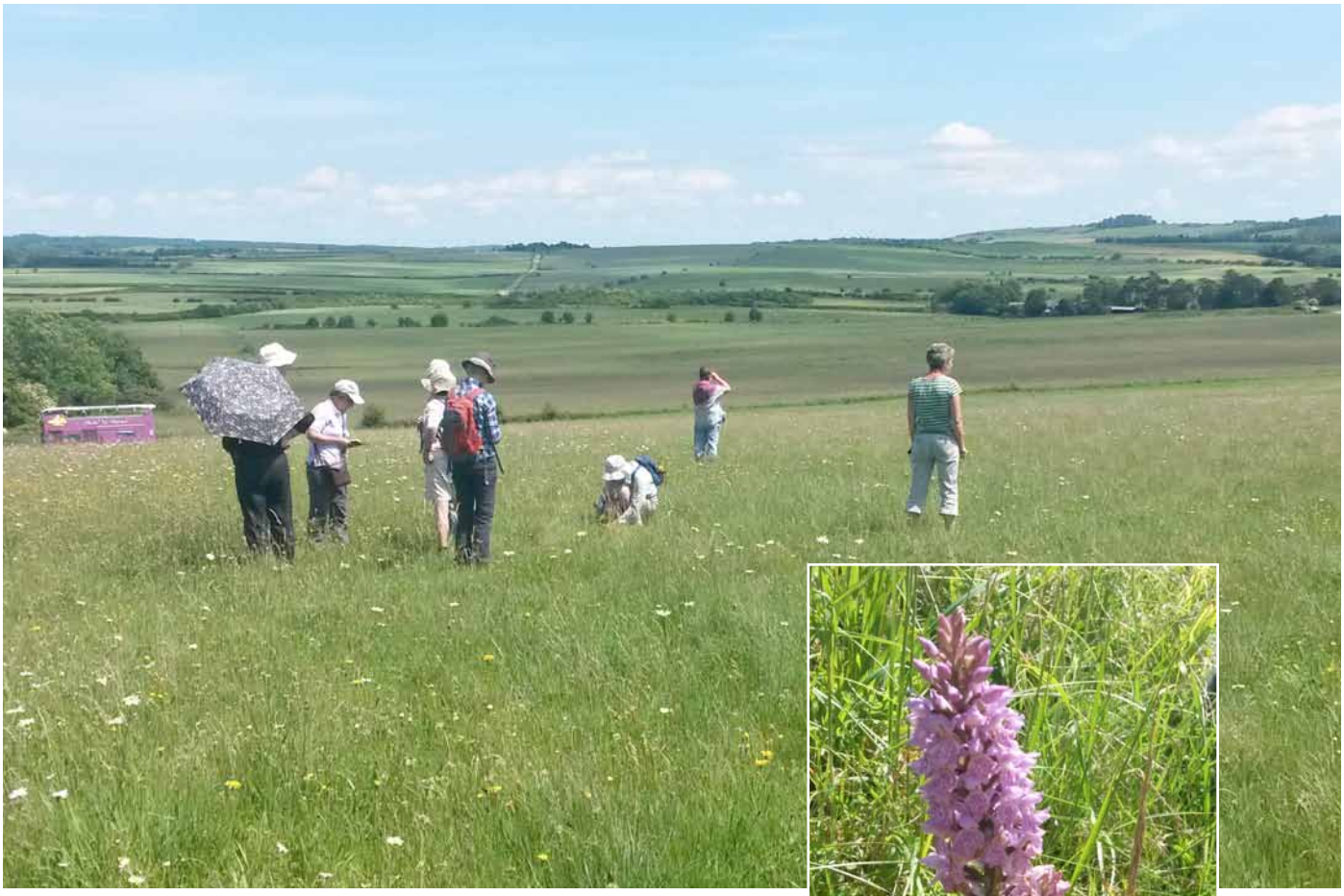
Nick Gray

Studland Dunes and Little Sea

David Brown led a group of nine walkers to look at Studland dunes. The walk started next to the beach where we stopped to look at the foredune community and managed to find Sea Rocket, Sea Bindweed, and Lyme-grass thriving among the more dominant Sand Sedge and Marram. We also saw that above the foredunes trampling by visitors had created conditions in which English Stonecrop was thriving.

