

KENT BOTANICAL RECORDING GROUP



NEWSLETTER

No.4

May 2012

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Enlightening Eyebrights

Liam Rooney presents a useful key for Kent *Euphrasia!*



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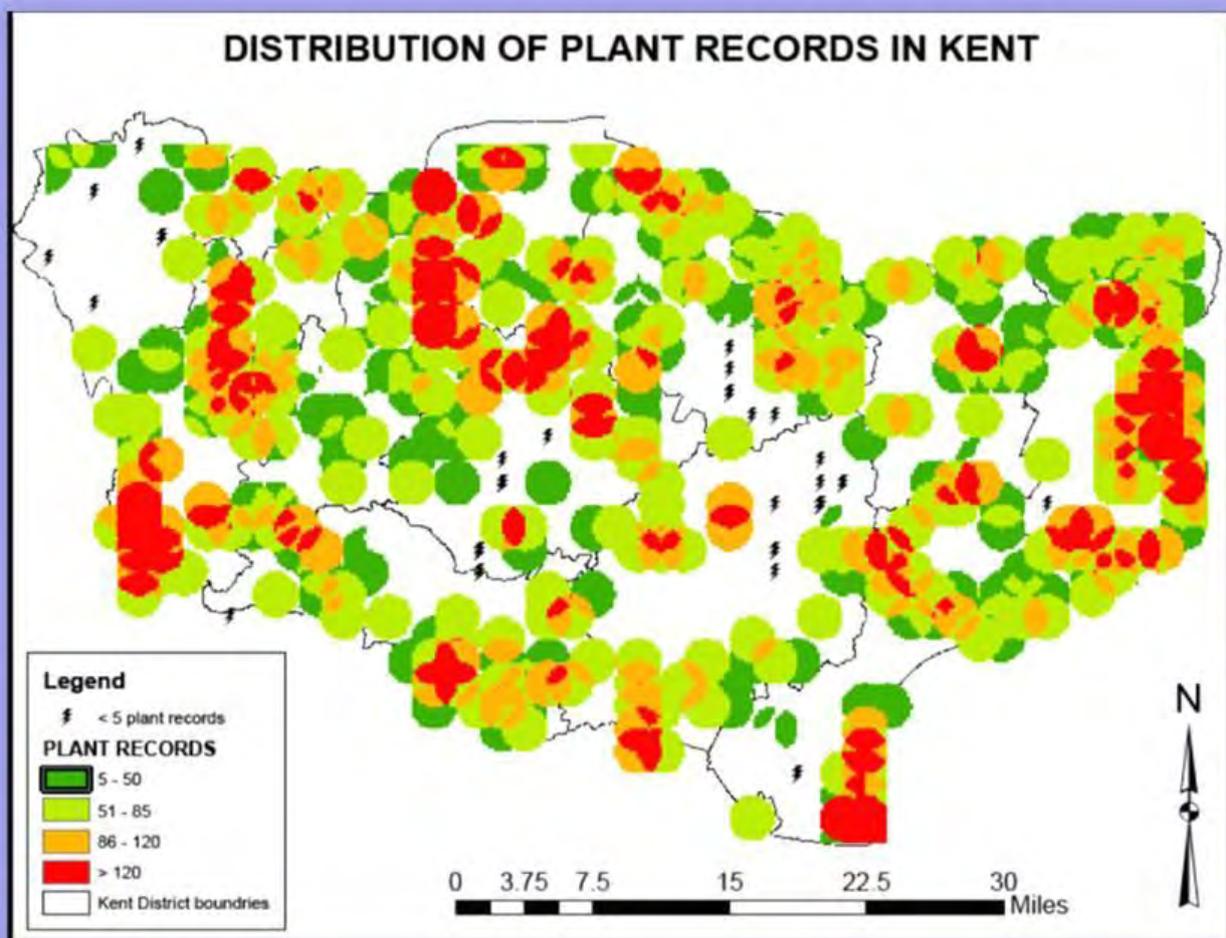
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AGM minutes

Where have we been recording most/least?

Where have we been recording most / least?

At the 2012 AGM, there was much interest in Hannah Cooke's presentation, and a request was made to publish the following slide, showing the distribution of general plant records produced by KBRG up to the beginning of 2012. So here it is, with kind permission of Hannah and the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre. It shows good developing coverage, but also recorder bias, so there are quite a few white patches calling out for survey by anyone interested in general recording.



Field meeting reports



5 October 2011: Oare Marshes

Our president, Eric Philp, led a meeting to study and record *Salicornia* (Glasswort) species at Oare Marshes. This turned out to be a remarkable session in which not only were the six previously known current Kentish species seen, plus the one perennial species classified under *Sarcocornia*, but a further species was discovered and also a hybrid glasswort was encountered which had only been recently seen in Kent.

Twelve members together with the leader attended at the car park by the flowing artesian well which is situated within the Kent Wildlife Trust's Oare Nature Reserve (well known as a site for migratory, overwintering and breeding wetland birds). The purpose of our visit was to search for and record the Rare Plant Register Glassworts that are to be found along the salt-marshes of the North Kent coast. The timing of the meeting in October was needed as to be able to note certain characteristics in colouration during fruiting which can be invaluable to determine identification.



