



The Irreplaceable Grasslands Project

Ann Sankey

Last year, I outlined the aims and scope of the Grassland Project – see our Newsletter for Spring 2022. Since then, considerable progress has been made. Firstly, funding has been obtained by the efforts of both Natural England (NE) and Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT).

Secondly the scope of the project is concentrating on Irreplaceable Grasslands in Surrey. The result will be an Inventory of these grasslands in the Administrative County of Surrey, not VC17 at this stage. This is because SWT is the major partner in this project and they do not have jurisdiction in the London Boroughs. SWT is providing the staff to manage and fund this project as well as the expertise in GIS mapping etc. Other partners include NE, SCC, Space4Nature, BC, Surrey Fungus Group and Surrey Nature Partnership. SBS is providing most of the records with additional ones from Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre (SBIC).

So far, we have had three meetings starting in November 2022 where a number of topics have been discussed. One of these was the title. The use of the term 'irreplaceable' carries considerable weight in planning and hence is a very useful term. Within this, we can include grasslands that are old, unimproved and/or species-rich. The types of such grassland habitats in Surrey are illustrated by the following table:

UK Broad Habitat	UK BAP Priority type
Neutral Grassland	Lowland Meadow
Calcareous Grassland	Lowland Calcareous Grassland
Acid Grassland	Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
Fen, Marsh and Swamp	Purple Moor-grass & Rush Pasture
Boundary and linear	Hedgerows and other Boundary features

We have a list of Grassland Axiophyte species. The records for these have been used for an interactive map that shows all of the grassland parcels we have so far recorded. The map is looking very interesting. One aim for this recording season is to use our data and other information to select sites that need surveying or further surveys. A provisional list has been compiled and this will probably be added to as the project progresses.

Sites likely to support these grassland habitats include open downland, heathland, commons, parkland, cricket fields, golf courses, village greens, road verges, borders of FPs and BPs, churchyards and cemeteries, woodland rides and enclosed fields.

SBS's role is two-fold: firstly, to provide the records and secondly to look for and hopefully record new sites. The latter are most likely to be small enclosed fields but could include any of the above areas. Hopefully most of our SSSIs are reasonably well recorded, though as we discovered last year at Frensham Little Pond for example, there are always new records to be made. The point though is that at least the designated SSSIs and LNRs are protected. It

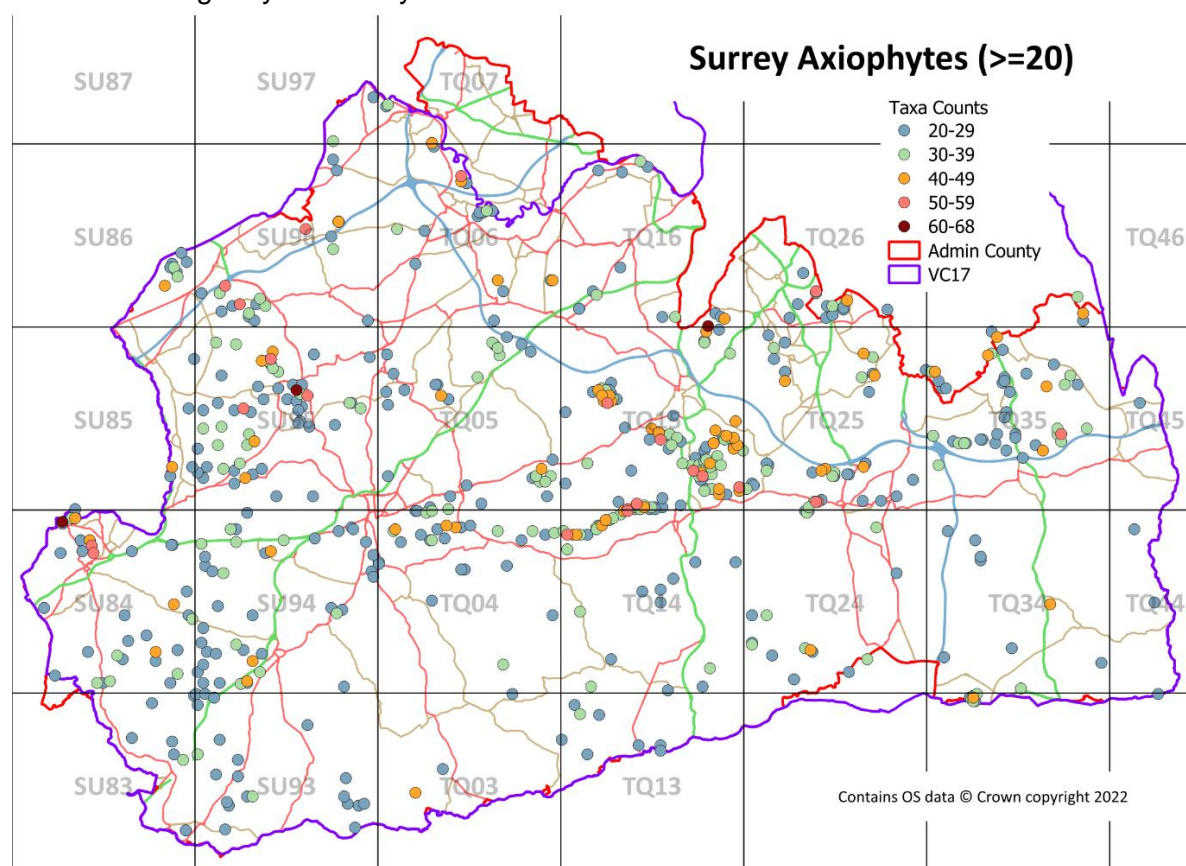
is perhaps the enclosed fields that are the most vulnerable and inaccessible, unless crossed by a public FP. So please do look out for these when out walking, botanising, driving or when browsing satellite images. Unimproved grasslands frequently show as a browner green than those brighter green ones affected by the use of herbicides and fertilisers.

Record these unimproved fields or other areas if you can. If not, let one of us know about a potential new site. Remember, these have to be restricted to Admin Surrey. Those who live in the London Boroughs could encourage London Wildlife Trust to create an Inventory of Irreplaceable Grasslands for London.

The plan is for the final report to be completed by December 2023.

Road verges can be excellent species-rich grasslands, especially if managed well. After a gap of a good number of years, SCC are now initially funding the original list of conservation road verges. It is hoped that further verges can be added to these as this project advances. SCC Highways has now taken back management of all of the road verges in Surrey. This means that it should be more straightforward to ensure that all conservation verges be managed in an appropriate way. This includes mowing at the optimum time and collection of arisings. Because of the timing of awarding contracts etc, it is unlikely that there will be any collection in 2023.

Plantlife are running their 'No mow May' campaign again this year. Do check their website for details and encourage as many people as possible to leave their grassland areas unmown during May – and beyond.



The document *Britain's Changing Flora, A summary of the Results of Plant Atlas 2020*, see https://bsbi.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2023/02/BSBI-Plant-Atlas-2020-summary-report-Britain-in-English-WEB.pdf provides a map on p.5 of the recording effort as recording days per 10km square during 2000 – 2019. In the south east, the squares coloured red, to indicate > 400 days, cover much of VC17. This is a clear documentation of all of our efforts of recording the 33 whole or part hectads that cover VC17.

[illegible]

This online version is an amazing information bank. It provides a lot of information about the flora of the British Isles in general and the losses of our native and archaeophyte species. There is also detailed information on 3445 species recorded in the wild. This was expertly demonstrated at the launch event on 18th March, which may be available online. There is

much that can be discovered by using the various display options for each taxon. The data behind all of this information is impressive too.

As mentioned above, there is also the document that summarises the findings of *Plant Atlas 2020*. It is definitely worth **reading** this document. At only 32 pp, it will not take long and it is worth getting a hard copy to do this. On p.12 there are graphs indicating the short and the long-term trends for our native, archaeophyte and neophyte flora. These are depressing, if not surprising results, with the graphs for the first two showing declines and that for the latter a steady increase.

Also summarised are the changes in our flora linked to habitats. Those for grasslands all show declines as do those for the wetland habitats of fens, mires, marshes, rivers, lakes and ponds. The document ends with six clear actions that need to be taken. There is much that we as botanists can do to help promote these actions, including that of 'plant blindness'.

We all need to use these resources, there is much here to learn and to take actions on them. The *Plant Atlas 2020* provides baseline data for the start of the 21st century. Most importantly, please do use the information gathered here, especially on the overall decline of our native flora, to spread the message about the importance of this flora, together with its interdependency on other forms of wildlife and on our future survival. Please do so wherever you can, at the local levels with schools, parish councils, local tree officers, churches, local natural history societies etc. And do also remember the mantra, right tree, right place.

Nutfield Marsh 8th June 2022

Simon Elson



The Inn on the Pond

Caroline Bateman

Eight of us gathered on what was forecast to be a wet day, but proved sunny and dry, if not a tad windy. I was particularly impressed with Linda and her folding electric bicycle, enabling her to travel by train and bike for events. The area we were surveying on Nutfield Marsh, east of Redhill and north of the A25, is a 15 acre/6-hectare remnant area of grassland, bounded by overgrown hedgerows/woodland, and includes a cricket ring, two ponds (no guesses where the Inn on the Pond gets its name from!) and a length of Warner's Brook running across it. It lies within the Holmethorpe Pits Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and the Holmesdale Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). The underlying geology is Lower Greensand (Folkestone Beds).