From the dunes we walked inland, and passing though the vivid blue and yellow of Sheep's-bit and Cat's-ear we observed the succession from open dunes to dune heath. Alongside the Heather we stopped to look at some of the dune grasses, including Early and Silver Hair-grass and Squirrel-tail Fescue, as well as the more common bents, Marram and Sweet Vernal-grass. We also looked here at how the bryophyte community showed similar successional changes, with pioneer mosses such as *Polytrichum juniperinum* and *Ceratodon purpureus* making way to the more shade-loving *Hypnum jutandicum*, *Dicranum scoparium* and *Pseudoscleropodium purum*.

Our final stop was in the dune slack wetland communities. On the shores of Little Sea we looked at the differences between spike-rushes and counted up a good list of plants specialising in the nutrient poor, acidic wet ground – including Round-leaved Sundew, Marsh St. John's-wort, Bog Pimpernel, Gipsywort,



Jean Smith with walkers at Cashmoor Down.
Tom Smith

Floating Club-rush and Lesser Spearwort. A shallow wade a few metres into Little Sea produced two of the plants associated with this rare oligotrophic lake habitat: Alternate Water-milfoil and the rare Six-stamened Waterwort.
David Brown

Thursday 1st June

Cashmoor Down

Twelve of us met for this visit on a hot, sunny day. Cashmoor Down is a linear site comprising chalk grassland hedgerow and scrub. This remnant of chalk grassland has survived owing to its being located on ancient earthworks, whose slopes provide sheltered conditions for the butterflies that are found here, including Adonis blue, small blue, dingy skipper and green hairstreak. We are grateful to Arthur Bryant, the Butterfly Conservation transect recorder for this site, for helping coordinate our visit.

The first part of our walk was gradually uphill along a track that leads to the model aircraft club that is based at the top of the hill. The trees and shrubs lining the track provided opportunities to see typical woody species of chalk, including Wayfaring Tree, Dogwood, Spindle, Buckthorn and Whitebeam. Climbing up this vegetation were both Black Bryony and White Bryony. A short distance along from model aircraft club we were able to admire

A large Common Spotted-orchid at Cashmoor Down. *Tom Smith*

the fine views across Cranborne Chase to the north of the site.

The part of the site around the tumulus earthwork is a SSSI and this was where we saw the majority of chalk grassland flowers including, Chalk Milkwort, Horseshoe Vetch, Kidney Vetch, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Small Scabious, Greater Knapweed, Common Knapweed, Hoary Plantain, Lady's Bedstraw and Wild Mignonette. Two grasses also characteristic of chalk grassland, Upright Brome and Quaking-grass, were present in this area. We also saw several parasitic Knapweed Broomrape, evidently growing on the roots of Greater Knapweed. Cowslips grow here in profusion, although these were not flowering but identified through their seed-heads.

We saw three species of orchid: Common Spotted, Chalk Fragrant and Pyramidal, with the latter two species just recently out in flower with many more to come. Our best specimen of

an orchid on this visit was a rather large Common Spotted-orchid, growing at the intersection with the Jubilee Way, which crosses the site. The hot weather seemed to have caused most of the Goat's-beards or Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon to close up their flowers by about 11.15am or maybe they just hadn't read the script!

With the kind permission of Canada Farm, we also explored a small part of the 'Shepherdess's fields' which adjoin Cashmoor Down at its eastern end. Here the sward is shorter and unsurprisingly Yellow-rattle is present here in good numbers. We were delighted to find further Pyramidal Orchids here. This was a first visit to this site for many of our party and we were glad to have shared the pleasurable experience with our group.