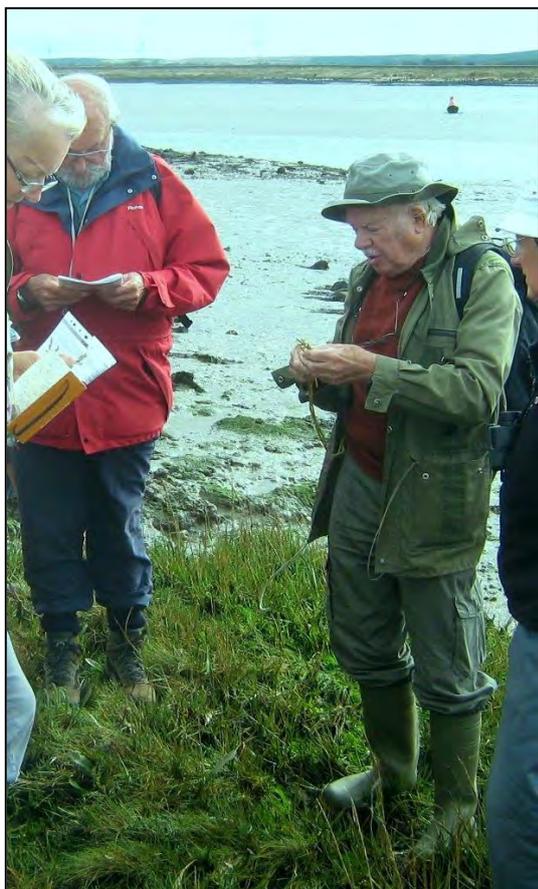
With low tide being around midday we had plenty of time to walk down to the salt-marsh at the end of Faversham and Oare Creek east of the car park. We were warned from Stace 3 that *Salicornia* is “an extremely difficult genus, the problems arising mainly from great phenotypic plasticity and the inbreeding nature of the plants”, and that it is possible that taxonomic views may change so as to lump together some of what are currently treated as separate species. Certainly, at the outset many of us found that the extent of variation within a species made it far from easy to draw distinctions between the species themselves.

Nevertheless, we soon plunged in (not literally, in spite of the mud!) with *Salicornia europaea* (Common Glasswort) and *S. ramossissima* (Purple Glasswort), the latter having noticeably more knobby spikelets and red-purple colouration. Although not on the Rare Plants Register, *Salicornia europaea* is, as Eric pointed out, not that common. Then we began to appreciate how extensive was the Perennial Glasswort, *Sarcocornia perennis*, which, unlike the annuals, could not be uprooted for examination as the wiry stems needed to be snapped off. Eric pointed out the salmon pink segments, which helped recognition. We also had the opportunity to record *Inula crithmoides* (Golden-samphire) along the sea-wall. A ray-less form of *Aster tripolium* (Sea Aster) was also noted, along with *Triglochin maritima* (Sea Arrowgrass).

Because of the dominance of *Spartina anglica* (Common Cord-grass), a pioneer species across the tidal mud, the opportunities for *Salicornia* to flourish on the mud were limited. But, where *Atriplex portulacoides* (Sea-purslane) had infiltrated on a lower part of the marsh we found a group of yellowish glassworts which keyed

out to both *S. fragilis* (Yellow Glasswort) and *S. dolichostachya* (Long-spiked Glasswort). Eventually, we were obliged to conclude that we could not place these under any one species because both were in fact present.

Returning to the upper saltmarsh, in several places we came across a dull green or glaucous glasswort with an unusually flat-angled margin below each flower group. This was identified as *S. obscura* (Glaucous Glasswort), and perhaps, by now, we were beginning to find some glassworts less obscure than others. Nevertheless, there were more difficulties to come, as again on the upper saltmarsh Eric found a few small, little-branched and youngish shiny glassworts which did not match any of the others. He could only conclude was *S. emerici* (formerly *S. nitens*, Shiny Glasswort). This species does not feature in either Atlases of the Kent Flora, and although a couple of records appear in BSBI on-line maps, there are no supporting data by which these records



might be confirmed. The timing for this meeting was perfect as a storm that night covered that particular area with debris and mats of *Spartina* which made looking for Glassworts impossible!

All of this activity meant that there remained just *S. pusilla* (One-flowered Glasswort) to be found. Perhaps this is the easiest to identify given that all the other species have groups of three flowers. It was plentiful on a higher, drier and flattish area of saltmarsh with shallow pools near a sluice gate which was the far point of our coastal exploration before we headed along the path to the road. This was also an area of mixed populations with *S. ramosissima* and *S. pusilla* growing together. Considering that the hybrid, *S. pusilla x ramosissima*, had been found last year in similar mixed populations at TR0065 west of this site further along the Swale, we decided to look for it here. Persistent searching by Liam Rooney produced a hybrid plant which had flowers in ones, twos and threes, to add to the first Kentish record which he made in 2010.

Left: Eric identifying glassworts

We then followed an embanked path back to the road, passing the bird hides and *Ononis spinosa* (Spiny Restharrow), *Typha x glauca* (the hybrid between Bulrush and Lesser Bulrush), with both parents. A hybrid dock was spotted along the path on the other side of a barbed wire fence with poor tepal development, many tepals having dropped early, and having very crisped upper stem leaves. Confirmation of its identity showed it to be *Rumex x schreberi* (the hybrid between *R. hydrolapathum* and *R. crispus*, Water and Curled Docks). This is its first record in Kent and nationally it is very rare and not found anywhere near our county.