The site is registered common land with vacant title, but now under the tender care of Tandridge District and Nutfield Parish Councils. In recent years it has been subject to intensive traveller pony grazing and supplementary feed, until action was taken to terminate this. So, part of today's exercise was to see how the sward had recovered, as well as provide pointers to future management.

In summary, whilst there were signs of localised enrichment over the grassland area, a more mature grassland sward was present. Species indicative of lowland acid grassland such as Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*) (known as Good Friday grass because of its flowering period), Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Common



Simon and Jon with weed drag Photo by Caroline

Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), and Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) (that traditional chewing grass favourite that has a vanilla taste) were seen. However, there were also species indicative of more neutral and wetter grassland like Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), and Meadow Barley (*Hordeum secalinum*). The Councils have in recent years given the grassland an annual mow, but left the arisings to rot, so today's survey has helped feedback the importance of the need to remove the cut material to avoid further enrichment. A classic example of the important role such SBS events have to help inform future management of sites.

Not to contain ourselves to just plants, we also enjoyed a number of butterfly and Odonata species (five damselfly and two dragonfly) sheltering in the grassland.

Warner's Brook, has for many decades only run seasonally, but with the adjoining sand extraction running a dewatering scheme pumped into the watercourse, this now produces a water flow all year round. This has resulted in a noticeable flourishing of aquatic species particularly the floating mats of Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*).

Of the two ponds, the northern one is a shallow, Greater Pond Sedge (*Carex riparia*) dominated feature, which is also overgrown around the margins by willow species. Again, our management advice will lead to some practical nature conservation work to clear vegetation.

The Pond by the Inn on the Pond, which is also a Great Crested Newt breeding pond, yielded an abundance of Rigid Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*) and Ivy-leaved Duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*), brought up on my homemade cooking whisk sampling grapnel (quite happy to do an article on how to make one in a future edition). Both ponds were restored in the 1980s by the now disbanded Nutfield and Merstham Pond Preservation Group, and are salutary examples of the care needed if you are planting species. Not just selecting species appropriate to the area, but sourcing. For example, the Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) are a cultivated version clearly on steroids.

With thanks to Inn on the Pond for use of their car park (and sampling their wares afterwards!).

Addington, Spring Park 6th August 2022 **Caroline Bateman and Geoffrey Kitchener**



Threehalfpenny Wood and Spring Park Wood form a continuous strip of remnant ancient woodland straddling the historic and vice-county border between Surrey and Kent (now the London Boroughs of Croydon and Bromley). The woodland once covered a much greater area but in the early part

of the 20th century a considerable part was lost to housing and to the creation of a golf course. The steep wooded slopes have been designated a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) for the range of soil types exposed. On the highest level the sands and pebbles of the Harwich Formation predominate and overlie the clayey strata of the Lambeth Group. These in turn overlie the fine sand of the Thanet formation. At the base is Chalk bedrock overlain by gravelly alluvium. The many springs in the woods emerge from the base of the Harwich Formation where groundwater meets the Lambeth clays before draining into the Thanet Sand. This presumably is why Spring Park Wood is so called. It is alleged that Threehalfpenny Wood owes its unusual name to the discovery in 1801 of the body of a Sanderstead parish clerk in a pond in the wood, with precisely that sum in his pocket. This explanation sounds a bit far-fetched and should probably be taken with a pinch of salt.



Despite the continuing heatwave, it was a well-attended meeting with ten representatives from Surrey and six from Kent. We started off by exploring the rather dried-out grassy slope south of Threehalfpenny Wood on the Surrey side of the border. Some species were just about hanging on in the frazzled vegetation,

including Greater Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus angustifolius*) which can be distinguished from Yellow-rattle (*R. minor*) by the teeth on the upper lip which are longer than wide, as you can see on Clare Million's photo. Another of Clare's photos shows the denticulate sepals of

Hypericum x desetangsii which is a characteristic of the cross between Perforate St John's-wort (*H. perforatum*) and Imperforate St John's-wort (*H. maculatum*). It may grow in the absence of both parents as it appeared to be doing here.

Some of us had previously experienced difficulty in distinguishing between Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and the formerly named Chalk but now Slender Knapweed (*C. debeauxii*), a much more helpful name that encourages us to look for it in habitats other than chalk grassland. With both present for comparison, and with Geoffrey Kitchener's help, it all became much clearer. Ask yourself whether the dark feathery parts of the involucre bracts (on the hard bit below the purple ligules) almost completely cover the green basal parts. If they do then it is likely to be *C. nigra*. If you can clearly see patches of pale green between the dark feathery bits then it's probably *C. debeauxii*. Slender Knapweed, as its name suggests, is also a slenderer plant and lacks the conspicuously swollen top to the stem of Common Knapweed. One wonders how many of our *C. nigra* records are really *C. debeauxii*? [Thanks to Mick Crawley for letting us reproduce this photo from his Twitter account.]

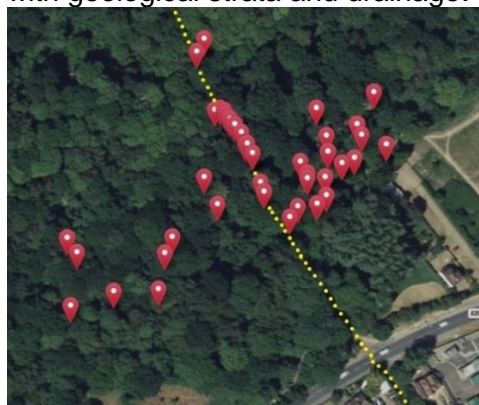


Common Knapweed

Slender Knapweed

It was pleasant to make our way out of the hot sun and into the woodland which, like the grassy slope, was very dry with little interesting ground flora in evidence. Our principle aim, however, was to find and map the locations of the Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) growing along and on both sides of the boundary. The results of our efforts, and in particular those of Stephen Lemon, can be seen on the maps prepared by Geoffrey Kitchener. These maps show not only a strong association

with the county boundary and the southern margin of the ancient woodland but also a link with geological strata and drainage.



Small-leaved Lime at all stages of development were recorded: ancient trees, many multi-stemmed after previous coppicing; some recently coppiced; some formerly pollarded; some wind-thrown with vertical shoots and occasional maiden trees. Altogether ten trees were mapped in Surrey, 19 along the county boundary and 34 in Kent. Peter Wakeham's photo shows us beneath a particularly splendid multi-stemmed example and it was by an enormous partly wind-thrown one that we had lunch.

While Stephen continued with the work of *Tilia*-mapping, the rest of us continued into Kent. At the southern edge of Spring Park Wood, we examined a pond, excavated in 1993 and usually topped up by spring water but looking very dry after a couple of months of drought



and exceptionally high temperatures. We thought that some species growing there such as Mare's-tail (*Hippuris vulgaris*) had probably been planted. After a steep climb up the wooded slopes we reached the housing that had swallowed up much of the woodland in the first part of the last century. In Woodland Way, among the usual ruderals of gutters and cracks in paving, were Common Millet (*Panicum miliaceum*), seedlings of the foul-smelling Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), Water Bent (*Polypogon viridis*) and Fern-grass (*Catapodium rigidum* subsp. *majus*), distinguished

from subsp. *rigidum* by its more profusely branched panicle growing in three planes. The photo shows a small patch of Four-leaved Allseed (*Polycarpon tetraphyllum*) growing in a gutter. This plant seems to be on the move and is popping up on pavements across London and neighbouring counties. The photo was taken by Caroline Bateman and the fingers are those of Richard Gowing.



By this time, it was quite late in the afternoon and only a few of us opted to head back into Surrey for a rapid survey of Shirley Heath. This area also lies on the sands and gravels of the Harwich Formation which give rise to infertile low pH soils supporting a heathland vegetation. As you can see from the photo taken by Caroline, many of the plants here were scorched almost beyond recognition but several patches of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) stood proud of the tinder dry vegetation.

We were also able to pick out the remains of a number of species including Sheep's-fescue (*Festuca ovina*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*). In a shaded and more poorly drained area Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*) were less affected by drought conditions and were growing with Compact Rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*) and Soft-rush (*J. effusus*). Our return route took us past another pond that had dried up in the prolonged drought but we were still able to see a scattering of Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*), Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*) and more *C. binervis*.



What with the heat and gradients it had been quite a tiring but extremely worthwhile day with a varied range of plants seen. It had also been a treat to see so many native *Tilia cordata*. To round it off, Caroline Bateman and Jon Wilson found just about enough energy to stop off

at a small modern development on the north side of Addington Village Road where there was more Jersey Cudweed (*Laphangium luteoalbum*) growing between paving setts than you could shake a stick at. One of the residents couldn't believe that we were so excited by the "weed" that was giving her and her neighbours so much trouble. By the time we left she seemed quite proud of her patch of Schedule 8 plants! It is spreading so rapidly, particularly in urban areas, that one wonders how long it will remain protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Buckland Park Lake 19th August 2022**Caroline Bateman and Susan Medcalf**

One of the many enjoyable aspects of SBS meetings is the opportunity they provide to discover new places. Passing along the main road between Dorking and Reigate gives no clue as to the nearby existence of a large, peaceful lake hidden by extensive woodland and dramatic sandstone cliffs. This is Buckland Park Lake, which, as an extraction pit from 1950 to 1990, supplied premium quality sand to the likes of Swarovski. Processing continued until 2014, when industrial operations finally ceased. The site is now a fairly low-key outdoor activity centre, with the lake, fed by natural springs and rainwater, as the main attraction. Efforts have been made to improve the habitat, including some planting; the exposed sandstone faces of the cliffs are now a breeding site for Sand Martins and solitary bees as well as giving excellent views of the cross-bedding in the sandstone rock strata.



