

Spring 2012

The Dorset Heath

The Newsletter of the Dorset Flora Group

Volume 3

2012 Events

Our regular summer event, Dorset Wildflower Week will run again this year although slightly later in the year. The committee felt that there were too many competing events in half term week so this year's event will take place from 9th – 16th June with one or two walks on every day. Other field meetings will range from inland woodlands to the coast and include chalk grassland on Hod hill, Saltmarsh and Heath at Middlebere and Scotland Heath and a look at the wetland habitats in and around Little Sea on Studland..

There is a targeted hunt for Petty Whin on Winfrith Heath and a surveying visit to the RSPB's Garston wood, famous for birds but also notable for woodland flora. All details of these and other field meetings follow within.

This summer will mark the 5th year of Dorset Flora Group activities. We hope that the programme will attract and entertain many of our members – we do have far more people on the mailing list than we generally see. We need to think about how the group will develop in the future, and invite members' views, either at the meetings or direct to any of the committee. There is a recent trend for groups such as ours to affiliate to the BSBI, but we could also link more closely to the Wildlife Trust, DNH&AS, or remain independent. The committee are generally in favour of the group carrying out more scientific surveys and

monitoring but we want to represent our members and meet their preferences as well as lead them. We look forward to your input.

Dorset Flora Group AGM 2011

Our AGM was busier than ever and it was a pleasure to see so many members taking part. We had displays and book sales from Ted Pratt, Peter and Margaret Cramb, Christina Hart-Davies, Alison Stewart and Angela Peters, bargain books from British Wildlife Publishing, and again two quizzes supplied by Peter and Margaret Crambe (congratulations to Ted Pratt – 2011 champion). We were fortunate to have 3 interesting presentations; Robin reviewed 2011 field meetings and appealed for volunteer co-ordinators to come forward for BSBI work planned for the year ahead. Carolyn Steele presented the new Living Record web based recording programme; this will make the laborious task of entering records quicker and more interactive and is a very user friendly tool. Our guest speaker, Christina Hart-Davies, then took us through the work of a botanical illustrator and in particular the plates created for David Streeter's Collins Flower guide; a fascinating presentation with beautiful illustrations. We hope to see you next year – a chance to see old friends and make new at our only annual social. Exhibitions welcomed.

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Living Record

Wild Flower Week 2012

Saturday 9th June 10.30 am

Stanpit Marsh

Join Christchurch Countryside Service and botanist Phil Budd to identify and learn about the wildflowers of Stanpit Marsh Nature Reserve. Sturdy footwear advised.

Meet: Marsh Pod Information Centre, Stanpit Marsh Nature Reserve, Christchurch, map ref SZ169921.

Leader: Phil Budd.

Telephone 01425 272479 for details. Booking essential as numbers limited.

Cost Adults £2.50, Children £1.50.

Saturday 9th June 2.30 pm

Mudeford Woods

Join Christchurch Countryside Service and botanist Phil Budd to identify and learn about the wildflowers of Mudeford Woods.

Meet: Mudeford Woods Community Centre, Pipers Drive, Off Brabazon Drive, Christchurch. Map ref SZ183930.

Leader: Phil Budd.

Booking essential as numbers limited. Telephone 01425 272479 for details

Cost Adults £2.50, Children £1.50.

Sunday 10th June 10.30 am

Ringmoor and Turnworth

A leisurely stroll through old woods/grassland to see what is in flower/of interest

Dogs must be on leads at all times.

Meet at small car park at map ref ST816085

Leader: Laurence Taylor.

Booking/further information 07541 075844

Donations to Dorset Flora Group welcome.

Sunday 10th June 2.30 pm

Durlston Country Park

Flower-rich hay meadows at their best - downland flowers also.

Meet at Learning Centre (car park charge) map ref SZ031773

Leader: Ted Pratt.

Bookings 01929 424443.

Cost Adults £3, Friends of Durlston or children £2.

Monday 11th June 10.30 am

Winfrith Heath Reserve

Flower-rich heathland and wetland plants by the Tadnoll Brook.

Meet at Gatemoor Road Reserve entrance – map ref. SY805863

Leader: John Wright.

Enquiries to 01929 556816.

Donations to Dorset Flora Group welcome.

Monday 11th June 2.30 pm**Hilton and Milton Abbas Churchyards**

A walk around these churchyards, which are very well maintained for wildlife. Milton Abbas' two site churchyard won the county competition last year. No rarities, but a colourful variety of wild plants.

Meet at Hilton: map ref ST781030.

Leader: Ted Pratt.

Bookings needed – 01929 427229.

Donations to Dorset Flora Group welcome.

Tuesday 12th June 10.30 am**Badbury Rings**

A walk around the rings and the surrounding chalk grassland to look at orchids and other wild flowers of this fascinating site.

Meet at the public car park at ST961031.

Leader Jon Crewe.

Bookings needed - 01202 549377

Donations to Dorset Flora Group welcome.

Tuesday 12th June 2.30 pm**Corfe Charity/NT Meadows**

One of the rarest habitats – unimproved lowland meadows, full of flowers. Only 3% of such meadows remain in Britain, compared with 60 years ago. Two miles. Wellingtons advised.

Meet at Scotland corner on Slepe Road, map ref SY961840.

Leader: Ted Pratt.

Bookings needed - 01929 427229.

Donations to Dorset Flora Group welcome.

Wednesday 13th June 10.30 am**Westhay Farm**

The meeting point is the National Trust Shop and information point where there are picnic tables and toilets. Hot drinks available. There is a small car parking charge for non members payable near the entrance to Stonebarrow, map ref SY383933.

Leader John Newbould - Enquiries to 01305 837384

Donations to National Trust welcome.

Thursday 14th June 10.30 am**Corfe Common**

Discover the wild flowers and other wildlife of Corfe Common.

Meet at West Street car park (charge applies) map ref SY958818.

Leader - National Trust Staff.

Booking essential - 01929 450002

Donations to National Trust welcome.

Thursday 14th June 2.00 pm**Burton Bradstock and Cogden beach**

Interesting coastal flora in beautiful scenery.

Meet at the Hive beach café SY491888. (car park charge for non National Trust members)

Leaders John Newbould and National Trust staff. All welcome.

Donations to National Trust welcome.

Friday 15th June at 10.30 am**Wild flowers of Ferrybridge and Chesil.**

Meet at the Ferrybridge car park, map ref. SY 668 753.

A walk through coastal grassland, scrub and shingle beach habitats looking at some of the specialist plants that thrive here.

Leader: Bryan Edwards.

Bookings on 01305 225081: Donations to Dorset Flora group welcomed.