We finished looking at *Bupleurum tenuissimum* (Slender Hare's-ear) on a bank along a bird hide path adjacent to the road. This location was a little more inland than might normally be expected. Although the plant had long since finished flowering, it was still identifiable. Feeling very happy with ourselves that this had indeed been a most successful *Salicornia* meeting we decided to end the day with lunch sitting on the sea wall and overlooking the Swale.

The meeting was held wholly within TR0164. It was remarkably productive for a single 1km square (much of which is water or mud, anyway). We did not attempt much general recording, but added another 21 species to the 54 species already held for this square for 2010 onwards. We are grateful to Eric for sharing his expertise.



3 May 2012: Chestfield and Wraik Hill

Six members met at Primrose Way, Chestfield (no primroses in sight though), on a day with much rain in some parts of the county. Fortunately, the rain stayed away from the meeting location where the conditions were cloudy but entirely compatible with botanising.

We had not even got away from the cars, when *Poa infirma* (Early Meadow-grass) was found scattered along the road verge. At the usual botanical pace, we eventually covered the few metres required to reach St Joseph's (R.C.) church. The building is modern but the front lawn may be much older and a residue of neutral grassland. The area was punctuated with the purple of *Anacamptis morio* (Green-winged Orchid) flowers. A survey for the BSBI's Threatened Plants Project was carried out: we counted 535 spikes and listed the 15 vascular plant species to be found within one metre of a sample spike. We are grateful to John Puckett (unfortunately unable to be present that day), who had arranged matters with the church authorities and kept mowers away.



Left: counting orchid spikes

From the church, we then made a circuit of a couple of quiet residential roads and in a fairly short time had built up a list of 115 records, of which 98 were new to our post-2010 database for square TR1366. Sightings included *Poa angustifolia* (Narrow-leaved Meadow-grass), *Stellaria pallida* (Lesser Chickweed) and *Torilis nodosa* (Knotted Hedge-parsley). Some interesting garden plants had also jumped their boundaries, such

as *Euphorbia characias* ssp. *veneta* (Mediterranean Spurge) and *Viola riviniana* 'Purpurea Group', to which the name *V. labradorica* has sometimes been (mis-)applied.

Our intention was then to make for Wraik Hill reserve, south west of Seasalter, and take lunch there, but it became apparent that we would be unable to link up with the warden, Emilie Mitchell, at the expected time. So we took lunch at Chestfield and moved on afterwards. Unfortunately, the leader led the procession of cars astray en route and so was banished to the rear of the procession which, even so, did not manage to reach Wraik Hill without hesitation or deviation. It was with some relief that we met up with Emilie and her colleagues at the reserve.

Wraik Hill is owned by Canterbury City Council and managed by Kent Wildlife Trust. It has been scrubbed over in part, and much of this had been fairly recently removed, so that our recording was limited, not just by the season, but also by part of the terrain as it was exposed London Clay and has not yet revegetated. The scrub through which we climbed the hill was largely *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn), with some *Crataegus laevigata* (Midland Hawthorn) and the hybrid between them (*C. x media*). We also passed one Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*). On top of the hill was a clump of *Narcissus x tazetta* (Bunch-flowered Daffodil), which gave rise to some speculation as to how it had got there, and whether a dog might be buried beneath. We made 64 records in TR0963 and just dipped into TR0964, for 27 records. Not everything was identifiable, and much had been held back by the prolonged cold, wet season. The drizzle which had held off earlier became somewhat insistent, so we then called it a day.

Leaving no Stonewort unturned?



The joint meeting with Sussex Botanical Recording Society at the Rother Levels on 21 August 2010 resulted in the find of a charophyte in a Kent ditch at around TQ900250 which no-one could identify at the time, but material was taken by SBRS. Roy Wells has kindly passed on a determination of this plant by the national referee. It turns out to be *Chara vulgaris* var. *papillata*, a variety of Common Stonewort which has long spine-cells projecting along furrows down the main axis of the plant. Not an uncommon plant, but the Stoneworts are perhaps not well recorded.

By coincidence, member Jon Bramley has been preparing plans to collect Stoneworts for an Atlas, projected to be completed over the next 5 to 10 years. Our AGM minutes (in this issue) record a discussion on this subject at our meeting on 31 March – with the result that the Group is now extending our interests from vascular plants to include Charophytes. After all, we may well find both in botanising ditches and other waterbodies!

Please contact Jon if sending specimens for identification (to ensure his availability and check his up-to date postal address) - jonathan.bramley@btopenworld.com.

Did you know?

That the name stonewort derives from the calcareous deposits on the stem of the plant, which appear to be turning it to stone. And this does happen – their fossil record goes back over 400 million years!

Dull Old Papers?!



Dull Old Papers was the heading of an email received from Ro FitzGerald in February, offering a collection of survey and historic record data, correspondence and botanical papers, mostly from around 1986, when she undertook a lot of survey work for many of our rarer species.

Far from being dull, these are proving to be a treasure trove, which will be invaluable for our rare plant register. (Just compare the account of *Alopecurus bulbosus*, Bulbous Foxtail, in the first issue of Part A of the Rare Plant Register with the latest – and see the difference this new information has made!) In many cases, Ro researched historic specimens and records for rare species and then set out to re-find them, with frequent success. She also made many remarkable finds on her own account.