Buckland Park Lake

Jon Wilson

A group of twelve SBS members congregated on a warm August morning. After providing some background, joint leaders Caroline Bateman and Susan Medcalf explained that they had visited parts of the site earlier in the year and that the aim now was to record the species along the lake margin and around the car park.

We set off along the car park drainage ditch, still wet despite the summer drought, as this part of the site lies below the water table. Several willowherbs were noted, including American Willowherb (*Epilobium ciliatum*), Short-fruited Willowherb (*E. obscurum*) and Hoary Willowherb (*E. parviflorum*), together with the first aquatic plants of the day, Common Duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and Fat Duckweed (*L. gibba*). The latter was identified from its structure when held up to the light since it had the characteristic round “tummy”. The wet north east corner of the car park produced what was later confirmed with George Hounsome’s help to be Common Water-starwort (*Callitriche stagnalis*).

At this point we were joined by a friendly Greylag Goose, which stayed with us all morning, showing an impressive botanical interest. Our efforts were hampered, however, by some recent strimming, reducing some of the vegetation to a pile of clippings. Amongst the heap we picked out Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Square-stalked St John’s-wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*) and Blue Water-speedwell (*Veronica anagallis-aquatica*), also found growing in



Veronica anagallis-aquatica

Jon Wilson



Elodea nuttallii

Clare Million

the ditch. The identity of the last of these was not immediately clear as the flowers were mauve rather than blue, but the smaller bracts, shorter than the pedicels, distinguished it from the similar Pink Water-speedwell (*V. catenata*). While still in the car park, we noted that some areas were damp enough for tufts of Toad Rush (*Juncus bufonius*), and, to Caroline’s delight, small numbers of diminutive Small Cudweed (*Filago minima*).

After an hour or so we reached the lake itself and with it more aquatic species, starting with the twisted straplike leaves of Nuttall’s Waterweed (*Elodea nuttallii*), introduced from North America and first recorded in the UK in 1966. We also found the native Spiked Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), noting how it kept its shape when removed from the water.

Advancing on an anti-clockwise circuit of the lake, our attention was drawn to a nice patch of Pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*), almost certainly the plant of the day for most of us. The identification was confirmed by the globular, well-separated whorls of flowers, while close examination revealed the lower calyx teeth to be longer and narrower than the upper ones, and the corollas hairy outside but glabrous within.

Other striking plants along the lake included some handsome Water Figwort (*Scrophularia auriculata*), *Oenothera x fallax*, the hybrid between *O. glazioviana* and *O. biennis*, and Cyperus Sedge (*Carex pseudocyperus*). We also found a small patch of dried-up Silver Hair-grass (*Aira caryophyllea*). A disturbed sandy area yielded Red Goosefoot (*Chenopodium rubrum*) and Common Stork's-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*), while Small Balsam (*Impatiens parviflora*) was seen growing at the edge of some woodland.

Returning to the water's edge, Bill fished out a species with very narrow leaves, suggesting Hairlike Pondweed (*Potamogeton trichoides*), subsequently confirmed by George Hounscome. It was growing with more *Lemna minor* and, unfortunately, the dreaded and highly invasive New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*). We also noticed nearby a small patch of Nodding Bur-marigold (*Bidens cernua*), a lovely plant, although it was not yet fully out or nodding.



Mentha pulegium Clare Million



Bidens cernua Jon Wilson

Lunch was taken in a grassy area on the west side of the lake with good views of the cliffs. After a moment of inattention, Richard discovered that our patient Greylag companion had sidled up and stolen some of his sandwiches. It then made off across the water, its mission in joining us obviously accomplished!

As we continued on our way, we passed an area with several species more typical of chalk, so perhaps introduced here with surfacing material, including Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia*

perfoliata) and Hairy St John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*). The lake at this point was lined with Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). Susan explained that, although planted, it came from a native source. A large green Edible Frog (*Pelophylax eculentus*), sitting immobile in the water, provided a brief diversion from the botany. It is apparently a non-native species, a hybrid between the Pool and Marsh Frog.



Mentha pulegium

Linda Pitkin



Greylag Goose Clare Million

Moving on, we added Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*), the latter identified from backward-pointing prickles along the leaf edges. A few skeletons of Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*) provided a distant memory of early summer. The next point of interest was a tall marginal plant, initially thought to be Galingale (*Cyperus longus*). Caroline later advised that the round and squidgy base stems showed that it was in fact Wood Club-rush (*Scirpus sylvaticus*).

Our next stop involved scrambling up a bank to visit a veteran Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). It was a large and spreading specimen, thought to be several centuries old and happily not showing any sign of ash dieback disease. Heading back to the carpark along the eastern side of the lake, we were delighted to find several small carpets of *Mentha pulegium*, sufficient for the species to be considered "locally abundant". We also had some close-up views of the geology of the cliffs. Finally, by the slipway we stopped to admire the bright yellow flowers of Creeping-Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*).

Before returning to our vehicles some of us climbed up the path to the top of the cliff to enjoy the view and investigate the idyllically sited café-

restaurant, the Reverie. Sadly, it had already closed for the day but it's good to know about it for future reference.

Thanks are due to Caroline and Susan for organising a very interesting and enjoyable day at this picturesque location, and to them and others from SBS for patiently sharing their knowledge. Buckland Park Lake proved to be an inspired choice for an August outing after a summer of drought and record high temperatures. It was most refreshing to see plenty of water and, above all, some green vegetation!

Ash Ranges, Henley Park Lake 11th September 2022**Isobel Girvan**

We had intended on taking a different route but, due to the unfortunate set of fires at Pirbright Common, the firing days had been changed and we were unable to access through Henley Gate.

Bill came up trumps and suggested that instead we would take a walk around Henley Park Lake. We saw some treasures on the way there including Fragrant Agrimony (*Agrimonia procera*), Water Figwort (*Scrophularia auriculata*) and Common Wintergreen (*Pyrola minor*). The latter was almost hidden under a willow tree, by the pond north of the main lake; there were sadly one or two aliens in and by this pond that included Altar-lily (*Zantideschia aethiopica*) and American Skunk-cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*).



Pond at northern end of Henley Park Lake



Group discussion by swim on east side of Lake

Bill mentioned that the lake must have been quite old as apparently Henry Halsey (squire at Henley Park Mansion) enlarged it around 1800. It was then used for leisure activities until the war when the company Vokes pumped water from it to a tower at their works by the Mansion.

Working along the east side of the lake amongst some boring Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) lurked a clump of Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*). This was well worth the lurk as it was a new record for the monad!

Drifting off plants for a moment we also saw a range of other wildlife like Ruddy Darter, Alder Leaf Beetle, a sawfly on Alder, Raft Spider, Common Toad, Common Frog and a Common Lizard making its way carefully on damp vegetation along the edge of the lake.



There seemed to be a paucity of aquatic plants in the lake (almost exclusively water lilies) but the marginals and nearshore plants made up for that. On the water's edge in the south were Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*), Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) (see photo), Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Lesser Skullcap (*Scutellaria minor*) and a couple of recognisable bryophytes Common Hair-cap and several sphagnum species. At this point the path veers from the lake edge and it was difficult to progress to the path that exists along the western shore especially as it was so wet underfoot so we headed southwest through Standinghill Wood to the range perimeter track before heading back.

On the long straight section of the track (with Henley Park Range on our left [north]) there was a calcareous influence from the track material and we saw Carrot (*Daucus carota* subsp. *carota*), Red Bartsia (*Odontites vernus*), Oval Sedge (*Carex leporina*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*) and Autumn Hawkbit



(*Scorzoneroides autumnalis*). Close by there was a damp ditch which Bill was quick to spot and even quicker to jump in. There we found both Fen and Common Marsh-bedstraws (*Galium uliginosum* and *G. palustre* subsp. *palustre*), Marsh Willowherb (*Epilobium palustre*), Tormential (*Potentilla erecta*), Water-pepper (*Persicaria hydropiper*) and the rather delicate Bristle Club-rush (*Isolepis setacea*). The photo here shows the ditch where two members are busy validating the *Epilobium palustre* which thankfully had a knob-shaped stigma, no glandular hairs, terete stems without ridges and small, opposite, sessile leaves. Further along the remains of a very tall orchid spike could only be *Dactylorhiza x grandis* (*D. fuchsii x praetermissa*). It was also pleasing to find a small patch of English Eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis* subsp. *anglica*) on the verge as, to date, only *E. nemorosa* (which we had also seen) had been recorded from this monad. We also saw some beautiful flowers of the Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and were alerted to the fact that

the buds are sticky, a good identification point.

All in all, it was a lovely end to a lovely season.