Friday 15th June at 2.30pm**Coastal wildflowers of Kimmeridge Bay.**

Meet at the Fine Foundation Marine Centre (DWT centre) at SY 910 788 on the eastern side of the bay to enjoy a walk with DWT President Tony Bates to see the interesting flora both on the shore line and on the cliffs above.

Book on 01929 471563.

Please note a car park toll charge applies. Donations to Dorset Flora Group welcomed.

Saturday 16th June 10.30 am**Hartland Moor.**

Meet beside Soldiers Road between Stoborough Heath and Hartland Moor National Nature Reserves at grid ref. SY942853. A walk across a variety of heathland habitats to look at a diverse range of wild plants of bog, heath and fen. Bring footwear suitable for rough ground and damp conditions.

Leader Jonathan Cox.

Booking essential – 07766 133696

Donations to National Trust welcome.

Sunday 17th June 10.30 am**Fontmell Down.**

Meet at the small car park on the Fontmell Magna to Ashmore road, map ref. ST884 168

Chalk flowers and grassland in an outstanding setting.

Leader Andrew Branson. Booking on 01747 838223

Donations to Dorset Flora group welcomed.

Field Meetings 2012

Saturday April 21st 10.30 am. Thorncombe Wood

Meet in the car park at Higher Bockhampton, SY725922 with lunch. Members wishing to visit Hardy's Cottage will be able to do so.

Thursday April 26th 9.30 am. Stonebarrow (NT Golden Cap estate):

Take narrow road from Charmouth to the Stonebarrow estate. Meet in the car park at the east end SY381933 to monitor Green-winged Orchid and the spring bird migration. Green-winged Orchid is a BSBI target species for 2012. A small car parking charge applies. NT members free.

Saturday May 12th 10.30 am. Pribdean and Garston Woods

Leaders Robin Walls and Peter Hatherley

Meet in the car park SU004194 on the Handley – Bower Chalk Road with lunch. We are covering the woods south of the County boundary – part of the RSPB Reserve – and will be recording some compartments for the RSPB.

Thursday May 24th, 10.30 am. Hod Hill N.T.

Meet in the car park ST853113 on the Child Okeford - Stourpaine Road. There is a steep climb to the Hill Fort. Bring lunch. Dorset Invertebrate Recording group are invited, as the NT's professional survey team will visit this property in 2012.

Thursday May 31st 10.30 am. Winfrith Heath DWT Reserve

Leader Laurence Taylor

Meet at the roadside at SY 804 864 to survey this large heathland site for Petty Whin. Bring lunch.

Saturday 30th June 10.30 am Ferrybridge and Chesil.

Meet at the public car park at SY 668 754 – a car parking charge applies.

This will be a longer visit to a site which features in Wildflower week earlier in June, led on this occasion by Jonathan Cox and Robin Walls. Coastal flora and shingle plants.

Saturday 14th July 10.30 am to 3 pm. Middlebere

Heathland, farmland and edge of saltmarsh - a range of species on each. Discover how small the flowers of *Hypochoeris glabra* (Small Catsear) really are. See *Spartina maritima* (Small Cord-grass) in one of its two remaining Dorset sites - but perhaps find more! Meet on Slepe Road, at the start of the farm track, map ref. SY963854. Wellingtons advised. Bring lunch. Leaders: Angela Peters and Ted Pratt. Bookings needed – 01929 450002

Saturday 28th July 10.30 am. Deadmoor Common

Leader Andrew Branson

This is an interesting and possibly under-recorded site. We will explore the site for as long as people feel keen to continue. Additional interest may come from butterflies; we will be close to noted reserves such as Alner's Gorse, a site for Brown Hairstreak. Booking is essential - 01747 838223. Details of where to meet will be provided nearer the time.

Saturday 25th August 10.30 am. Plants of Little Sea.

Meet at SZ 025 844 by the track to Greenland farm. Parking for half a dozen cars on the roadside here – please share transport if possible.

Join botanist Jonathan Cox for an exploration of aquatic plants at the freshwater but coastal Little Sea lake, Studland. Booking essential on 01929 450002. Donations to the National Trust welcomed.

November: Conifer id workshop with national expert Matt Parrett at Coldharbour in Wareham Forest, date and details to follow.

Dorset Heath (*Erica ciliaris*) and Dorset Hybrid Heath (*E. x watsonii*): Distribution Survey. Studland & Godlingston Heaths (National Trust) Purbeck

Background

Erica ciliaris is a Nationally Rare heather species restricted to the wet heaths of South-east Dorset (with high populations on the Isle of Purbeck), West Cornwall, Devon and Hampshire. The hybrid of *E. ciliaris* and *E. tetralix*; *E. x watsonii* is also rare and is restricted to areas where both parent species are present. Loss of habitat to coniferous plantations and agricultural intensification has caused *E. ciliaris* to be on the British Red Data list.

Method

The volunteer recording day was organised for 23rd July, when eight NT and Dorset Flora Group volunteers surveyed *E. ciliaris* and *E. x watsonii*. Using maps showing old records, provided by Ted Pratt, the site was divided into sections of Studland and Godlingston Heaths and allocated to the volunteers. Standing in the middle of a patch of *E. ciliaris*/*E. x watsonii* the grid reference was recorded using a GPS device, and the amount of plants was noted in every location on a 10-square metre basis. The locations not covered on the day were surveyed a few days later. Plants found during other recent field visits were also mapped. A distribution map was produced.

Results

493 *E. ciliaris* and 88 *E. x watsonii* plants were found. Compared to old records of *E. ciliaris*, 5 new sites were found, one holding 58 plants. A seemingly isolated population was found in the dunes behind Shell Bay. The highest population of plants was found in a location in the south-west area of Godlingston - 64. Other populations had 25 plants or less, with the majority having under 10 plants at one grid reference.

Marsh Gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) Distribution Survey: Studland and Godlingston Heaths (National Trust) Purbeck

Background

Due to habitat fragmentation *Gentiana pneumonanthe* has a scattered distribution across the UK, though there are a few strongholds on the eastern heaths of the New Forest and on Dorset Heaths. Found on wet heaths, not marshes (!), *G. pneumonanthe* is often more frequent on sites which have been recently burnt. It is declining in numbers in the rest of Britain, and is Nationally Scarce.

Method

A National Trust and Dorset Flora Group volunteer survey day was organised for 10th September, with a good turn out of 15 volunteers. Existing records had been compiled by Ted Pratt and produced on maps, to show areas where *G. pneumonanthe* had been recorded before. Volunteers were split into small groups of 2/3 and given areas to cover. Any *G. pneumonanthe* found were counted and then recorded by standing in the centre of a group of plants and noting down the 8 figure grid reference using GPS devices. Part of Western Valley on Godlingston Heath was not covered, but was surveyed a few days later. A map was produced of the distribution.