Amongst the papers were some informative accounts by Ro about the status of many interesting Kent plants. There were also photocopies which proved to be sections of manuscript from Francis Rose's Flora of Kent which was never published and which now seems to have disappeared. There is a list by Francis Rose of all the Kent *Carex vulpina* (True Fox-sedge) records known to him, with 6-figure grid references – already enabling the refinding of long unrecorded plants.

*Thank
you*

All this information will be a great help to the continued production of the Rare Plant Register and we are most grateful for Ro's most thoughtful gift.

Have you come across, or been given any old records of a similar nature? If so, why not consider sharing them and the knowledge which they might contain! You never know, 'someone's trash is frequently someone else's treasure'! Please speak to Geoffrey Kitchener, contact details at the end of the newsletter.

**TEST YOUR IDENTIFICATION SKILLS!
HOW MANY OF THESE DO YOU RECOGNISE?**

(Answers on page 17)



A Key to *Euphrasia* in Kent



Reproduced courtesy of Liam Rooney

Above *Euphrasia pseudokernerii* at Lydden NNR

The Eyebrights are a very difficult group and one would normally have to work through a long key and navigate down a selection of multiple couplets before arriving at a satisfactory determination. The key below is a rather simplified and in no way infallible guide to help determine the five eyebrights that one might find, including *Euphrasia tetraquetra* which is now considered probably extinct in Kent. It does not however, allow for hybrids and/or possible discoveries of other species.

It is suggested that for a good chance of correct determination, at least five or six well grown (not stunted or spindly) and undamaged plants bearing some fruits as well as open flowers should be examined from a population. Ranges of measurements, rather than means, from these should be used.

The following key and accounts are mostly taken from The New Flora of the British Isles by Clive Stace (3rd edition, Cambridge University Press). They are based upon the views of P F Yeo modified by A J Silverside. Additional references come from The Vegetative Key to the British Flora by John Poland and Eric Clement (John Poland in association with The Botanical Society of the British Isles) and from A J Silverside's articles in the Wild Flower Society's Magazine 1990-91.

- 1 Middle and upper stem leaves with glandular hairs with stalk (6) 10-12x as long as head. ***E. officinalis* ssp. *anglica***
- 1 Middle and upper leaves without glandular hairs, or with glandular hairs with stalk $\leq 6x$ as long as head. 2
- 2 Leaves fleshy; on sea cliffs only. ***E. tetraquetra***
- 2 Leaves not fleshy; mostly inland. 3
- 3 Stems and branches flexuous; leaves near base of branches usually very small (lower bracts mostly alternate, capsule usually about same length as calyx). ***E. confusa***
- 3 Stems and branches usually straight or gradually curved; leaves near base of branches not much smaller than others. 4
- 4 Teeth of bracts mostly long bristle-tipped; capsule much shorter than calyx. ***E. pseudokernerii***
- 4 Teeth of bracts acute to acuminate; capsule usually slightly shorter than calyx. (lower bracts mostly opposite) ***E. nemorosa***

***Euphrasia* - species accounts**

***Euphrasia officinalis* ssp. *anglica* (Pugsley) Silverside (*E. anglica* Pugsley) – English Eyebright.**

Stems flexuous-erect, to 20(30)cm; branches (0)1-4(6) pairs, flexuous or arcuate, usually again branched; internodes shorter than to 2.5x as long as the darkish green leaves; lowest flower at node 5-8; corolla (5)6.5-8(10)mm.

In grassy areas on sandy or acid soils. (Philp 2010).

***Euphrasia nemorosa* (Pers.) Wallr. (*E. curta* (Fr.) Wettst. *pro parte*) – Common Eyebright.**

Stems erect, to 35(40)cm; branches 1-9 pairs, ascending, often again branched and rather rigid; leaves darkish green and glossy; lowest flower at node (5)10-14; corolla 5-7.5(8.5)mm.

The commonest *Euphrasia* sp. in the county. In grassland on chalk downs, heaths and woodland rides.

Frequent on the chalk, but more local elsewhere. (Philp 2010).

***Euphrasia pseudokernerii* Pugsley – Chalk Eyebright.**

Stems erect or flexuous, to 20(30)cm; branches (0)3-8(10) pairs, ascending to patent, often again branched; leaves glossy dark green above, sometimes purplish; lowest flower at node (5)10-16(18); corolla (6)7-9(11)mm (and so relatively large), white to pale (rarely deep) lilac. Late flowering and at its best in late August or September.

In short grassland along the chalk downs. (Philp 2010).

***Euphrasia confusa* Pugsley – Confused Eyebright.**

Stems flexuous or procumbent at base, to 20(45)cm; branches (0)2-8(10) pairs, usually long, flexuous and ascending, usually branched again; leaves mid-green and rather narrow; lowest flower at node (2)5-12(14); corolla 5-9mm (and so relatively large). Generally a short plant with numerous basal branches.

In heathy grassland in the Sandling Park area TR13I & TR13N. Although sought, it was not re-found on Dartford Heath (TQ57G). (Philp 2010 and 1982).

A note on possible extinction:

Euphrasia tetraquetra is now considered 'probably extinct' in the county. It is a plant of coastal cliffs and dunes by the sea. It has been included in the key and an account is given below, not only because there is always a chance and hope that it could be re-found in the county, but also to aid in the process of elimination of plants found in suitable habitats, especially of plants that could 'mimic its distinctive 'squat' growth-form'.