About fifty botanists gathered at the Field Studies Council's Preston Montford field centre in Shropshire over Halloween weekend for the first in-person BSBI Recorders' Meeting in three years. Ably led by Jonathan Shanklin most attendees were Vice County Recorders (VCRs) from all parts of the country including Ireland, Scotland and Jersey, but there were others (including me) who were there as 'ordinary' members. Straight away we were faced with about 25 numbered sprigs of different *Cotoneaster* species laid out on tables in two rooms.



Armed with various ID books (most of us used Stace 4th Edition and Poland and Clement Veg Key, a few also had Fryer and Hylmö *Cotoneasters*), off we went to work round the specimens, coming to a consensus if there were differing opinion between the sub-groups or agreeing to disagree! On our worksheet we were told the growth form of each specimen. I was in a

group who all confessed to the habit of moving swiftly past *Cotoneasters* if given the choice which was fortunate because it meant there was time to work patiently through the keys together and compare thoughts.

Similar to the key for *Epilobium* species, for *Cotoneaster* Stace uses an assemblage of letters to lead you to the Key you need. The colour of the fruit is a useful feature as he asks an either-or question (dark purple to black or bright red to crimson) but even this can lead to different opinions until you get your eye in and compare. It is worth noting the number of stones as well as the shape. Hairiness of the calyx and underside of leaves is another feature to note. It turned out to be an invaluable exercise to meet so many species and hybrids together for comparison and a great icebreaker! Worth keeping an eye open for *Cotoneaster obtusus* – a shrub that does not at first glance resemble a *Cotoneaster*.

Next up was Fred Rumsey on non-native ferns. He went through a whirlwind tour of species that are jumping the garden fence or may do so in the future. First up was the distinctive Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) often washed down watercourses and becoming a problem. He then went through *Adiantum* species which included a photo of *Adiantum aleuticum* 'imbricatum' found in VC17 in Epsom. Another increasingly popular fern genus in garden centres is *Cyrtomium*. He looked at differences between *C. fortunei* s.l. and *C. falcatum*. The *fortunei* group were thinner and more papery than *falcatum* which has a thicker textured leaf and glossy in comparison. In total he estimated there were c.38 non-native fern species naturalised or escapes in the UK. Species to be watchful for from other genera included *Polystichum*, *Dryopteris*, *Pteris* and *Equisetum*.



Mark Duffell gave a resume of aquatic invasives in Shropshire, their arrival dates and distribution using live material to reinforce his excellent teaching. It was interesting to learn that Canadian Waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*) has declined massively, and useful to compare to *Elodea nuttallii* and Curly Waterweed (*Lagarosiphon major*) to check what we're



recording. And unfortunately, there are new kids on the block in the *Myriophyllum* genus to be watchful for including *M. braziliensis* and *M. cristatum* similar to Parrot's-feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*). This may well be the result of a horticultural

loop hole to get around the recent ban on selling Parrot's-feather.

There were two interesting talks with a focus on sites: firstly, The Flora of Upper Teesdale by John O'Reilly. This is a massive study that includes baseline mapping of rare species following on from the indefatigable Margaret Bradshaw. Secondly, Steve Woodward gave a brief summary of a superb collective effort looking at Grace Dieu, a Leicestershire hotspot and fragment of an ancient landscape. He pulled together a fascinating narrative of this volunteer project that used plants and historical ecology including herbarium specimens and memoirs of notable botanists such as Babbington and Henslow who were regular visitors.

Chris Metherell gave an engaging talk on nomenclature, challenging us not to fall asleep given the subject's reputation! However, many agreed that this was one of the most enlightening talks of the weekend. He explained the rules on plant names, including the International Botanical Congress (IBC) Nomenclature Section which vote on name changes (please note - anyone can turn up and vote!). Creating a valid name is a process full of pitfalls with a set of rules. For a name to be valid, it must be **legitimate** (earliest published name), **validly published** (complying with IBC code rules!) and **effectively published** (*i.e.*, not a synonym/pre-published etc). It was news to me that the name after a species, for example *Carex flacca* Schreb. is the person who *publishes* the name, not the taxonomist who put forward the name and did all the hard work!

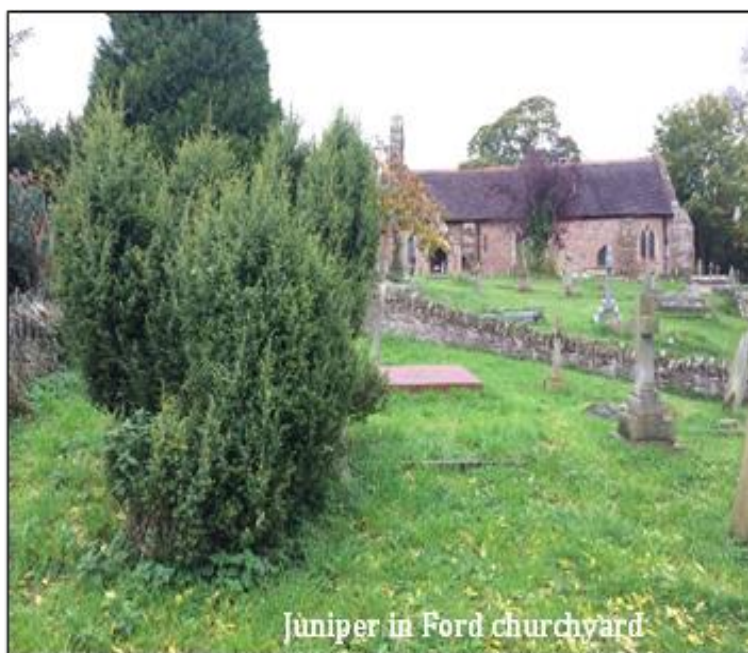
Paul Green, outgoing Ireland Officer for the BSBI, gave a superb tour on how to identify *Atriplex* species and hybrids. Much information lies with the type of bracteole the plant has (mealy, stalked, foliaceous, spongy and/or united at the base or to the middle). He warned that hybrids were more common than their parents, and extraordinarily can exist without parents present. There was also a workshop looking at herbarium specimens of Eyebrights (*Euphrasia* species) guided by Chris Metherell; the plan was to key them out using Stace or the BSBI guide. Chris urged recorders to decide on what group of *Euphrasia* rather than putting down agg. and he also gave us warning of some nomenclature changes ahead! A key piece of information to collect in the field is counting the number of leaf nodes up from the root.

The genius that is Ken Adams gave us the final talk of the weekend, taking us through some tricky and unusual or overlooked grasses. Of the Bromes, species to be alert for include: *Bromopsis benekenii* (very like *B. ramosa* but comes out a month earlier and might be overlooked), *Bromopsis inermis*, *Bromus pseudosecalinus*, and *Bromus lepidus* v *Bromus hordeaceus*. *Bromus hordeaceus* ssp *divaricatus* is an alien to be watchful for. Of the Poas, he discussed *Poa infirma* and its rapid spread and showed us a great tip to distinguish from *Poa annua*, not only looking at the anthers in January but also comparing panicle branch direction (*P. infirma* pointing a bit upwards, *P. annua* pointing straight out at right angles).

We had a number of discussions including how the BSBI plan to run training for VCRs in use of MapMate and QGIS.

It was a wet weekend in Shropshire but for a few dry hours we were able to get out in groups to record. I joined the churchyard group with John Poland of Veg Key fame and Lynne Farrell (outgoing BSBI chairman) both of whom became more focussed on recording grassland fungi as fortunately we stumbled upon a number of waxcaps. It was a memorable moment when we realised we were botanising around Charles Darwin's father's tomb, Robert Darwin, in Shrawardine churchyard.

I can highly recommend the BSBI Recorders conference for anyone who wants to look at tricky or overlooked genera with some of our country's top botanists. It was a thoroughly enjoyable weekend and a great way to meet friends from the wider botanical community in Britain and Ireland.



Recording in churchyards around Preston Montford with Lynne Farrell, Tony Mundell and others.

Flowering times of Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) in Surrey