Results

The survey found large areas of *G. pneumonanthe*; one large area found at the southern end of Central Valley has several clumps of up to 23 plants (per 10m²). Another clump of 56 plants was found in Western Valley. Comparing old records of *G. pneumonanthe* with the new 2011 data there is one possible new site west of Hill-cut-in-two, though due to the inaccuracy of the old records they might have been recorded here before. A total of 1297 plants were found.

Book Review:

"*The Special Wild Flowers of the Isle of Purbeck*" by Edward Pratt. Published by the author 2011. 40pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-9567791-0-6. Price £5.

Following his outstanding local flora, "*The Wild Flowers of the Isle of Purbeck, Brownsea and Sandbanks*", Ted Pratt has published this delightful booklet covering 65 of Purbeck's most interesting wild flowers.

The species selected for inclusion are regarded as *special* because of the limited number of sites where they occur in Britain; using this definition has certainly resulted in a fascinating collection of plants. Over half the species are illustrated with the author's attractive photographs and field guides are recommended which will help readers to identify the rest. Locations are given where each species may easily be found and there are many perceptive identification tips and other points of interest reflecting Ted's unrivalled knowledge of Purbeck's wild flowers. One particularly useful feature is a flowering times chart which enables the reader to see at a glance which flowers are likely to be at their best at any one time.

While intended primarily for the general reader, the booklet also has much to offer the more experienced botanist, with interesting coverage of, for example, Sundews, Eyebrights and the Dorset Hybrid Heath.

The booklet is beautifully designed and produced; at a price of £5 it is ideal for both holidaymakers and Dorset residents who wish to learn about and enjoy Purbeck's botanical gems. Flora Group members will find it a useful summary of what the area has to offer the botanist - and a most welcome present for their friends.

The book is obtainable at Durlston Country Park, New & Secondhand Books (Station Road, Swanage), Portland Bird Observatory and Purbeck Information & Heritage Centre (South Street, Wareham), or direct from Ted Pratt, 7 Bay Close, Swanage, Dorset BH19 1RE for £5.92 to include postage (cheques in favour of E. A. Pratt).

Peter Cramb

Field Meeting Reports 2011.

April 16th Hibbit Woods DWT Reserve, Halstock (Map ref. ST547076). Leaders Tony Bates and Robin Walls This is a recently acquired Dorset Wildlife Trust reserve, which is under-recorded. The woodland, donated to the Wildlife Trust recently, is located in an area of Halstock known as Adam's Green and has been re-named in honour of the donor. The nature reserve is composed of two units north and south of the road, Harper's Hill Copse and South Clarkham Copse. The field to the east of Harper's Hill Copse is now pasture but is shown on the 2nd edition of the OS Maps as coniferous plantation. Both of the existing woodlands follow the boundaries of the 2nd edition of the OS map.

In Harper's Hill Copse, there are numerous Ash saplings through the wood with many Pedunculate Oaks (*Quercus robur*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and a Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) ground flora. Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) was present in open areas but it was the large amount of Wood Goldilocks (*Ranunculus auricomus*), which surprised the members, as it is present throughout the woodland. The middle and southern compartments were more species rich with a substantial wood bank separating the two compartments. There are Ash and Oak pollards in the canopy. Many of the oaks had a diameter of 1m, with the occasional tree measuring 1.5m at breast height suggesting around 150 years old. The shrub layer has Field Maple, Hazel, (*Corylus avellana*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). There were many fallen oaks with a potential for saproxylic insects and a considerable amount of leaf litter. Interesting herbs included: Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*), and the following considered by Kirby (2006) to be ancient woodland indicators for Dorset: Sweet Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*), Wood Anemone, Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*), Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*) and Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*).



Flora group members in Hibbit wood.

South Clarkham Copse has a small meadow adjacent to the road with a wood bank to the south marking the wood boundary. There are many Cowslips (*Primula veris*), Wood Anemone, Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) with Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) and an occasional Common Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*). To the east of the meadow is a substantial hedge bank with Hazel, Hawthorn and Blackthorn, running through the woodland to its southern boundary.

Once again in South Clarkham Copse, we have many oaks and Ash but also plenty of Hazel coppice with Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Dog's Mercury. Using Kirby's list of ancient woodland indicators we added Hairy Wood-rush (*Luzula pilosa*) and Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*). It was also pleasing to find a small area of Wild Daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) and Primrose (*P. vulgaris*). We did note one large Ash coppice stool measuring around 1m, suggesting the presence of woodland over 200 years old.

Later in the afternoon, we moved to Corscombe Meadows where we looked at three co-axial wet meadows, each separated by hedge banks containing both standard and coppiced oaks, Ash, Spindle, Hazel, Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*) and Blackthorn, with a ground flora including Wood Anemone, Bluebell and Dog's Mercury. The meadows were covered in Cuckoo Flower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), Bird's-foot Trefoil, Common Knapweed and Spring Sedge (*Carex caryophylla*) amongst many others.

April 18th Dancing Ledge. The July 2010 edition of the *Journal of Ecology* identified that Early Spider Orchid is self-pollinating but one rare solitary bee (*Andrena nigroaenea*) could be involved in pollination. In the afternoon, the weather was favourable so a small party set off for the chalk downs. *En-route*, we stopped to photograph a Violet oil beetle (*Meloe violaceus*) crossing the footpath from the car park in Langton Matravers.

Arriving at The National Trust's Dancing Ledge property, we selected an area of calcareous grassland dominated by Tor-grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*) where the Early Spider Orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*) was in good flower. Michael Edwards collected a number of solitary bee specimens. A male he took on the orchid, keyed out as *A. nitida*. It compared very well with one in his reference collection checked for him by David Baldock. The majority of the females he saw were also *A. nitida*. The only other sizeable females he saw were *A. cineraria* and *A. haemorrhoea*.

Thursday 28th April Stonebarrow (NT Golden Cap estate): The purpose of the day was to monitor Green-winged Orchid (*Anacamptis morio*).

The party was taken to a field south of Westhay Farm where Green-winged Orchid are found and we were pleased to report an increase in the population, from 2010 adjacent to the footpath. The main populations are in the fields south-west of Monument Coppice and these were easily seen from the footpath; we did not undertake a detailed survey but rather concentrated on other potential pasture fields adjacent to the coast. These produced negative results suggesting that here the hay meadows are the most suitable places for this species.