Tom and Jean Smith

Brand's Bay

Seven people came on this walk, which was a joint event with the Isle of Purbeck DWT group. As we walked from Ferry Road towards the Brand's Bay hide, we saw plenty of Heath Milkwort, and looked at the opposite leaves at the base of the stems. Going down the slope to the shore we looked at a Downy Birch, and considered the differences from Silver Birch.

On the shore a walker soon spotted English Scurvy-grass, and another found Greater Sea-spurrey. There was a small amount of Thrift, and much more Sea-lavender, though the latter was only just coming into flower. Someone's keen eyes picked out a sedge, which surprisingly turned out to be False Fox-sedge. Another surprising find was Knotted Hedge-parsley, which was new for the tetrad. As we walked around the shore north-westwards we saw increasing amounts of the beautiful English Stonecrop.

On reaching Redhorn Quay some of us got down on our knees to look for small species. There were not so many as usual owing to the dry weather in the past month. One of the species we noticed during our walk back across the heath was Deergrass, distinguished by the flap at the top of the stem sheaths.

Edward Pratt

Chalk Fragrant-orchid at Badbury Rings.
Janet O'Connor

Friday 2nd June

Hambledon Hill

A group of ten people gathered for the wildflower walk at Hambledon Hill. After a short introduction to the geology and impressive history of the site, we climbed up along the north side of the hill. Quickly, we started to see typical plants of chalk and unimproved grassland such as Common Rock-rose, Horse-shoe Vetch, Fairy Flax and Quaking-grass.

As we made our way around the hill along one of the ramparts it was obvious that we had arrived at just the right time to see Common-spotted Orchid, as there were excellent displays on the banks. We also saw Common Twayblade and Pyramidal Orchids in bud. Near the southern part of the hill, we came

Common Spotted-orchids at Badbury Rings.
Janet O'Connor

Walkers at Budgen's Copse. *Phil Budd*

One of the ponds at Stephen's Castle. *Phil Budd*

across some good patches of Chalk Milkwort. Best of all, one steep south-facing bank had a good population of Early Gentian, the shy-flowering purple trumpets of which could just be made out, once one had learnt to make out their 'jizz' in the flowery sward. Other additions were Kidney Vetch and Common Gromwell.

Cloud and breezy conditions kept the butterflies down but a reasonable number were seen, including small heath, common blue and dingy skipper, as well as day-flying moths such as the burnet campion. Last of all, just as we were heading down to the car park a keen-eyed participant spotted a delightful Bee Orchid, much to the delight of everyone.

Andrew Branson

Badbury Rings

Our group of 24 gathered on the Sarum–Dorchester Roman road for an over-view of the hill-fort. Flowers there included Horseshoe and Kidney Vetch, Fairy Flax, Quaking-grass, Glaucous Sedge, Common Milkwort and Mignonette. Near the three round barrows was one solitary Pyramid Orchid.

Along the northern outer rampart, numbers of Common Spotted-orchids increased, as did robust Greater Butterfly-orchids and Twayblades, together with White and Black Bryony and Wild Thyme. Returning along the northern middle rampart, there were several dense flowery patches. One included Common Spotted-orchids liberally interspersed with Fairy Flax and a few Greater Butterfly-orchids. Another, now in sunshine, was bright yellowish-green from tall Twayblades growing through Brambles, Barren Brome, Yellow-rattle and the seedheads of Cowslips. In the barbican section, there were a handful of Chalk Fragrant-orchids, one Bee Orchid, and one Early Purple Orchid (in seed).

Butterflies included several small blues & one ringlet, with five-spot burnet, yellow shell & burnet companion moths. Birds included corn bunting, skylark and kestrel.

Seven different orchids were seen, but it was the prolific patches of Common Spotted, Greater Butterfly and Twayblade orchids that were particularly spectacular.

Janet O'Connor

Saturday 3rd June

Budgen's Copse, Verwood

The morning walk was attended by ten people in cool but sunny weather. Firstly, the group looked at the common plants of a patch of amenity grassland close to the Morrison's store, concentrating on the various leguminous plants to be seen there, for example, Lesser Trefoil and Black Medick, which were compared.