***Euphrasia tetraquetra* (Bréb.) Arrond. (*E. occidentalis* Wettst.) – Western Eyebright (Compact Eyebright).**

Stems erect, stout, shortish (to 15(20)cm); branches 0-5(8) pairs, usually rather short and erect or ascending; but may be almost as tall as the main stem; sometimes branched again, forming a compact plant; lowest flower at node (3)5-7(9); corolla (4)5-7(8)mm, with usually white (sometimes lilac) lower and white or lilac upper lip; capsule usually ≤5.5mm, straight, truncate to slightly emarginate and usually shorter than the calyx; distal teeth of lower bracts not incurved; inflorescence dense and four-sided (but its habit may be mimicked by *E. nemorosa*).

In grassland on chalk cliffs at the coast.

Last recorded from above Dover harbour, TR34G (Philp 1982), and could perhaps be found in similar habitats nearby, for which there are historic records.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 31 March 2012, 2.15pm

This meeting was held at Brogdale, home of the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre, Brogdale Road, Faversham, ME13 8XZ. At least thirty three members of the Group and guests attended the meeting including the Chairman and Vice County Recorder for Kent, Geoffrey Kitchener.

1 WELCOME

The Chairman began by thanking everyone for coming along to the meeting. He thanked Dr Hannah Cook, Manager of KMBRC, for agreeing to talk to the Group at the end of the formal programme; Sarah Kitchener for the refreshments which would follow after that; and Sue Buckingham for agreeing to take the minutes.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE had been received from Eric Philp (President), Fred Booth, Judith Shorter, Daphne Mills, Ruth Eastwood, Richard Black, Jacky Langton and Margot Birkbeck.

3 MINUTES OF MARCH 2011 MEETING

These were published last year in newsletter no 3 which was circulated to all members at the time and published on our webpage. The Chairman proposed that the Minutes should be adopted as a true record of the proceedings, which they were with no objections.

Matters arising:

- **English names:** A request had been made for English names to be used for plants as well as Latin. Since then, **Liam Rooney** kindly assisted in converting our list of Rare Plant Register species, so we now have two versions: one with Latin names (and which also gives details of changes through the various editions of the list); the other with Latin and English names (but no room left to include the details of past changes). Both can be printed double-sided on one sheet of paper. The Chairman said he thought that we have been fairly consistent in our publications now about including English names. The only place where this has not been done fully is in some of the lists of associated species in the rare plant register accounts, largely to help

formatting. He hoped that we have gone towards addressing the point now and invited anyone to comment on the use of plant names.

- **Website interactivity:** There had been a request to consider whether we might have a more interactive website, and the Chairman was to ask BSBI, our current website provider, if it were possible to add a blog to our site (the minutes say blog, but the idea was more of a message board or sharing facility). He was told by the Botanical Society of the British Isle (BSBI) that, to develop this idea, it would be best to set up a group facility with Yahoo or Google, and our BSBI webpage could link in with it (but not actually host it). The alternative of having a completely separate KBRG website with its own message boarding was not viable because of cost (we get the BSBI webpage free together with updating services and advice), and public prominence (the BSBI home page gets thousands of hits each month, where people can see that there's a page for the county of Kent). Liam and Geoffrey explored setting up a KBRG group for message boarding, including using Google plus; and in the event, Liam set up a Facebook site as Kent Botany, with a link to the KBRG site. This was advertised in Newsletter no. 3. Liam was invited to comment.

Liam said that he was pleased with the way the Facebook site is working. It has great potential for botanists to interact; you can look at the site, leave comments or ask questions without actually needing to have a Facebook account.

Liam was also asked to comment on his plans for setting up a separate botany website complementary to the KBRG one.

*Liam explained that this is hopefully on its way and it would have photographs of not only vascular plants but also all non-vascular plants including bryophytes, lichens, algae, fungi and stoneworts. He said that there had been thoughts of having a forum added to the site in the future but this might not be needed if Facebook proves to be adequate. **Hannah Cook** said they had had a forum on their KMBRC*

website but it had experienced big problems with spam and this was taking too much administrative time. Instead, they have set up a Facebook account and this works well. Hannah recommended that Liam sticks to the Facebook page rather than set up a separate forum on another site. Liam agreed that this was probably the best idea and saw no reason to worry about a new website forum for the present when it is easy enough to set up a link from the website to the Facebook page.

- **Field meetings:** There had been a proposal as regards encouraging people to feed in suggestions for setting up the field meetings programme, which became an action for Sue Buckingham. Lesley Mason was to supply Kent Field Club meeting dates, so as to avoid clashes, which had been done, and was helpful. The remainder of this action was carried forward to the meetings report (below).

4 REPORTS FOR THE YEAR

Membership

The Chairman said that membership continued to increase from 37 on foundation in 2010; 67 at time of 2011 AGM; 73 by the end of 2011, to 77 at present. There was one resignation during 2011.

Each of the following reports was also given by the Chairman.