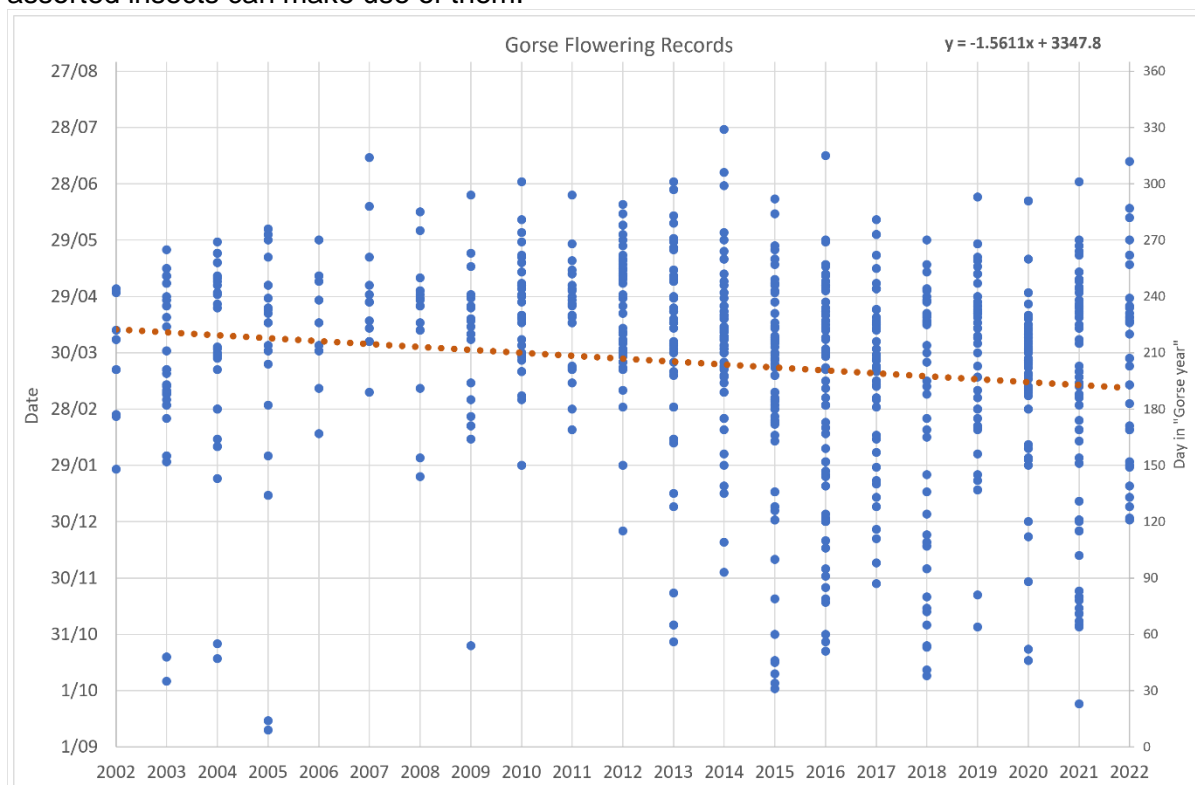
Ken Elsom and Ann Sankey

In a recent Sussex Botanical Recording Society newsletter, their President David Streeter posed the question as to whether *Ulex europaeus* was flowering earlier than it used to. Intrigued, one of us looked at the Surrey records for which the stage was given as flowering. Pre-2000, it was not the custom to note the life cycle stage of a species so our records do

not go very far back. It was the use of the MapMate database in the early 2000s that allowed this detail to be noted with little extra effort. Now we routinely do this for all taxa, one advantage being that our records can be used for phenological studies.

The phenology for all species is also given in the online version of *Plant Atlas 2020*. This gives the national flowering range for Gorse to 2009 to be March to June inclusive. Our data show a much wider range. In the chart below, the x axis ranges from the years 2002 to 2022. The y axis has been arranged to show the flowering season, in days per month with 1st August as the start date. As can be seen, there is quite a wide range of flowering times. It is not known whether the very early autumn and late summer flowering times are correct or are recorder or inputter errors. We do know that Gorse can be seen in flower in early winter, definitely much earlier than March. The dotted line shows that the mean flowering times are getting earlier. The equation on the chart is for the trendline which shows an overall change of about 1½ days per year.

This is presumably a consequence of climate change. The flowers of this species must be an important nectar source. Let us hope that sufficient flowers are available at the times that assorted insects can make use of them.



The other gorse found locally in Surrey is Dwarf Gorse (*Ulex minor*). The BSBI phenology for this species is given as July – September inclusive. Our records give a similar start time but this species does seem to carry on flowering into October. Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) is too rare in Surrey to be of use in any analyses.

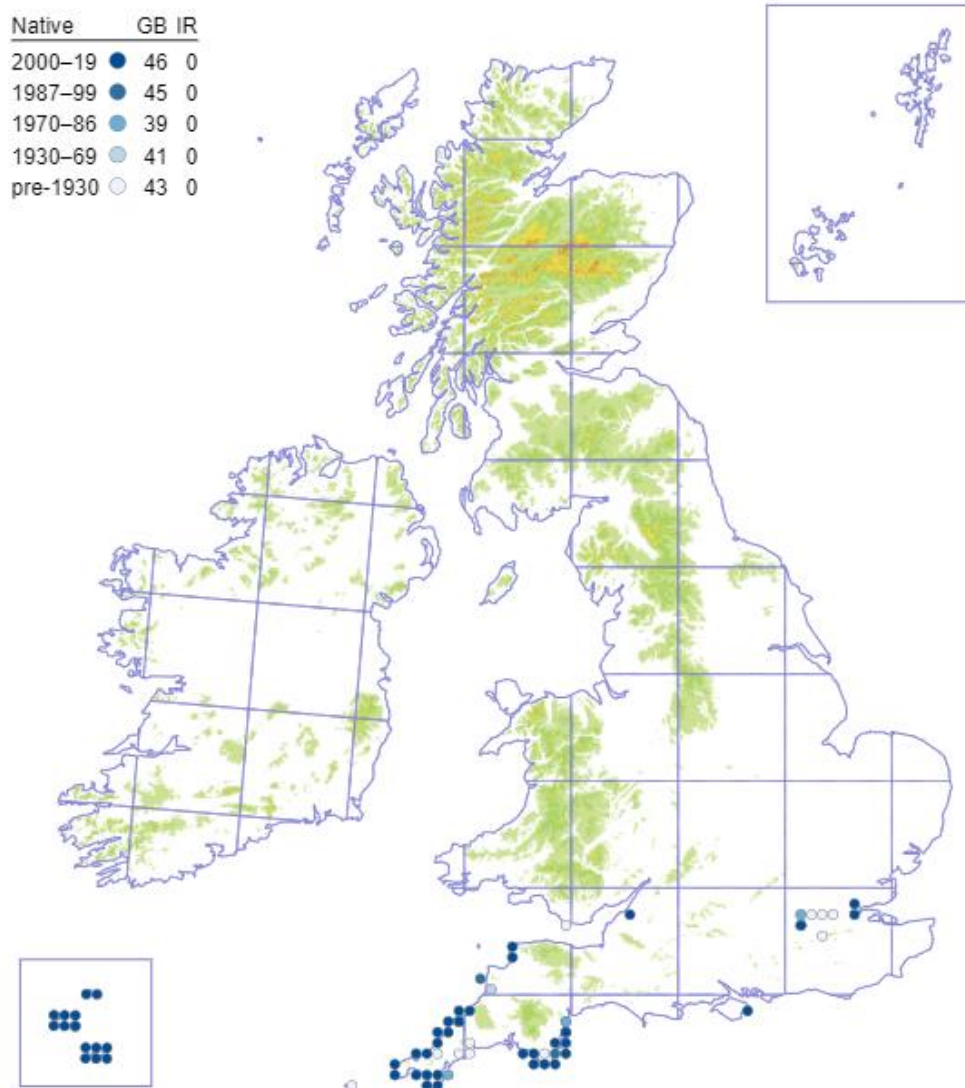
Autumn Squill (*Scilla autumnalis*)

Ann Sankey

Autumn Squill is a small bulbous perennial of dry acid grasslands. The bulbs can tolerate long periods of dry weather with flowering usually taking place in August and September, especially after rain. The narrow grass-like leaves usually emerge after flowering and over winter before dying down in the spring. This life-cycle does make it difficult to find except when in flower. Seed seems to be freely produced and plants grown in cultivation from seed

can flower within three years. Under these conditions, it can also remain in leaf throughout the growing season.

Scilla autumnalis has always been rare in Surrey, VC17. Our populations form part of those along the lower reaches of the Thames from Middlesex and Surrey eastwards to Essex and Kent on the thin and free-draining alluvial sands and gravels. As the map below indicates, the main distribution centres for Autumn Squill are in the SW with an outlying population on the Isle of Wight. The map can be seen at <https://plantatlas2020.org/> where much more information about this species can be found.



Scilla autumnalis L. in *BSBI Online Atlas 2020*, eds P.A. Stroh, T. A. Humphrey, R.J. Burckmar, O.L. Pescott, D.B. Roy, & K.J. Walker. <https://plantatlas2020.org/atlas/2cd4p9h.m3e> [Accessed 20/03/2023]

First recorded south of the Thames in 1666, quoted by C. Merrett as near Ditton and on Kingstone-bridge, in more recent times there have been two main sites in Surrey. These were near Ham, in an area we now call Ham Riverlands or Ham Lands, and further west at Moulsey Hurst. Our last record for Ham is for 1958 where it was described as “*TQ1672 Above & below Ham Dock. Normally very few plants*”. Earlier, C.E. Salmon in 1916 recorded it as “*Abundant in sandy meadows, near the river & by gravel pits near Teddington Lock*” It is hardly surprising that it appears lost from here for, after the extraction of gravel from the area

ceased just before WWII, there was much infilling and general disturbance. For a history of what is now Ham Lands LNR, see <http://hamiswheretheheartis.com/ham-history/ham-lands/>.

The Moulsey Hurst area has also been subjected to disturbance and house-building but fortunately not on the same scale as at Ham. Amongst the earliest records for this area in *Flora of Surrey* J.A. Brewer 1863: "*Plentiful in several places on Moulsey Hurst, more especially about the gravel-pits near the ferry to Hampton; also in the field on the contrary side of the road to West Moulsey; H.C. Watson.*" This was the Watson who developed the system of Watsonian Vice-counties, still in use today as more or less stable recording areas. Note the reference to "**on the contrary side of the road**", for this is significant.