Saturday May 14th, Ashmore Wood and Stubhampton Bottom. Leader Peter Hatherley. Report John Newbould.

Whilst undertaking a preliminary survey on 7th May, PH reported that he had seen three Hares (a UK National BAP species) to the east of Earl's Hill. Our route took us from the north west of the hamlet of Stubhampton to Hanging Coppice, which is the southern area of one of the largest woodland areas in Dorset. This is an area of abundant Hazel coppice, occasional Ash and Pedunculate Oak with some Field Maple. Bluebells are infrequent and Lesser Celandine are plentiful but also we found five spikes of Greater Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*. This small area of woodland had five Dorset woodland indicator species: viz; Columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*), Wood Anemone, Yellow Archangel, Wood Meadow-grass *Poa nemoralis* and Sanicle.

We then turned to walk along the Tarrant Gunville/Ashmore parish boundary. Ashmore Wood is mainly coniferous plantation, but the margins were left as deciduous woodland. Ten ancient Field Maples mark the parish boundary. In the shrub layer we also found younger Field Maple, Hazel coppice, Spindle, Holly, and Wayfaring-tree (*Viburnum lanata*). Pedunculate Oak and Ash also form standard trees, whilst in Upper Broadridge Coppice, there is Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Again this deciduous margin contains six Dorset ancient woodland Indicator plants viz. Columbine, Wood Sedge, Wood Spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), Sweet Woodruff, Yellow Archangel and Wood Speedwell. Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and Dog's Mercury are scattered along the edge; Crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*) was present. Bowen (2000) locates Crosswort mainly in the Purbecks in Dorset; it is occasional elsewhere. Near the hilltop we turned northwards walking through Broadridge Coppice, where two ancient woodland indicator species were noted viz. Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*) and Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*). Wet areas had Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*).

Leaving the woodland behind, we walked to Gatehouse Row where to the south-east is a magnificent ancient hedge bank with a 1m diameter Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*) coppice, an ancient Holly, Ash and a large Field Maple together with a number of Pedunculate Oaks. On the bank, Wood Melick, Pignut, Sanicle, Yellow Archangel, Wood Violet (*Vila riviniana*) and Dog's Mercury give a hint of past woodland.

Returning via Stoney Bottom to Stubhampton Bottom, there is a steep south-west facing calcareous slope from Ball Coppice to the track, (ST903151), scrubby but with herbs such as Rock-rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*), Marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*), Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*) and Burnet Saxifrage (*Sanguisorba minor*.) Dingy Skipper butterflies and Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*) were also noted in this area.

Saturday May 21st Corfe Common. Leader Ted Pratt. A group of about 15 recorders met at West Street car park in Corfe to look at known sites for Vipersgrass, (*Scorzonera humilis*), on Corfe Common and attempt to find new sites. Those attending first had a chance to see the plant and get the look of it lodged in their brain by visiting the site where it was found by John Wright in 2010. This was in an area of the common quite distant from the location where it has been known for years. The group gathered round the plant, which was quite large, with a good number of flowering heads. Once we felt we had the gis in our heads Ted divided us up into smaller search groups and sent off us to search the common valley by valley. Unfortunately, although we saw the original plant in its enclosure and looked all around that area, as well as elsewhere, no further new plants were found. Hopes were occasionally raised by patches of *Plantago lanceolata*, Ribwort plantain, which has similar long narrow leaves but closer examination always led to disappointment. We hope that botanists will find new sites in years to come but for the moment 2 locations seems to be the total. The meeting closed at about 2.30 with general agreement that the lack of new sites for *Scorzonera* was largely compensated by good company and the pleasure of visiting such a rich site.

Interestingly, a return visit a few days later found all the flower heads eaten from the plant, making it far less easy to spot. It remains possible that more sites exist but are missed due to the plants being reduced by browsing.

Thursday June 9th Chetterwood. Leader Robin Walls. This meeting was planned as a search for Bastard Balm (*Melittis melissophyllum*) in its remaining known Dorset site. The wood is private and members were asked to respect access and follow marked bridleways and footpaths. For a third time this season, we visited coniferous plantation, where wide rides allowed deciduous woodland ground flora plants to survive where the light is adequate.

The survey went well with just two flowering spikes of Bastard Balm seen hidden in Bracken after walking some quarter of a mile. A little later we found an area where there were 25 flowering plants on each side of the ride in shorter more open grassland and then around 100 spikes in a more open area to the south-west. In addition, we recorded a number of plants of Columbine and in an area of Hazel coppice Wild Liquorice (*Astragalus glycyphyllos*). Bowen (2000) describes this species as plant of calcareous soils being on the western end of its range in Dorset and gives only one post 1990 record. To add to our collection of unusual species, JAN recorded the gall *Contarinia scrophulariae* on Figwort (*Scrophularia nodosa*). This species is reported in the Plant Gall Report within the *Dorset Proceedings*. (Newbould 2012 in press).



Melittis melissophyllum in flower

Showing the diverse soils of the woodland, we found Parsley Piert (*Aphanes arvensis* s.l.), and Dwarf Gorse (*Ulex minor*). typical of sandy soils in addition to most of the Dorset ancient woodland indicator plants mention earlier. We even saw Round-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia spuria*) on a field margin adjacent to the woodland edge.

9th July 2011 Arne Moors

A pleasant day began with a walk along the roads and sightings of Dorset Heath (*Erica ciliaris*)- the County Flower, Dorset Hybrid Heath (*Erica x watsonii*), Zigzag Clover (*Trifolium medium*) and Des Etang's St. John's Wort (*Hypericum x desetangii*) among other plants. Then we turned along the track into The Moors RSPB reserve. The first of several plants of Cyperus Sedge (*Carex pseudocyperus*) appeared in the ditch. Going through gates into private farmland (with permission) a west-east ditch yielded many more species – Tubular Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*) and Unbranched Bur-reed (*Sparganium emersum*) among them. After a while we turned south and entered a small wood to see Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris palustris*) and, on the wood edge, we got close to Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*). Other sedges awaited us in the wet field, including Greater Tussock Sedge (*Carex paniculata*), Brown Sedge (*C. disticha*) and Long-stalked Yellow Sedge (*C. lepidiocarpa*). Another ditch had Least Bur-reed (*Sparganium natans*) just coming into flower. After that we retraced our steps and had our lunch at our original rendez-vous. After lunch almost all came on the optional extension to see Whorled Caraway (*Carum verticillatum*) and the greatest rarity, Vipers grass (*Scorzonera humilis*) in its best and, at one time, only British site.