Meetings

In addition to the 2011 AGM, in 2011 we held 8 field meetings, literally from one end of the county to the other. Two meetings were joint with the Sussex Botanical Recording Society and the Surrey Botanical Society respectively. Three meetings were held in order to undertake surveys for the BSBI's Threatened Plant Project (TPP). One other meeting was a study session on *Salicornia* (Glassworts) led by our president – which was successful in encountering every *Salicornia* species known in Kent, plus one which was new to the county (or rather, had only a couple of unconfirmed records before), and a nationally rare dock hybrid which had never been recorded in Kent before. We have had fairly mixed attendance for the various meetings and it is difficult to know without feedback

whether any lower attendance is due to the location (we spread these quite widely) or the date, which has been a mix of weekend and weekdays.

The 2012 programme has been circulated, generally by email. We have retained some of the features of the 2011 programme: there are joint meetings with neighbouring counties along our borders, and two other meetings will involve BSBI TPP surveys.

We have also started a move towards more informal sessions which would be unprogrammed and set up as the season progresses. People who have expressed an interest would be contacted. This arrangement is mentioned in the programme. It partly relates to Hawkweeds, for which Eric Philp is expecting to carry out some field investigations this year, having spent much of the winter re-cataloguing the Maidstone Museum collection. The catalogue includes the late Dr West's specimens, and is one of the best in the country. Also, there should be opportunities to carry out or join in more BSBI TPP surveys. There is an unusually large number of these to carry out in 2012, partly because the species to be covered include plants like Man Orchid, where Kent has an exceptional number of sites, in comparison with the rest of the British Isles. At present, the plan is that, broadly speaking, Sue Buckingham will organise half the surveys and the Chairman will organise the other half; but either will welcome help.

The Chairman asked if there were any comments on meetings, particularly our programmed meetings, adding that suggestions regarding meeting locations and help in leading would be very welcome.

Joyce Pitt asked about a cemetery in Tunbridge Wells which she is interested in and which although within the administrative county of Kent, falls outside Watsonian vice county 16. The Chairman replied that the Group is primarily directed to recording areas within the vice county, although its remit covers the wider administrative county as well, if there might be any danger of areas being missed by adjoining county botanists.

Publications

The Chairman said that members could see from our website that we are now accumulating quite a lot of information on county botany. Since the last AGM, we have published on the web:

- Newsletter no. 3;
- Updated lists of plants on the Rare Plant Register (we are now on version 5 for 2012);
- the introduction to the Rare Plant Register (circulated by email last August);
- Parts A and B of the draft register, early versions of which have been circulated, beginning with Part A last August. The Chairman said he believed that these have been much improved with members' feedback and records, and together they make 22 species accounts available.
- A list of plants which would have been on the Rare Plant Register, but which are 'probably extinct' in the county, including details of last known occurrences. He added that he would not be at all surprised if some of these are found not to be extinct after all and invited everyone to keep looking.
- Kent Botany 2011, which reports on botanical developments and finds last year – of course with records and photographs from many people present at the meeting.

The Chairman added that we have one more item not fully published yet, but just circulated by email, and this was the first instalment of Part C of the register, with 30 more draft species accounts. He invited comments on publications.

Jan Armishaw said that she was finding the publications very helpful and she was now able to locate sites for plants that are new to her. The Chairman was pleased at this, although he hoped that, so far as the register was concerned, this would be a catalyst for re-finding old sites and searching out new ones.

Sue Buckingham pointed out that using the register to revisit known recent sites had value for botanists wishing to familiarise themselves with a plant.

Hannah Cook congratulated the Chairman on the inclusion of historical records for species in the RPR. She said that being able to show continued presence of a species at a particular

site was useful to planners. The Chairman declared that this was a very interesting aspect and one which he had not previously considered. *Joyce Pitt* asked if recorders were counting populations, to which the Chairman replied that there were several ways of sizing plant populations and members were using various methods. However, he stressed that such details and also information on habitat were of great importance and should be included when sending records of rare plants to him.

Finances

The Chairman reminded everyone that at the 2011 AGM, we had a query about costs. He explained then that the Group did not have any material costs, so there are no financial statements, no treasurer, no bank account and no member subscription. There were some costs related to servicing members who were not on email, but they have been covered by contributions by those members, and do not affect the position regarding the group as a whole. The position had now changed slightly, because the Group's wish to hold a meeting at Brogdale had given rise to cost of room hire. He said that he would be suggesting that those present make a contribution for refreshments which would help go towards the room hire, and that he would report the financial position at the next AGM. He said that he still did not think that there would be a need to have membership subscriptions at present.

He invited comment and there was general concern that the Chairman should not incur unrecompensed expenses on behalf of the group.

Recording

The Chairman said that of course this is our core activity and could be split in two; general recording and rare plant register recording. He gave some statistics on:

General recording

By the end of 2011, we had over 37,700 records collected since the Group began in spring 2010. With 24,000 records produced in 2011, we doubled the input of records over what was collected in 2010. This was partly due to there

now being two people able to input to the database. Sue Buckingham was also using the MapMate programme, but in any event had significantly increased her recording level, mainly in East Kent. In broad terms, the main contributions to 2011 records were, in addition to the Chairman's 9,000, about 7,500 from Sue Buckingham, about 2,000 from Doug Grant and Sue Poyser, over 1,000 from Joyce Pitt, about 1,000 from Tim Inskipp; and the rest from many recorders and from our own field meetings.