In time Moulsey Hurst became known as Molesey Hurst and then when the racecourse was formally established in 1890 it was called Hurst Park Racecourse. Soon after this C.E. Salmon in his *Flora of Surrey* 1931 gives as "*Not seen there since 1894.*" However, *S. autumnalis* is remarkably persistent for it was found in the area again in 1944 by Barbara Welch: "*Thames side outside Hurst Park Race Course, on grass between FP near river and the stony road, one spike opposite four lime trees downstream from 2 pines in the row of pollarded limes on the edge of the river opposite the waterworks.*" In 1962, Autumn Squill was recorded more widely in both TQ1369 and TQ1469. Up to this time the central enclosure of the racecourse supported a range of rare and scarce species including Maiden Pink (*Dianthus deltoides*), Hoary Cinquefoil (*Potentilla argentea*) and Knotted Clover (*Trifolium striatum*) plus many others. Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*) must also have been there too even though it was not recorded until 1993. In the 1960s it was rare for full species lists to be compiled for a site.

The racecourse closed in 1960 and was sold for housing in 1962. It was at this time that Joyce Smith and Barbara Welch recorded a number of interesting species including Clustered Bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*), Field Mouse-ear (*Cerastium arvense*), Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*), Smith's Pepperwort (*Lepidium heterophyllum*), Hoary Cinquefoil (*Potentilla argentea*) and Knotted Clover (*Trifolium striatum*). These days the presence of such species would hopefully have protected the site. Houses were built in two phases on just over one quartile in the south west of Hurst Park. The remainder passed to Elmbridge BC and is now a public open space. The area between the houses and the river is managed as amenity grassland and the last note for *S. autumnalis* in the area noted above as by the ferry to Hampton gives: "*Land ploughed and re-sown in 1970s. Plants gone.*" Surveys in 2014 and 2017 showed that most of the interesting species have been lost from this amenity area, with just *T. striatum* plus *Trifolium subterraneum* (Subterranean Clover) surviving. The eastern part, especially to the south has fared better, being less disturbed and managed much more sympathetically. More or less between the two are the access road Sadlers Ride and its car park at TQ141692.

In 1983 about a dozen plants of *S. autumnalis* were seen at TQ142692 in the remains of shallow diggings in the NW corner of fenced field immediately to the east of the housing estate. Then in 1992 four seed heads were found in the same area, c.1m south of a newly dug ditch. These were the last sightings for many years and Autumn Squill was considered lost from Hurst Park and thus from Surrey. Then in 2011 I was sent a record of this species by Nicholas White for a road of the housing estate: "*Acid grassland of open front gardens, former Hurst Park Racecourse area*"! Also included in his list for the site was another survivor, *P. argentea*. It was about this time that one of the founders of the Friends of Hurst Park thought he had found one spike in the same approximate area as the 1983 and 1992 records above. It was these findings that sparked our current interest in the Hurst Park area. At about the same time, the Friends of Hurst Park was formed to protect the area from assorted threats including expansion of some sporting activities. They have proposed that the areas known as Hurst Meadows and Hurst Minor be designated by NE as a Local Nature Reserve, LNR. See <http://www.friendsofhurstpark.org.uk/> for more information. Currently, the

Management Plan for the site is being revised. When this is completed, the aim is to seek LNR designation.

A few years after the 2011 discovery, flowering plants of the squill were in two areas east of Sadlers Ride car park. In 2015 for example, 50 flowering spikes were counted in mown turf and a further 12 by the kerb of the car park. Both these areas are susceptible to trampling and mowing, despite Elmbridge BC's best efforts to protect them. While the plants here do persist and flower, it was thought advisable to find some sites away from this public pressure where the plants could grow safely. Fortunately, *S. autumnalis* grows readily from seed. In autumn 2015, seed was collected and grown on for three years by both Peter Wakeham and the Friends Chair. Seed collected from these plants were introduced to three areas further south in Hurst Meadows. Peter describes the process thus: *"We chose an area where the sward was quite low, probably because the soil was shallower or perhaps more gravelly than the area near the car park. I brought along some garden shears and cut the vegetation down to the ground then scarified the area with a 3-pronged hand tool. The seeds were scattered on the surface, raked in and then the surface trodden down."*

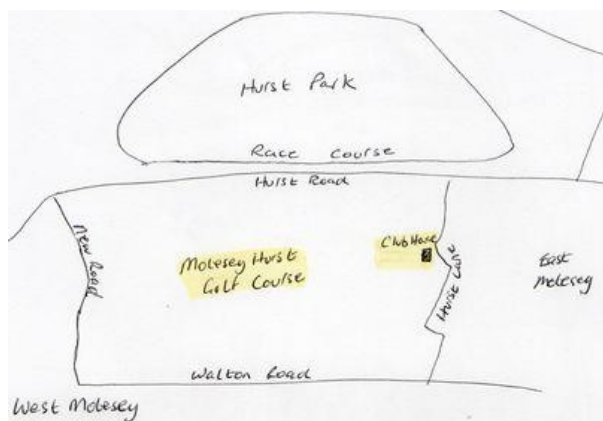
This introduction appears to have been successful at two of the chosen sites with 12 flowering spikes being counted in 2022.

In 2021 Barry Phillips and Brian Spooner started some general recording in the Molesey area. In West Molesey they came across about 100 mown flowering spikes of *S. autumnalis* in an urban road verge. When they reported their find to the Friends, there was some confusion about the locality and it was assumed that the mown plants were those from the introduced seed. Thus, this find was unknown to SBS member Mick Rock who lives in the area and sends us his records for *S. autumnalis*. So, he was very surprised and delighted to discover this 'huge population of Autumn Squill' in 2022 in what turns out to be in the same road verge in TQ1368. He took the images below, noting the presence of a few white flowered spikes.



A few days later, over the August Bank Holiday, he saw cars parked on the flowers. Then a few days after this along came the mowers! Before this, it is presumed that the dry weather plus perhaps SCC's reduced mowing regime allowed the plants to produce their flowering spikes so that they were seen in 2021 and 2022. Mick returned after the mowing incident and found more flowering spikes emerging. He estimated that in total there were c.1000 spikes in this verge, making it one of the largest in the south east. Essex tops the list with several populations, including one of 2000 plants. Just over the river in Middlesex, the population by Hampton Court is suffering from public pressure with a recent

count of 100. Kent last recorded its long-known population in 1920. This makes our Molesey populations of national importance. SCC has assured us that there will be no mowing of this verge, at least while the squills are in flower. Mowing with the arisings removed is important for verge management, though on these poor soils, the arisings do not appear to have had much effect. Mick did not find any more flowering spikes in any of the other nearby verges but the whole area does need a thorough botanical survey, including in the spring to pick up early flowering species. One reason for the possible botanical interest comes from the past history of the area, as so often is the case. Investigations have shown that the area south of Hurst Road was once Molesey Hurst Golf course. See sketch map below. Although there was informal playing of golf in the area before this, the course was established in 1907 and closed in 1935. During this time, without use of herbicides and abundant fertilisers, the



course could have been botanically very interesting. Unfortunately, it was agreed that the area could be used for housing. This was much earlier than the building that occurred on the former Hurst Park Racecourse to the north. There are some remaining green spaces, including Molesey Hurst Recreation Ground and West Molesey Recreation Ground. Their botanical interest is currently unknown.

But back to Brewer and his “**on the contrary side of the road**”. This means south of Hurst Road. Could the population of *S.*

autumnalis discovered by Barry, Brian and Mick in an urban roadside be the same as that noted by H.C. Watson who recorded mainly in the mid-19th century? Given the species' ability to persist, this is possible. Did it persist during the time the area was a golf course? Given the number of rare species that can survive in golf courses, the chances of this are highly likely. What else will we find in the area?

Three Spring Pieces

George Hounsome

1. Grass, Violets and Others

While driving along the A25 near Westcott during the first week in March I noticed a long yellow smear along a bank on the north side of the road. I thought "That looks just like Early Meadow-grass (*Poa infirma*)" so on the way back I stopped to check. It was indeed – thousands of them, visible from a hundred metres away. The species has spread rapidly over the past few years but seems to come and go, easily out-competed by other grasses, probably the reason it grows only on barish ground at a botanically-sparse time of year. I feel that MapMate shows where winter-botanising *P. infirma*-spotters live rather than the true distribution of the plant.



Poa infirma at Westcott

Following a suggestion that I make a note

of it for the newsletter I thought I'd include a few other plants that have piqued my interest this year.

I must mention the large patch of Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) in West Horsley Churchyard and the Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) rosette that has appeared in my front garden between flagstones. I shall nurture it to make sure I've named it correctly and confess if I haven't.



Eranthis hyemalis at West Horsley



Ophrys apifera rosette



Cyrtomium fortunei

Fortune's Holly-fern (*Cyrtomium fortunei*) is an escape seen by a gate of Lock 3 on the Basingstoke Canal at West Byfleet. I have been there before and I either didn't see it or it's new.

It was February 1999. We were at Warley Place in Essex and I was re-finding my botanical feet after years of other responsibilities and interests had directed them elsewhere. A well-respected and knowledgeable older botanist pointed to a flowering Sweet Violet and said "*That's Viola odorata* var. *praecox*". I can still hear him saying it in my mind's ear and I filed an image of it in my head for future reference.