6th August 2011 Leader and report Peter Cramb

Tamarisk Farm

Despite a poor weather forecast, 20 members met at the farm, where the farmers, Adam and Ellen Simon, had kindly allocated us a field for parking. After a brief introduction by the leader, who explained that he and Margaret had surveyed the farm in 2009 as part of the Dorset Arable Plant Project, Adam described how the farm is managed organically with frequent cultivation being used for weed control.

Under brightening skies we spent the morning touring several of the arable fields, familiarising ourselves with the arable plants, while Adam provided helpful comments on crop management. A broad bean crop was highly productive for interesting arable plants including Dwarf Spurge (*Euphorbia exigua*), Round-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia spuria*), Sharp-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia elatine*) and vast numbers of Stinking Chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*), while on the edge of the field Jonathan Cox pointed out Pepper-saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*). In the next field we saw the delicately attractive Corn Parsley (*Petroselinum segetum*) surviving in barley stubble and, soon afterwards, Knotted Hedge-parsley (*Torilis nodosa*), Sea Clover (*Trifolium squamosum*) and Yellow Vetchling (*Lathyrus aphaca*) in a field of wheat. Finally, in a similar field, we found Tamarisk's speciality, Nit-grass (*Gastridium ventricosum*); the presence of both young and mature plants enabled members to get a feel of how the grass looks at different stages of development.

We then returned to our starting point past an area of waste ground, where John Winterbottom found Greater Burdock (*Arctium lappa*). On reaching the cars about half the party departed leaving the remainder to have lunch in Ellen's mother's delightful garden, where Adam kindly provided an urn of tea and we had the opportunity to purchase some of the farm's organic produce. Over lunch Adam showed us a sample of Small-flowered Catchfly (*Silene gallica*), which used to grow in good numbers in an arable field belonging to Ellen's brother, now sown with grass and used to graze ponies; we discussed several ideas on how the population of this endangered species could be salvaged.

After lunch the remaining members divided into two groups - one led by Robin and the other by Peter - to survey a wheat field. Both groups found a good number of arable plants, including Slender Tare (*Vicia parviflora*), but the undisputed winners were Robin's group with a find of Nit-grass in a previously unrecorded location! Under a darkening sky we hurried back to the cars and the meeting dispersed shortly after 4pm. Many thanks to Adam and Ellen for enabling us to have such an interesting and rewarding day.

DORSET WILD FLOWER WEEK 2011

Nine people went on the walk on **Ballard Down** on Saturday 28th May, led by David Leadbetter. It proved to be a cloudy and breezy morning, though fortunately dry. Ballard is a rich site for chalk flora, butterflies and ancient history. The walk was extended by half an hour in order to see Early Gentian (*Gentianella anglica*); other highlights included Common Gromwell (*Lithospermum officinale*), Hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) and Bladder Campion (*Silene vulgaris*).

There was an all-day Bioblitz at **Corfe Mullen** the same day organised by Dorset Wildlife Trust and Jane Adams from Nature Watch Corfe Mullen. Hundreds of species of flora were recorded in several different locations around the village, including meadows alongside the river Stour, the church meadow, recreation ground, Cogdean Elms local nature reserve and a large wildlife garden. Expert flora knowledge from John Wright, Susanne Masters, Felicity Woodhead and Robin Walls was invaluable, as was the help from all the enthusiastic recorders on the day

Sunday 29th – Tree identification at **Steamer Point** – six people. The walks went ahead in reasonable, if cloudy, weather conditions. A small group: so those that came were able to get great deal out of the walk. The leader, Phil Budd, used his own identification key, and looked at about 20 species to identify them as well as giving information on the folklore and uses of them. Evergreens such as Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) and Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) were identified, as well as a variety of wild and planted deciduous trees and shrubs. There were some trickier species such as Swedish Whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*), as well as more familiar species such as Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*).

In the afternoon Ted Pratt led a walk on the **Durlston Country Park** programme, in which 22 took part. Most of this walk was through the meadows, which were just coming into their best, with a pageant of colour provided by species such as Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*) and Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*). Pale Flax (*Linum bienne*) and Corky-fruited Water-dropwort were among the many other species in flower. At one point the surrounds of a small quarry provided a different, downland, habitat – for species like Early Gentian (*Gentianella anglica*) and Stars-in-grass (*Thesium humifusum*). Later in the walk some good patches of Sainfoin (*Onobrychis viciifolia*) were enjoyed.

On Monday 30th eight people went on a walk with Ted on the south-west part of **Stoborough Heath**, an RSPB reserve, in fairly poor weather. The main purpose was to see Pale Dog Violet (*Viola lactea*), but the dry weather meant that flowering was over and only leaves were seen, together with leaves which seemed to be those of the hybrid between pale Dog Violet and Common Dog Violet (*Viola riviniana*). But there were plenty of other species on view by the path, such as Leer's Sedge (*Carex divulsa ssp leersii*), Hairy Buttercup (*Ranunculus sardous*), Borrer's Scaly Male Fern (*Dryopteris borreieri*) and the grass Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*).

Winfrith Heath, Dorset Wildlife Trust Reserve, on Tuesday 31st. A party of 17, led by John Wright, set off on a sunny day to look at the flora of Winfrith Heath, the Tadnoll Brook and associated ditches. On the heath the more notable species included Dodder (*Cuscuta epithymum*), male and female plants of Marsh Valerian (*Valeriana dioica*), Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*) and several species of sedges. We were also treated to views of some early

emerging Silver-studded Blue Butterflies (*Plebejus argus*) and a Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) before examining the bankside flora of the Tadnoll and finding Tufted forget-me-not (*Myosotis laxa*) in one of the ditches.

In the sunny afternoon Bryan Edwards led a walk near **Portland Bill**. 7 people enjoyed a triangular amble and the benefit of Bryan's knowledge of the local flora. Some areas near the lighthouse had been fenced off and were showing the benefits of that.

On Wednesday morning, 1st June, Angela Peters led 14 people for a short walk over the botanically rich **Corfe Common**. We were wowed by plenty of Heath Spotted (*Dactylorhiza maculata*) and Southern Marsh Orchids (*D. praetermissa*), walked over patches of beautifully scented Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*), and looked at the interesting Adder's Tongue fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*). Other flowers seen on the Common included Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*), Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Betony (*Stachys officinalis*) and Eyebrights (*Euphrasia* spp.). Flea Sedge (*Carex pulicaris*) and Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*) were seen in wetter areas.