The general strategy has been to emphasize the importance of the Rare Plant Register recording over general recording; because with Eric Philp's New Atlas, we have good recent tetrad records for the administrative county, but there are not so good detailed location records for the rarer plants. Although we have a target to set up a Rare Plant Register as soon as possible, we also have a target to complete good general recording coverage of Kent by the end of 2019. At some point, we will want to shift the balance of our recording more towards general recording. The Chairman said he felt that this is not yet, although all records, of any type, are welcome at any time.

The Rare Plant Register

In 2011 840 records for rare plant register species were reported before the end of January 2012. We now have records for 81% of the plants on the Rare Plant Register list, which is good progress; although in many cases we need to update the position as regards whether old known sites still remain current.

The Chairman said that the Rare Plant Register will take some time to complete, both the species accounts and the recording. With 263 species accounts to draft, and 52 done in about a year, the Chairman hoped that this does not imply 5 years to complete, but thought that the upshot is that it will take some time, and it may not always be clear until an account is drafted, where effort in searching for a species can best be directed.

He asked people what they thought about recording, and how we are going about it as a group.

Jon Bramley said that he records on Mapmate and offered to pass on records via the Mapmate

direct link. The Chairman said that he was happy with this. To a question about recording format, he replied that he had prepared an Excel spreadsheet for members to enter their records on and send to him and he could let anyone who asked have this.

The Chairman was asked if he preferred to receive individual records from members or in large batches, to which he replied that individual records are preferable and easier for him to manage.

PROCESS OF PREPARING THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS

The Chairman then moved away from his formal report to deliver a PowerPoint presentation relating particularly to the preparation of the last 30 species. It went as follows.

- First, there is the question of what should be on the register list. Should this include not just any old rare plant, but those which have the distinction of being native in Kent (like Clustered Bellflower, *Campanula glomerata*), plus ancient introductions (such as Cornflower, *Centaurea cyanus*). There is the option to add plants with a special historical or cultural association with Kent. So far the list has only included the Rough Mallow (*Malva setigera*) from Ranscombe, where it was first seen in Britain, in the 1790s, but it is still present, of course. Should there be any more extras? We could include the Malling Toadflax, *Chaenorhinum origanifolium*, as this was probably first seen in Britain here around 1880, is the most permanent British population and of course has a Kentish name. The question about including it in the register arose recently, when works were to be carried out to one of its walls. Was there any support for putting this on the register?

There was general approval for including this on the Register.

- In each case the species accounts would be best with two or three Kent photographs: ideally one showing detail, one showing the whole plant; and another showing habitat. We could do with a lot more habitat photos, so don't assume that because an account

has already got one or more photos, your photo might not be needed as well. (A good example of a register illustration which shows plant and surroundings is *Carex elongata*, the Elongated Sedge, at Leigh.)

- The species account then notes whether the plant is found in East Kent, West Kent or both; what is its national distribution and conservation status, and then what its status is in Kent – rare, scarce or neither. It's possible to have a fairly common Kent plant on the register (such as *Carex divisa*, the Divided Sedge) if it's not common nationally or is under threat nationally.
- Then we consider population trends in the county from the plant's first record down to the present. This is not easy, given that there was no county Flora between 1899 and 1982! Some of this gap should have been covered by Francis Rose's Flora which was never completed for publication and the manuscript is now missing. Copies of a few pages survive and there are many specimens collected which are now housed at Maidstone Museum. There is also the BSBI's Big Database. But records are not straightforward: the accepted view is sometimes wrong. In particular, first records in the Tunbridge Wells area sometimes turn out to be in Sussex. The first county record for *Carex canescens* (or White Sedge) is given by Hanbury and Marshall's 1899 Flora as being in Thomas Forster's book *Flora Tonbrigensis* (1816), where it is said to grow in "watery and damp places, rarely; in the damp parts of the woods near Frant [this must be in Sussex]; and in the little wood behind the Sussex Tavern, where the spring rises which runs to the Wells". After some investigation of historical records, the Sussex Tavern changed its name to the Royal Victoria and Sussex Hotel in the Pantiles. The enumerator's schedule for 1851 census returns (contemporary with the establishment of the vice county boundary) show the Hotel included as part of Frant, Sussex. The wood behind it is therefore likely to have been in vc14, not the West Kent vice county. This is supported by

current vice county boundary mapping facilities, which show the boundary more or less along the Pantiles, albeit with c. 50 metre accuracy.

- Another interesting first record is for *Carex extensa* (Long-bracted Sedge), which was near Reculver, whereas now it is only at the mouth of the Great Stour near Sandwich. I've not seen it mentioned anywhere, but when the Isle of Thanet was an island, the Great Stour discharged into the Wantsum channel, and so reached open sea both at Reculver on the north coast and Sandwich on the east. So the sedge may well have had an original distribution along the silty edges of the channel, linking both locations.
- After considering population trends in the species accounts, we then go on to say something about characteristic features of the plant, and about its ecology, using Kentish information as far as possible. So this is not a matter of copying things out of national floras, but rather analysing any local studies and the comments made by recorders about the Kent habitats, associated flora and so on. So when you send in a record of a rare plant, these extra snippets of information help build up a more complete picture. The Rare Plant Register includes many more tables of records in areas seldom recorded since at least 1970. The details should help you re-find old sites and update the position regarding population size and threats.