We then ventured into the woodland where some common summer flowers were now in bloom. We looked closely at Wood Avens, Yellow Pimpernel and Enchanter's Nightshade, then found some more unusual species such as Tutsan, Common Cow-wheat and Pale Sedge. Other sedges, grasses and ferns were identified and the latter included a fine clump of Hard Fern. Various spring flowers, such as Bluebell, Wood-sorrel and Wood Anemone, had now gone over but were still visible in some form or other.

Finally, in the meadow north of the woodland, the main interest were grasses, sedges and rushes, but Pignut and a fine display of over 100 Heath Spotted-orchids were also observed. Of other wildlife, various species of hoverfly were shown to the group.

Phil Budd

Stephen's Castle, Verwood

Twelve people attended the afternoon walk at Stephen's Castle, including a couple who lived next door to the site. The weather was cloudier than in the morning, but still dry. Initially we walked back along the entrance track to the west and compared various species of crane's-bill, including Hedgerow Crane's-bill and Cut-leaved Crane's-bill.

Next, we progressed on to the sandy heathland area south of the quarries and got out the hand lenses to view Common Bird's-foot, Small Cudweed and various clovers, including Knotted Clover, Slender Trefoil and Subterranean Clover. Some heathland grasses, such as Bristle Bent-grass, were also examined. In the quarry bottom we looked around the two ponds to view the Common Cottongrass and were entertained by the dragonflies there, as well as courting Palmate Newts in one pond and hundreds of emerging young Toads in the other. We finished the walk on the flat ground west of the hill where highlights included a large colony of Heath Speedwell and a few flowering bushes of Small-flowered Sweetbriar.

Phil Budd

Lorton Meadows

On Saturday 3rd June I was joined by 13 participants, from grandparents to children, at Lorton Meadows Conservation Centre. After a brief introduction we wandered around the reserve, taking in the meadows and SSSI of Lorton Meadows nature reserve in Weymouth. The weather was dry, fairly warm and sunny, but a bit breezy.

Walking through the grazed meadows we spotted Grass Vetchling, Common Vetch, Smooth Tare, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Red Campion, Oxeye +Daisy, Corky-fruited Water-dropwort, Pignut, Pale Flax and Creeping Buttercup, to name a few. Along the edge of one of the recently restored Environmental Mitigation Area meadows we found Bee Orchids. This means that they are now present in two of the SSSI meadows and the verge outside the Centre, too. We saw our first few meadow browns of the season, plenty of common blue and speckled wood butterflies in the shadier spots. All the participants enjoyed the two-hour walk and stopped for a cup of tea/coffee afterwards at the Centre.

Samatha Dallimore

Sunday 4th June

Fontmell Down

This walk aimed to find as many of the nine orchid species regularly recorded on Fontmell Down as could be seen in early June. We also hoped to see Early Gentian, which was found on the leader's recce one week before the walk. A group of 14 started from the National Trust car park and headed along the ridge about South Curlew, where we quickly found Common Spotted and Bee Orchids, along with a few gone over Early Purple Orchids. We then took the higher path through Catswhisker plantation, and walked across to Littledown. This is one of the best parts of the reserves to see masses of flowering orchids, and we were able to add Common Twayblade and Chalk Fragrant-orchid to our list here.

We then walked back through Catswhisker along the lower path. Part of the woodland has White Helleborine, and after some searching we found a few of these a few metres from the path. We continued downwards onto open downland at the lowest part of North Curlew. This has one of the best sites for Early Gentian on the down; five flowering plants had been present on the recce visit, but despite quite intensive searching we could not relocate them! We consoled ourselves by looking at a few early Pyramidal Orchids before trudging back up the steep slopes to the car park. It was a very enjoyable afternoon, with seven of the eight species likely to be out in June found. The missing species was Frog Orchid, which sadly seems to have become very elusive everywhere in the last few years.