Powerstock Common, Dorset Wildlife Trust Reserve. A walk in the afternoon had been arranged as part of the Kingcombe Centre programme of Wednesday walks, and was led by Jim White. It was blessed with a very warm and sunny afternoon and this may have partly accounted for the good attendance – 19 adults and 6 children, who enjoyed the open flower-rich grasslands – a Powerstock speciality. Acid/neutral grassland gems like Lousewort, Bitter Vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*), Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*), and sedges including Flea Sedge (*Carex pulicaris*) and Tawny Sedge (*Carex hostiana*) were in fine form, with a few plants of Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*) in one of its few Dorset localities. Plants later to flower such as Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) were also spotted, this species doubtless the attraction for the several beautiful Marsh Fritillary butterflies on the wing. Countless Heath Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza maculata*) spangled the turf, locally replaced along the track banks, where soils were more base-rich, by Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). Pride of place probably went to Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) in full flower.

About 20 arrived for the other afternoon walk, led by Laurence Taylor, at **Northbrook Copse**, a small isolated wood in Swanage, owned and managed by the Town Council. The walk started by giving some history and details of management of the copse. We looked at the fine Turkey Oaks (*Quercus cerris*) and other large perimeter trees. In flower were many Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) - this year well over 200 had been counted. Newly cleared areas had already been colonised by Wild Iris (*Iris foetidissima*). Several large trees have had to be felled in the past year and wood from these have been made into benches - gratefully used by the group. Several people wished for a species list which the leader was glad to hand out. Hopefully by members of the public being made aware of this small but interesting wood it will be saved from development.

On the morning of Thursday 2nd – **Stanpit Marsh**, led by Phil Budd – 14 including two children. The walks went ahead in reasonable, if cloudy, weather conditions. They saw some of the specialities, including Bulbous Foxtail (*Alopecurus bulbosus*), which was compared with the Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*). We saw Brookweed (*Samolus valerandi*) and both Celery-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus sceleratus*) and Thread-leaved Water

Crowfoot (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*) in and around pools on the grazed areas of the marsh. On Crouch Hill several species of clover and trefoil (*Trifolium species*) were identified. They then looked at taller herbs such as Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), Black Horehound (*Ballota nigra*) and Common Mallow (*Malva sylvestris*) along the edge of the recreation ground on way back to the car park. There was some discussion of the folklore and uses for food and medicine attached to the flowers that we saw.

Old Harry and Ballard Down (National Trust) on Thursday 2nd morning and afternoon. Led by Mike Downing. Attendance 19. A glorious June day with marvellous views. 102 plant species and 6 galls were recorded. An early Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) was found near Old Harry and some bedraggled diminutive Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactyrorhiza fuchsii*) on the way down from Ballard Down. Nottingham Catchfly (*Silene nutans*) was still out on the way up to Ballard Down – many in the group had not seen this plant before. Also the occasional Common Broomrape (*Orobanche minor*) was seen in Old Nick's Ground.

The event at **Sutton Poyntz** on Friday 3rd coordinated by Robin Walls, differed from the other walks during the week in that it was a whole day and encompassed a wider range of activities. We are indebted to Wessex Water for the use of their premises and to John Willows for opening the fascinating waterworks museum and operating the waterwheel in the Jordan River to provide the background to the day.

The activities started with Dave Emery of the Sutton Poyntz Biodiversity Group opening his moth trap and discussing the overnight catch. John Wright organised a stream dipping session to investigate the aquatic invertebrates to the delight of the children (and adults). A walk through Holme Close and up, around the old reservoir was led by Robin Walls and Sarah Harbidge. The focus was on the wildflowers and archaeology, although with the expertise in the participants many other aspects of natural history were covered. The highlights were the glorious flowers of the Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*) and the unrivalled view of Weymouth and its hinterland from the top of the hill with Sarah's commentary on the archaeological and landscape features.

In the exhibition room there were displays by Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset County Boundary Group (with a talk on the boundaries and landscape history by Katherine Barker), The Ridgeway Partnership and the local natural history put together by John Newbould. If the weather had been poor more time would have been spent discussing the exhibits, but who can resist getting outside on a good day.

Saturday 4th. Some of the **Corfe Charity Meadows**, managed by The National Trust, are an example of the only 3% of lowland hay meadows which have survived since the Second World War. Ted Pratt led the walk for 23 people there. It began by crossing some dry fields which are being allowed to revert to heathland, but when the meadows were entered the number of species considerably increased. There were nice stands of Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Ragged Robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*) was scattered here and there, Corky-fruited Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*) was abundant, and there was plenty more colour. A diversion to the bank of the Corfe River stream allowed the leader to point out the flaking, cinnamon-coloured bark of Almond Willow (*Salix triandra*). Later, by the ruins of an old cottage the leaves of a hybrid Globe-thistle (*Echinops x pellenzianus*) were seen – a garden plant that has persisted there for 70 years!

In the afternoon Samantha Dallimore of the Dorset Wildlife Trust led a walk for ten people on their **Lorton Meadows** Reserve. It was attended by people with a variety of backgrounds. They had a lovely wander around the reserve, spotting all the usual neutral to slightly calcareous grassland species, and listening to a chorus of grasshoppers and crickets. Although they were disappointed to only find a few Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*), where previously there have been many, they did find a single Southern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) in a wet flush - a first for Lorton.

The walk on **Hengistbury Head** on Sunday 5th, led by Jon Crewe, took place in warm sunny weather with about 20 participants. It was preceded by the Bournemouth Borough Council Rangers showing the contents of their moth trap; the main floral focus thereafter was to find the food plants of the moths on the nature reserve. The route crossed several of the Head's habitats, including neutral grassland, dry heath and saltmarsh, and a number of interesting plants were seen.

Heath Lobelia Work party

Members who have been involved since 2007 will remember the suggestion after the introductory meeting in the Drax Hall in Bere Regis that the group should try to carry out some conservation work at the Dorset site for *Lobelia urens*, the Heath Lobelia. This is a plant with only 11 locations since 2000 on the BSBI's map for the species; the site where we hoped to work has been known since the late 1980's. It appeared after a local farmer, Mike Chandler, cleared a new track through woodland. Tony Bates was asked to identify the plant, which had sprung up in huge numbers. Tony and Mike then began a programme of voluntary conservation and study which continued for some years until Mike's retirement from farming.



Heath Lobelia flowering despite overgrown conditions

When the Dorset Flora Group got underway Tony Bates was involved and several members discussed the need for conservation work at the site. A visit there (with landowner permission) found an overgrown site with reduced numbers of Heath lobelia; there were enough plants to encourage a belief that the species was not about to be lost but clearly there was a need for conservation work. The site is private and it was necessary to seek permission from the landowner, which proved to be a difficult task! However, after a number of failed attempts, Jon Crewe and Tony Bates managed to make contact at the Dorset show and get the desired permission. We have been asked to keep the location secret in order to maintain the privacy of the site.