Twenty-three years passed; a period peppered with puzzlement as I saw various violets on verges and viatical



Viola odorata
Garden-escaped large-flowered cv



Viola odorata var. *odorata*
at West Horsley

places and wondered how to separate var. *praecox* from var. *odorata*. I occasionally saw *V. odorata* var. *odorata* in "good" habitats and it looked quite different from the roadside taxon. In 2017 the BSBI handbook *Violas of Britain and Ireland* appeared, with a description

of var. *praecox* that I couldn't reconcile with the roadside plants, so more puzzlement as there seemed to be a lot of Surrey records for it but I'd never seen any of them. Then, in February 2023, I was in West Horsley churchyard and noticed a patch of an inconspicuous violet with very small, dark purple flowers and a sleeping question awoke. I took photographs and contacted Mike Hardman, the BSBI *Viola* referee, who is very helpful. He replied "The large early ones you note as differing from var. *praecox* may be progeny of escaped cultivars, especially if anywhere near churchyards/parks/gardens. There are many such cultivars and an effectively infinite number of derived crosses grading back towards var. *odorata* ... I believe it is safer to refer to such plants as *Viola odorata* cv. rather than var. *praecox*". This makes excellent sense but unfortunately that option is not presented in MapMate so maybe we should record it as plain *V. odorata*, status Established and a suitable comment such as "garden-escaped large-flowered cv". As far as I can tell that taxon is not mentioned as such in the BSBI Handbook, unless I'm missing something. He has also sown seeds of doubt in my mind and I now think the West Horsley plant is probably plain *V. odo.* var. *odorata*, but I need to check to see if it sets seed.

I have a small piece from the churchyard and if it survives my not-so-tender loving care. I will see if it behaves the way the Handbook says it should. I now have to review all my records to make sure that those in 'good' habitats are in as *V. odorata* var. *odorata*. I have still never seen real *V. odorata* var. *praecox*.

2. The Crocuses are Springing

February is here, bringing with it the annual display of spring crocuses at a time when botanists don't have much to look at. Crocuses do not have the cachet of being native like Stinging Nettles (*Urtica dioica*) and Fat Hen (*Chenopodium album*) and no-one claims that they are as significant for the British flora but I like to know what things are when I see them and they do look brighter. However, for a recording botanist they cause problems for at least two reasons. First, "Is it wild?" and second, "Which one is it?". The first is a matter of



Crocus tommasinianus

They persist and clusters expand by offsets but when does "Planted" become "Established"? I haven't made up my mind yet. Secondly, which species are they? None is native. The only one that freely seeds itself is Early Crocus (*Crocus tommasinianus*). We see sheets of it in February by roadsides and in churchyards, cheering up a colourless time of year. It's easy to name, being first on the scene and usually a shade of lilac with a white perianth tube. Almost as common is Spring Crocus (*C. neapolitanus*) in a bewildering variety of colours from pure

opinion. One newly-planted in a graveyard clearly isn't, but what about those in rough grass between long-neglected graves? I take the view that they are as wild as a lot of other plants we record and should go in as Established with the comment "Persistent between old graves" or something like that. And what about roadside crocuses, planted by the local council to bring pleasure to any passing drivers that have eyes to see.

white to deep purple, variously striped inside and out but with a perianth tube the same colour as the tepals. There are thousands in St. Mary's Churchyard, Byfleet.



Crocus x luteus

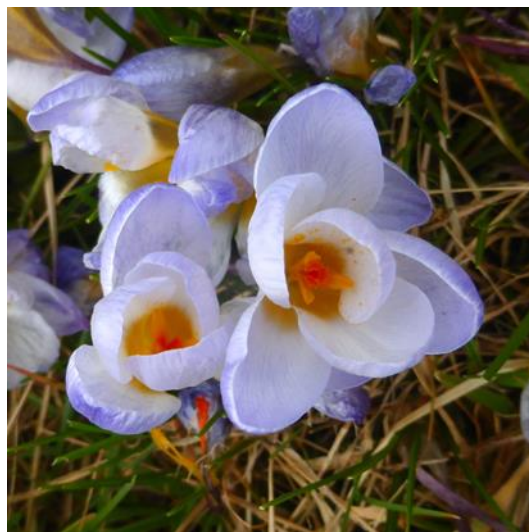


Crocus chrysanthus

There are others and it is these that gave me pause for thought. That thought resulted in my sending a selection of photographs to Brian Mathew, the BSBI *Crocus* referee, who responded very promptly and was extremely helpful and informative. The yellow one we often see is almost always Yellow Crocus (*C. x luteus*), a sterile hybrid, one parent of which is *C. flavus*, a yellow-flowered Balkan species rather rarely encountered in a naturalised state. The other parent is the Crimean (*C. angustifolius*) (also rarely seen) and it is this species that contributes the brownish stripes at the top of the perianth tube in *C. x luteus*. Another golden yellow crocus is Golden Crocus (*C. chrysanthus*) which, like all the others, is a plant of graveyards (mostly) and roadsides. It's smaller than *C. x luteus* and usually with more extensive brown markings, often reaching the tip of the tepals on the outside. The tunic of the corm has concentric rings of scales but you'd have to dig it up to see that. Yellow Crocus is also used as the common name for *C. flavus* which as mentioned above is a much less frequently encountered species. There are a few records of it in Surrey by folk whose determinations I wouldn't dare to question but I can't help wondering. I've found it once, confirmed by Brian, in a churchyard at Frimley.



***Crocus biflorus* 'Parkinsonii'**



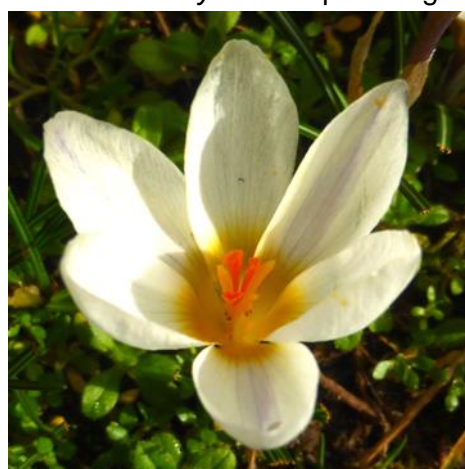
***Crocus biflorus* 'Blue Pearl'**

I've had Silvery Crocus (*C. biflorus*) near the bottom of my bucket list for some time and was delighted to come across it in that haven of crocuses, St. Mary's at Byfleet. There were two forms, also confirmed by Brian, who gave me cultivar names for them. What they have in

common is lilac tepals with a yellow throat. Just to confuse the issue it hybridises with *C. chrysanthus*. The hybrid has tepals with both lilac and yellow shades. Brian pointed out that the anther tails often have dark tips, an indication of the *chrysanthus* parentage.



Crocus biflorus x chrysanthus



Crocus biflorus x chrysanthus with dark anther tails



Crocus sieberi

Finally, there's Sieber's Crocus (*C. sieberi*), seen in Send Churchyard. It has a lilac corolla, a yellow throat and a yellow perianth tube. The form most commonly sold is the colourful var. 'Tricolor' but I've seen that only in a pot. I'd like to point out that it's not Sieber's crocus, it's its own crocus, around thousands of years before Sieber appeared on the scene and annexed it.

That's the story so far. I have yet to see Ankara Crocus (*C. ancyrensis*) and true *C. vernus*. Come the autumn I'll buy some corms to grow on to see what they look like.

I could not have written this without all the help and information given me by Brian Mathew and I am very grateful to him for it, for comments on this article and for opening my eyes to crocuses.

3. Daffodown Dilly Is New Come To Town...

...in a yellow petticoat and a green gown. Daffodils (*Narcissus* sp., subsp. and cultivars) are everywhere in the spring, on roadside verges, under hedges, by ditches, in woodland, etc, etc, etc and pose similar status/id problems to crocuses except that id problems are much worse. Stace lists 26 *Narcissus* taxa but the RHS Plant Finder has just under 2000 entries for the genus, most of which are cultivars which are a mystery to us, so *Narcissus* agg. comes in really useful. Occurrences vary from solid clumps of roadside cultivars, clearly sterile and reproducing only by offsets, to scatterings in woodland of some clusters but also separate young plants of varying sizes, indicating fertility. A few of the roadside plants are more easily nameable, one being *N. x cyclazetta*, sold as 'Tête-a-Tête'. It's a sterile hybrid of *N. cyclamineus* and another version of *N. x cyclazetta*, is very popular and is frequently thrown out/escapes. It's often mass-planted on verges but crops up in less controlled sites such as piles of garden debris and in the Mole Valley in brambly scrub on the north side of the FP to Longbury Wood. At least we can give it a proper scientific name. The same applies to the cluster of plants that Caroline Bateman found at the foot of a fence near Reigate. It's



***Narcissus x cyclazetta* 'Tête-a-Tête'**



***Narcissus minor* ssp. *pumilus* flore pleno
'Rip van Winkle'**

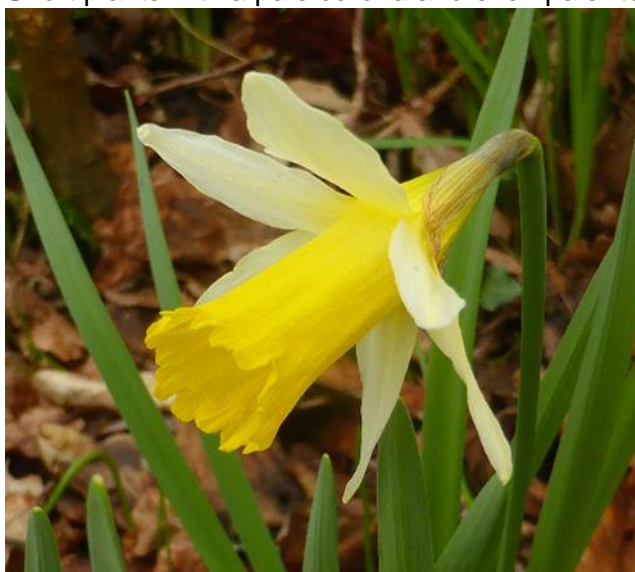
the heritage cultivar 'Rip van Winkle' which could be put into MapMate as "*Narcissus* 'Rip van Winkle' (Div. Four (Pets Yellow, narrow and diffuse))" but that's a bit clumsy and horticultural. It's actually a double form of Lesser Daffodil (*N. minor* ssp. *pumilus*), a far more satisfactory name so it's best put in as *N. minor*, with a suitable comment. But like the previous, it's only an escape.