Doug Grant asked the Chairman if he had referred to the list of species at the back of Eric Philp's 1982 Atlas of the Kent Flora. It lists those species which had not been found in that survey period but which had been previously recorded in the County. The Chairman replied that he had used the list as part of his research.

5 CONSTITUTION

The Chairman reminded everyone that at the last AGM, Eric Philp was appointed non-executive President, and the sense of the meeting was, he thought, that no other appointments were then considered necessary, nor was there any particular concern to have an

executive committee for the administration of the group (although he had said then that help on setting up the field meeting programme would be particularly welcome). He said that we have no constitution, and are running on an informal basis. In addition to his co-ordinating role, this relies on the help of various members without defined roles and responsibilities, and he explained that he put 'constitution' on the agenda to see whether there are any thoughts about the way we run ourselves and whether we should do it differently.

Several people expressed concern about the amount of work that our No Constitution status was giving the Chairman to which he replied that, with a promise from Sue Buckingham to help with Rare Plant Register accounts in the winter, he was currently happy with the work load but would welcome help with planning the field meetings programme.

6 CHAROPHYTES (Stoneworts)

The Chairman said that when the Group was set up, its terms of reference for recording did not include Stoneworts, which are aquatic green algae and which, it is believed, are the closest living relatives of the ancestors of land plants; and some botanists do take an interest in them as well as vascular plants. He said that Jon Bramley would tell us about a project involving Stoneworts and we might then wish to take a view as regards including Stoneworts as part of our interests.

Jon Bramley explained that he had organised with KMBRC and Alex Stewart two training courses on Charophyte identification in Wye, Kent in the last few years. At these training courses Jon had been very kindly given a large number of historical distribution records by Alex and it was tentatively considered that these sites could be resurveyed to check for persistence. Jon plans to do this over the next 5 or so years with the eventual aim of including new sites so as to produce an Atlas for this group in the County.

For any KBRG members interested in attempting to record Charophytes, he is able to offer help with identification and has a revised copy of a key to Charophytes (the BSBI Handbook is now partially out of date) which anyone can request from him. If members would like to send Jon any material, that would be fine. Jon would require two or more whole plants - ideally with sexual features - sent in a moist sealed bag. Just let Jon know they are coming. Charophytes don't press well though there is a technique that just about works - if members would like more details, just contact Jon.

It appeared that members were content that the Group could formally take an interest in Charophytes as part of its remit, in addition to vascular plants.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS OR COMMENTS

Sue Poyser had copies of a new edition of The Wild Flower Society's Field Botanist's Record Book (includes new Stace names) for sale at £7.50.

John Badmin provided, free for the members present, various botanical books originating from the library of Ann Whiteside.

Thanks were expressed for the work which had gone into KBRG activities over the last year.

8 DATE OF NEXT AGM

The **next AGM will be Saturday 30th March 2013** at Tyland Barn, subject to availability. .
 [Post meeting note - However, it transpires that this is Easter Saturday, and accordingly the AGM date is expected to be **Saturday 23 March or 6 April 2013** – to be notified.]

With no further business the formal part of the meeting closed at 3.20p.m.

Answers to Identification quiz on page 8:

Top row, left to right: (1) *Cynosurus echinatus* (Rough Dog's-tail) – looks more bristly than *Lagurus ovatus* (Hare's-tail), which can be found in similar locations. (2) *Galium x pomeranicum* (hybrid between Hedge and Lady's Bedstraws) – note the pale yellow buds, intermediate between the white and yellow parents; also the leaves are narrower than for Hedge Bedstraw. (3) *Potentilla argentea* (Hoary Cinquefoil) – the silver leaf underside is the give-away here, and of course there are five leaflets for a cinquefoil.

Middle row, left to right: (1) *Bassia scoparia* (Summer-cypress) – flower structure may be recognized as belonging to the Amaranthaceae, but this species may be unfamiliar to many close up. (2) *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid) – characteristic purple flower colour; lip is not indented and has small central tooth. (3) *Geranium lucidum* (Shining Crane's-bill) – the rounded, somewhat shiny leaves are the key feature here.

Bottom row, left to right: (1) *Cephalanthera damasonium* (White Hellborine). (2) *Buxus sempervirens* (Box) – maybe we don't look at the flowers/fruits very often! (3) *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern) – note sori spread along pinnule margins.

Contributions and photographs for the next newsletter will be most welcome!

Contributions, letters, queries and thoughts, details of recommended and relevant books, and photographs etc, for the next newsletter are welcomed by the editor!

Whilst KRBG does not produce a research journal as such, there may also be scope to put articles of a substantial nature and other papers, onto the website by way of publication as an alternative.

If sending photographs for inclusion in the newsletter by e mail, 300dpi minimum, please!

All contributions should be sent to Geoffrey Kitchener, contact details below.

Thanks to Liam Rooney for the *Euphrasia* key and the quiz; to Sarah Kitchener and Kate Kersey for reviewing this newsletter. Photographs are either by Liam or the editor.

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The editor, Geoffrey Kitchener, wishes to draw attention to the fact that neither he, nor the Kent Botanical Recording Group, are answerable for opinions which contributors may express in their articles; each author is alone responsible for the contents and substance of their work.

Kent Botanical Recording Group website: hosted by the Botanical Society of the British Isles at

<http://www.bsbi.org.uk/kent.html>

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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kent-Botany/223421087698067>