On 20th January 2012 we assembled a group of volunteers to carry out the necessary maintenance; although we were willing to give it our best shot it is probably fair to say that the addition of Steve Masters and Steve Oliver from Dorset Wildlife Trust was a major contribution to the success of the venture. The two Steves went through the scrub with brush-cutters while Jon Crewe and Laurence Taylor struggled with a rather recalcitrant rotavator. Robin Walls, Ted Pratt and Tony Bates helped clear up, cut back overgrowing trees and scarify the ground to expose the dormant seed bed. The entire site was cleared back to the metal posts which marked the extent of the 1980's population. We have permission for small numbers to return to monitor the success of our work later in the year and will update members on the project at the AGM.

Dorset vice-county recorder's notes

Dorset Rare Plant Register

Over the winter I have been tidying up the master register, updating the sites where species have been refound and adding the new sites. This has reduced the length of the search list. It has been further reduced by a small amount because I have taken off a few sites where it is all but certain the plants have been lost. Reasons vary from a loss of appropriate habitat on the site to many searches that have failed.

On the other hand, the search list is growing because I am adding some older and dubious records that should be confirmed or removed as current. By adding all the RPR records pre-2000 it increases the list of 782 records by 2734. This is too scary to release, so I am in the process of editing.

For the first time I have put in some taxa for which there are no records in Dorset. This is not as daft as it sounds. The search list is the most convenient place to advertise species that could be in Dorset but have not been noticed. See the note 'Really Rare Plants' below for an example of the species I have added. The potential 'new' species will be obvious because they do not have a site and I have added a note indicating why they are there.

Jon Crewe heard from a man in a pub that he had seen the musk orchid at Batcombe in the last few years. It seems my announcement of its demise in Dorset after our search in 2010 was 'greatly exaggerated'. With all due respect to the sort of people who go to pubs, I think we need to corroborate this. So the hunt is back on.

Recording Strategy 2012 onwards

To meet the BSBI's aspirations we have to ensure we have recent data for all tetrads by 2020. In the Dorset Heath last year I set out in broad terms my proposals for achieving this and introduced some more details at the AGM in December. The essence of the plan is to survey a sufficient sample of squares to update our records. I will need help with this and would like to have every hectad in the vice-county 'adopted' by one of our members.

Neither DERC nor I wish to collect any more records at the tetrad level or lesser accuracy, so the largest unit acceptable for common species is the monad, or 1km grid square. By thoroughly recording one monad in every tetrad in under-recorded areas we will achieve a 25% sample and avoid omitting any large tracts of the county. In practice some additional records will be gathered from elsewhere and the more popular areas are visited frequently. Alison Stewart has prepared maps of the diversity of each square from the DERC database to find which areas are under-recorded.

Not all squares can be expected to have the same diversity due to the differences in habitat, so deciding which are under-recorded is not a simple matter. I am hoping to improve the objectivity of the process by finding a formula that can provide an estimate of the number of records to be expected in a grid square of a given size. Then we can calculate a completeness index to direct effort and monitor progress. A prediction can probably be made from an inventory of the geology, weather, land use and human population of the square, but that requires a larger database and better statistics than I have available. I am wondering whether a quick and dirty method based on neighbouring squares or rate of increase in records might yield a result. As a cautionary tale, in the distant past when I was young, dinosaurs roamed Dorset etc. etc. and the PC was invented, what we now know as DOS was QDOS, the initials of quick and dirty operating system, because it had to be cobbled together in a hurry so that Microsoft could meet their marketing commitment. We are, of course, still living with the consequences.

Carolyn Steele and I are trying to set up a workshop to discuss these points and develop smarter recording. Whilst anyone interested in the technical aspects of recording will be welcome I would particularly like to gather together all those of you who have agreed to take on a hectad and others whom I've not got around to asking. An initial list of what each hectad coordinator can be supplied with is:

- post 2000 data for hectad
- maps, such as the known diversity of each monad
- record collecting, keeping and entering instructions.

Most species will only need recording to the 1km (monad) level. The more interesting species (see next section) should be recorded to 100m accuracy at least. We should aim to make sure one monad in every tetrad has been recorded as fully as possible between 2000 and 2019. For those tetrads that appear under-recorded that involves:

- several visits at different times of year and by different recorders.
- making a record of the routes taken and time spent.
- giving each species a DAFOR rating for the whole square (you might change this with improved knowledge)
- plotting totals against visit number to track the approach to completion.

Species worthy of better study

The task of recording all species at a very fine scale does not appear to be very popular in Dorset. It is not feasible on a reasonable timescale and unlikely to add much to our knowledge commensurate with the effort. Is anyone in any doubt that daisies, annual meadow grass and ribwort plantain will be found in every square where there is suitable habitat and that their habitats are widespread and common? Contrariwise, we are interested in exactly where the early spider orchids (*Ophrys sphegodes*), the bog orchids (*Hammarbya paludosa*) and marsh gentians (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) grow, to mention a few we have invested time

and effort into surveying recently. In between there is the full spectrum of species with a range of reasons for wanting to know where they are and how their populations are faring. Where to we draw the line between the common species and those where collecting more precise information is worthwhile?

I propose to target species that fall into one of the following categories, but this will be subject to discussion:

- rare / scarce nationally or in the county (RPR species)
- declining populations or otherwise threatened
- indicators or potential surrogates for rare species (see below)
- Data Deficient taxa (see below, Really Rare Plants)
- Alien species (not worthy, but we do need to keep track of them)
- Other exceptional taxa.

We already have a list of notable species for Dorset. This was devised in the early days of the SNCI project to help us be more objective in choosing sites with habitats worth saving. As well as the scarce species on the list there are more common ones that are strongly associated with good quality vegetation but probably not of great interest in their own right. Latterly the BSBI has used the term 'axiophyte' for species that indicate good habitat, but my proposals for the target species is wider than this and it would be nice to have a snappy term for them instead of the heterogeneous list. I have two classics based suggest so far:

- Stochophytes, target plants
- Chiophytes, plants with the X factor.

I would welcome comments or better suggestions before fixing on a term. We are investigating the possibility of marking these species in some way on Living Record and on recording cards.

Kevin Walker (BSBI Head of R & D) pointed out in something I read recently but can't remember exactly where, that predicting the fate of our rare species as the climate changes is more difficult than it is for the common species simply because we have much less information to go on. This is unfortunate because it is more important to predict the destiny of the rare species. By definition, there are far fewer data points and it is rarely known with any certainty whether the distribution pattern is dominated by edaphic / climatic variables or dispersion barriers created by man. His idea is that if we can link each rare species to a few more common ones, we have a surrogate which we can use in models of climate change and reduce the uncertainty.