Tenby Daffodil (*N. obvallaris*) can be bought and is presumably as likely to be found by roadsides as any others. The corona is longer than the tepals and both are the mid-yellow. There are a couple of Surrey records, both by me, which triggered a quality control alert - did I get it right? They look just like the one labelled as such that I bought from Wisley.



Narcissus obvallaris

I have long been puzzled by occurrences of "Wild" Daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*). Short plants with a pale corona and even paler tepals in ancient woodland are likely to be the native subsp. *pseudonarcissus*.



***Narcissus pseudonarcissus* subsp. *pseudonarcissus*
In woodland**

However, in not-so-ancient woodland, derelict estates and on roadsides there are plants that are qualitatively that taxon but too large. Keying one out in Stace leads to Pale-flowered Daffodil (*N. macrolobus*) but I don't believe it. I'm very wary of accepting a name just because the key says so and the ones I've seen are a poor match for the description. Googling about the place takes me to *N. pse.* 'Princeps', a common pre-1830 heritage cultivar and a good candidate. It's a taller plant with a more frillily flared corona, probably originating in Italy, perhaps as a selection from a wild population. It is said not to come true from seed, which I take that to mean that it's fertile but the progeny tend to revert to

the wild type. This is borne out by the mixture of sizes in naturalising populations found in old estates, as at Sandgates near Chertsey. The name is synonymous with *N. gayi* and *N. pse. subsp. gayi*, but probably simple *N. pseudonarcissus* is the best one to use with a

comment including "Perhaps cv. 'Princeps'", but I'm open to advice on that (and anything else!).



***Narcissus pseudonarcissus* 'Princeps'**

On a roadside verge

There are several other species that we encounter, including taxa cf. Spanish Daffodil (*N. hispanicus*) and Pheasant's-eye D. (*N. poeticus*). Both these are fairly frequent and recur. There are occasional records of more transient species such as Hoop-petticoat D. (*N. bulbocodium*) and Cyclamen-flowered D. (*N. cyclamineus*). I've never seen them "wild" in Surrey myself but hope to do so sooner or later.

So, what do we record and to what level? My approach is that if a population is producing fertile seed it's recorded, with a species name and status as Native or Established depending on the site. If it's frequent or unusual, in an uncultivated place, and can be given a proper scientific name, it's also in. If it's an indeterminable cultivar not obviously planted, it's in as *Narcissus* agg., Established, but if it's one of the mass-planted clumps on verges, it's out. Really, of course, it's a judgement call and depends on what you think the purpose of recording is. Whichever approach you take it's a joy to see them all as the plant world wakes up after the winter.

Gillian Elsom - BSBI Photographic Competition Winner

Caroline Bateman



Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) (Surrey)

Many congratulations to Gillian Elsom who won three out of the four categories in the 2022 BSBI Photographic Competition “Plants in the Four Seasons”. Winners were chosen by a popular vote at the Scottish Botanists’ Conference and Gillian was chosen as the winner for Spring: Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*); Summer: Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*) and Autumn: Autumn Lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*). There were 194 entries from 77 photographers so this is a remarkable achievement. It was the first time that Gillian had entered her photos.



Autumn Lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*) (Hants)



Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*) (Surrey)

For 2023 the categories are “Plants and People” and “Plants in the Landscape” and the competition is open to everyone whether or not they are members of the BSBI. If you would like to enter, visit the Photographic Competition webpage for the rules and how to submit photos. <https://bsbi.org/bsbi-photographic-competition>

A Tribute to Robin Day (1937 - 2022)

Barry Phillips

I first met Robin in 1981 when I started work in the machine shop of Badalex in Addlestone, a company specialising in automated machinery for the lamp making industry. He was chief programmer for the computerised mills and cam-making machines used for producing component parts. Although we spoke, it wasn't until another colleague, who I had mentioned my botanical interest to, said that I should talk to Robin as he likes to walk the Downs photographing wild orchids, say no more! I was quickly invited on the next trip; thus, the duo of Phillips and Day was born! I recall one early trip to find Musk orchids on White Down, our wives, and kids, he has a son Carl, came along too. Yes! we found them, but the pitiful looks we got from the onlooking spouses; at two grown men grovelling about paying homage to the diminutive plants, said it all! His wife, Julie, had an exceptional eye for spotting orchids, unfailingly after Rob and I had been unsuccessful in our mission she would ask what we were looking for, then would invariably say “is that one over there?” Yup!

Rob, being a computer programmer was full of enthusiasm when I said that I wanted to purchase a computer to set up a plant database. I had started recording the flora of my local Runnymede district. As there was no "off the peg" software available at the time, he said that he would write me one! Several weeks later he brought in a floppy disc and was ready to install it. After work he downloaded it, we ran through it, he went home, five minutes later I had lost it! Gone completely! I felt such a fool when I told him the next day. He reinstalled it and looked through the program...he'd made a typo in a line of commands, so it wasn't me after all.

Rob had lots of other interests with club cycling there at the top, although not a racer he and Julie were keen marshals at events. Walking and an avid appreciation of the countryside were a close second, where his camera skills were put to good use, especially in later years when he and Julie moved to the Isle of Wight.

The connection to the Surrey Botanical Society came via me submitting my local records to the London Natural History Society Recorder, Rodney Burton, he in turn passed them over to Joyce Smith, joint Recorder for the Botanical Society of the British Isles (VC17) and the Surrey Flora Committee (SFC). Rob and I, after meeting with Joyce, were invited to join the committee in 1990. Publicly he was embarrassed by his plant knowledge and felt out of his depth at meetings and field trips, but privately he was a very accomplished botanist. The plant find he was most pleased about was discovering Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) alive and well in the marshy meadows beside the River Blackwater near his home in Blackwater, near Camberley, its first record in the county after being presumed extinct as a native plant in Alan Leslie's Supplement & Checklist (1987).

In 1998 Badalex foundered, resulting in redundancy for us both. Rob and Julie sold their Blackwater house and moved to Freshwater on the Isle of Wight. Rob was in his element, with a salt marsh just across the road he had a whole new habitat to explore, wading birds, over-wintering ospreys, green-winged orchids, etc. etc. Many visits followed and we saw many of the floral and bird delights of the island (with many a good pub lunch too!).

Having written several websites for parish councils, local societies, etc. he suggested writing one for the SFC. However, when it was proposed to the committee it was thought a bit too avant-garde and was turned down! At the disbanding of the SFC and the formation of the SBS he suggested the website idea again, this time with success. Rob was a very able guy, if something didn't work, he would try another tack and before too long he had it up and running. He tweaked it when it needed it over the years until advancing age suggested that he hand it over to somebody new.

He was very honoured when the SBS made him a life member, and as chuffed as little mint balls when I passed the SBS's gift of a touchingly personalised fine bone china mug to him.

He was always a pleasure to be with, a master joke teller and will be greatly missed!



Robin Day with the bone china mug

Would all those intending to send contributions for inclusion into the next SBS Newsletter note that they should be sent by email to the Editor by the end of September 2023 to enable production and distribution to take place before the end of October. Please check that you have received a reply confirming receipt.

All reports should be written in Arial 11 Normal font. When referencing plants, the description should show the 'common' or English name (as described in MapMate) first then the scientific name (as per Stace 4) in italics and bracketed.

Finally, could you please ensure that you notify the Secretary if you change your e-mail and/or postal address so that the Society may keep you informed. Thank you.

Surrey Botanical Society – Social

Please note that this year's SBS Social will be held at:

Box Hill Village Hall at 2.00pm on Saturday 28th October 2023

Location: **Boxhill Road, Box Hill, Surrey, KT20 7JT (TQ1952 5148)**

Surrey Botanical Society Contacts:

Chairman:	TBA
Hon. Secretary:	P. (Peter) Wakeham
Hon. Treasurer:	C. (Caroline) Bateman
Field Meetings:	I. (Isobel) Girvan
Newsletter Editor:	G. (Graham) Cotten
Other Committee Members:	C. W. (Bill) Stanworth G. (George) Hounsome R. (Roger) Hawkins S. (Susan) Medcalf
VC Recorder for BSBI:	TBA

Web-site: www.surreyflora.org.uk