Jon Crewe

Field meetings and workshops 2018

There was a full programme of meetings throughout the summer of 2018. This included a series of monthly field meetings to survey under-recorded squares mostly in the north of the county.

These included:

- Chase Woods on 21st April
- Stubhampton Bottom and Ashmore Wood on 5th May
- Corscombe on 2nd June,
- Longburton and Holnest on 7th July
- Buckland Newton on 4th August
- Kingston Lacy on 8th September

All the meetings were well attended and an enjoyable day out. In order to cover as many squares in the area as possible, we split up into several groups. The records from each meeting have been uploaded onto the Living Record website and will contribute to the Dorset coverage for the BSBI 2020 Atlas project. A fuller report on the meetings will appear in next year's *Dorset Heath*..

There was also a workshop on the carrot family (Apiaceae) on 30th June at Durlston Country Park, led by Ted Pratt.

Purbeck National Trust

Botanical survey days will be taking place across the estate each Thursday. To register an interest please email: darren.cook@nationaltrust.org.uk. A plan for the coming months is provided and usually an email of the precise meeting place on the day before when the weather has been checked.

Exhibition and Annual General Meeting

This will be held again at the Dorset Wildlife Trust's Headquarters at Brooklands Farm, Forston, Dorchester DA2 7AA on Saturday 24th November 2018 from 2pm-5pm.

Agenda

1-Apologies for absence
2-Chairman's introduction and report
3-Treasurer's report
4-Election of officials
5-Any other business

End of formal business

Presentations

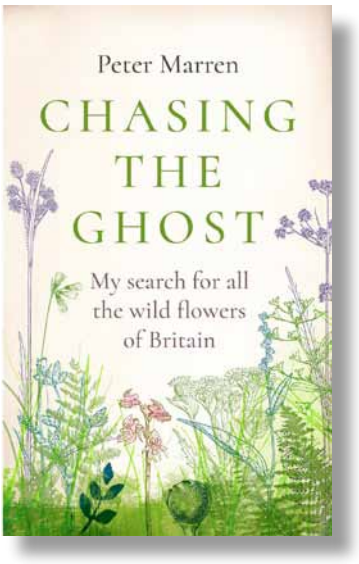
Review of 2018 Field Meetings
Review of 2018 Wild Flower Week
Review of 2018 from the VC Recorder Robin Walls

Break for tea, coffee and refreshments and view exhibits and quiz. It is Dorset Flora Group's tenth year so there will a special birthday cake for the occasion!

Main talk

Guest speaker, Peter Marren, 'Chasing the Ghost' – an insight into his latest highly acclaimed book, a quest for some of Britain's rarest and most enigmatic plants.

The formal business of the AGM and presentations regarding the activities of the Dorset Flora Group will be followed by a break, when coffee, tea and cakes/biscuits (£2 donation) will be available. This will also enable people to look at the exhibitions around the hall or just have a chat with friends and colleagues. Again this year we are grateful to Peter and Margaret Cramb for organising the plant quiz. After the break, we are pleased to announce that Peter Marren, award-winning natural history author and columnist, will give a talk on his latest book – *Chasing the Ghost*. Overall, an event not to missed!



Bob Gibbons

This edition of Dorset Heath was compiled by Andrew Branson. Many thanks to all the contributors, particularly John Newbould, Robin Walls, Ted Pratt, Peter and Margaret Cramb, Jean and Tom Smith and Bob Gibbons. If you have any comments or would like to contribute to a future edition please contact: Andrew Branson, Dorset Flora Group Chairman, Riversdale, The Street, Stour Provost, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 5RZ; tel: 01747 838223; email: andrew@3alpacas.co.uk.
Dorset plant records should be sent to VC 9 Recorder, Robin Walls, 10 Old Brickfields, Broadmayne, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 8UY, email: robin@rmwalls.plus.com.
Dorset Flora Group is linked to the Dorset Environmental Records Centre, Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, Dorset Wildlife Trust, The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, Natural England and The National Trust.
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