Of course it is not quite as simple as listing the associated species or the appropriate NVCs. I think it was Tim Rich who, years ago, showed me a set of European distribution maps of tree species at various times since the last Ice Age, from which it is clear that associations changed as the climate warmed. I don't remember the detail, but the moral is that NVC communities are not eternal; we must expect changes in phytosociological groupings. Before the idea of using surrogates can be applied there is a lot of work to be done teasing out the causes of the associations we see now. We all have experience of the problem without knowing. Many rare plants do well in cultivation (*Carex depauperata* seeds itself readily around the gardens of sedge maniacs but won't do so in the wild despite the same climatic conditions). Brown beaked sedge (*Rhynchospora fusca*) is only found on bare, seasonally wet, peaty substrate in Dorset and the Hampshire Basin, but in Scotland it grows over *Sphagnum* amongst the mire vegetation; there are hardly any sites in the rest of England and

S.Scotland despite the presence of both habitats and the full range of climatic variables. We have to admit, we just do not know the parameters to predict plant distribution in most cases. Perhaps we can contribute to elucidating some of these relationships by collecting autecological data for some of our rare species.

Threatened Plant Project (TPP)

I am in the process of collating last year's efforts. The list of species for this year is:

- *Alchemilla wichurae*
- *Anacamptis morio* (*Orchis morio*)
- *Bupleurum tenuissimum*
- *Fumaria parviflora*
- *Hypochaeris glabra*
- *Orchis anthropophora* (*Aceras anthropophorum*)
- *Persicaria minor*
- *Ranunculus arvensis*
- *Tephrosia integrifolia* subsp. *integrifolia*
- *Vicia parviflora*

Most of these are in Dorset (only the first is certainly not) and for those that aren't I am sure the recorders of the counties where these species are to be found will welcome help if you are holidaying in their areas.

Really Rare Plants

In a talk Fred Rumsey gave at the BSBI's annual exhibition meeting was a comment that the IUCN threat status (the more grown up version of a red data list) had not been decided for a short list of 39 species in Britain because there is not enough information to form an opinion, the so-called data deficient (DD) category. There appear to be three main reasons for this deficiency:

- there is simply no data because nobody has been sufficiently interested to study the plant.
- the taxonomic status is not well enough known for plants to be identified reliably, or even recognised as a problem by most botanists.
- a species has been split into separate species or subspecies, only one of which is rare and might be declining.

A subset of these reasons is that it has only recently been generally recognised that we have an extra species because it had been lumped together with a much more common one. Two examples of this from the sedge world are the recognition of northern deer-grass (*Trichophorum cespitosum*) and a freshwater form of sea club-rush (*Bolboschoenus laticarpus*). The latter of these is not on the IUCN list although the better known species (*Bolboschoenus maritimus*) is categorised as 'of least concern' (LC). In the case of the former example, a nomenclatural confusion has not helped.

Fred sent me the list of British DD species from which I have extracted the ones that could, just possibly, be in Dorset. This is a very long shot and will require much more critical examination of specimens than usual. You will have to do some detailed research to get familiar with the plant and be able to distinguish it from almost identical species; but for those fed up with looking for the same old plants it is a challenge with a potential of huge

rewards. To comply with the trade descriptions legislation I had better admit that these are in terms of street cred. rather than financial and that the probability of success is very low. Whether or not the probability is better than a lottery win, you are guaranteed a confidence boost. You will learn a lot and become much more self-assured as a botanist irrespective of the outcome.

There are 32 species on the Dorset list. I have tended to include rather than exclude because without proper knowledge it is not possible to be certain. I will be pleased to send it to anyone thinking of the gamble. I have added the species to the search list and may put it on the website with some comments.

Lastly, congratulations to Ted Pratt: 2011 *Hieracium grandidens* near Milton Abbas has been confirmed by the referee and is a First County Record. There is a good roadside colony.

Living Record

Robin's vice-county recorder notes give plenty of ways in which botanists can hone their botanical skills on difficult species. But for those of you who are not so confident, still learning, or a bit rusty on your plant identification, the plans to assist with the BSBI tetrad atlas for 2020 could provide the first challenge. For this we will need records of common species as well as the more exceptional, and regular recording is the best way to improve.

At the DFG AGM I presented Living Record as a way to keep your own botanical data and provide data to DERC. It is an online system that allows you to enter records after each field trip. The county recorder (Robin for plants) can review the records and contact you if there are any queries. If we can get a lot of the DFG involved in recording in this way it will be easier to monitor recording across Dorset during each field season, but we will be producing annual maps including data from all sources.

Living Record can be found on the DERC website (www.derc.org.uk). You will need to register and you will then be emailed a user name and password. You can join the Dorset Flora Group and start adding data. With Living Record you will also be able to record other subjects like dragonflies and butterflies. There are plenty of guidance notes (look for the (?) sign) but do contact me if you have any queries.

Carolyn Steele (derc@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

DFG Events Programme 2012

Saturday 21 st April	10.30am	Thorncombe Wood
Thursday 26 th April	9.30am	Stonebarrow (NT Golden Cap)
Saturday 12 th May	10.30am	Pribdean and Garston Woods
Thursday 24 th May	10.30am	Hod Hill (NT)
Thursday 31 st May	10.30am	Winfrith Heath DWT Reserve
Saturday 30 th June	10.30am	Ferrybridge and Chesil
Saturday 14 th July	10.30am – 3pm	Middlebere
Saturday 28 th July	10.30am	Deadmoor Common
Saturday 25 th August	10.30am	Plants of Littlesea

Dorset Wildflower Week

Saturday 9 th June	10.30am 2.30pm	Stanpit Marsh Mudeford Woods
Sunday 10 th June	10.30am 2.30pm	Ringmoor and Turnworth Durlston Country Park
Monday 11 th June	10.30am 2.30pm	Winfrith Heath DWT Reserve Hilton and Milton Abbas Churchyards
Tuesday 12 th June	10.30am 2.30pm	Badbury Rings Corfe Charity/NT Meadows
Wednesday 13 th June	10.30am	Westhay Farm
Thursday 14 th June	10.30am 2.00pm	Corfe Common Burton Bradstock and Cogden Beach
Friday 15 th June	10.30am 2.30pm	Wild flowers of Ferrybridge & Chesil Coastal wildflowers of Kimmeridge Bay
Saturday 16 th June	10.30am	Hartland Moor
Sunday 17 th June	10.30am	Fontmell Down

Full details of these events are available in the DFG newsletter and on the DERC website www.derc.org.uk under the Local Groups section.