

# Cambridgeshire Flora Group

## NEWSLETTER 2012

### Progress with the Flora

Work on the new Flora has progressed well over the last year and at least half of the individual species accounts are now prepared. Alan is particularly grateful to all those that have helped with enquiries, read the accounts or generally assisted in taking this project forward, but there is a lot more still to do!

### Threatened Plant Project

In 2011 our success rate was far lower than in the last two years, at a measly 13%. *Baldellia ranunculoides* was re-found at one of its three target sites, the ditches at the two negative sites being heavily vegetated and shaded (ie. at the wrong part of the slubbing cycle). *Juncus compressus* was re-found at two of its five target sites (though it remains widespread on the Ouse Washes). *Silene conica* was not re-found at its single target site. *Torilis arvensis* was not re-found at any of the four target sites, though one of the original records is now known to be an error for *T.japonica*.

Several surveyors supplemented the target sites supplied by BSBI with some sites of their own, naturally favouring those sites where success was likely. So *Baldellia* was recorded at Bassenhally Pit; *J.compressus* was recorded at Bassenhally Pit, Grange Farm Knapwell and Wicken Fen. *Silene conica* was not re-found at its former site in a sandpit near Isleham Plantation but a new site came to light in allotment gardens in Fordham.

Our list of target species for the final year of the project comprises: *Orchis anthropophora*, *Anacamptis morio*, *Bupleurum tenuissimum*, *Fumaria parviflora*, *Persicaria minor*, *Ranunculus arvensis*, *Tephrosieris integrifolia* subsp. *integrifolia*, *Vicia parviflora*. The re-visit sites offer a better chance of a higher success rate.

### Summary of excursions in 2011

#### Great Covens Wood & Park Wood - April

We recorded a typical Boulder Clay woodland flora in both woods with a good show of *Geum rivale* in Great Covens Wood but we were perhaps too early to see the hybrid with *G.urbanum*. *Veronica montana* was encountered frequently along the rides but we were more surprised by the occasional patches of *V.filiformis*. A brief detour at the eastern end of the wood allowed us to admire David Barden's recently (re)found site for *Adoxa* along a footpath hedgerow. Park Wood had some good if localised shows of *Paris quadrifolia* and *Allium ursinum* but we omitted to look for the stand of *Prunus avium* noted in NCC survey reports (Is Wild Cherry invariably a planted species in Cambs or is it native in some woods?). As we have come to expect in recent visits to ancient woodlands *Dryopteris affinis* turned up in Great Covens Wood, though generally it was not a ferny wood.

#### Soham - June

We spent most of the day close about the town with a brief wander across part of Qua Fen, recording comprehensively as we went. A civic garden in a very new housing development surprised us by providing *Rumex acetosella* subsp. *acetosella* var. *tenuifolius* more usually seen in our Breck area or in the Cambridge Science Park, here patently introduced with soil/mulch around the base of shrub plantings. An unusual looking *Equisetum* along a ditchside in allotment gardens caused some discussion as to whether it was an *arvense* x *fluviatile* or even a *telmateia* hybrid but was eventually determined as just *arvense*. *Eryngium planum* turned up naturalised in a regularly mown lawn, a habitat in which it is increasingly found. A stand of *Petasites hybridus* along former railway sidings allowed us to update Graham Easy's 1976 record, not a common plant in the fens.

### **Great & Little Chishill - July**

The batologists in our group had a rewarding visit to Little Chishill Wood, refinding species such as *Rubus insectifolius* and adding *R. cissburiensis*, in what was generally a rather nettley and disturbed wood. Despite recent sightings reported by both owners of these woods we failed to find any *Melampyrum cristatum* about their boundaries nor anywhere else during our wanderings. To compensate for this we finished the day admiring the very dense and extensive population of this species along road verges near High Wood, Duddenhoe End just a short distance away into Essex proper.

### **Wicken Fen - July**

Our most significant achievement was to refind and confirm Alan Silverside's 1995 record for *Salix myrsinifolia* which we found as a single bush in the carr along the north side of Wicken Lode. This was accompanied by a bush of apparent *S. cinerea* x *myrsinifolia*, new for the site. Also apparently new to Wicken records was a plant of *Athyrium filix-femina*, in carr along the northern fringe of the Fen. Elsewhere we tested our identification skills on a variety of sedges and spike-rushes and were delighted to find a large colony of *Carex lasiocarpa* near the old windmill, although it was purely vegetative with no sign of flowers or fruit. We failed to refind any *Salix cinerea* x *repens*, but did locate *Crataegus* x *media* and *X Schedolium loliaceum*, last reported on the Fen in 1952 and 1931 respectively.

### **Doddington - August**

Despite the fact that some boundaries of the former Doddington Wood survive as ditches only the southern boundary retained anything that could be termed hedgerow or trees. In the plantings on the southern side of this ditch a couple of patches of *Stellaria holostea* were still to be found but there was nothing else to say that an ancient wood had been here until the middle of the 20th century. The pond in Crossway Wood on the main road had its usual abundance of *Oenanthe aquatica*, (also found in a pond in the pocket park) and in the scrub behind we found *Lonicera xylosteum*, the fourth record for the vice-county. In the corner of an arable field just on the northern side of the village a dumped or escaped garden geranium was determined by Alan as *G. asphodeloides*, a first record for the vice-county.

### **Soham Mere - September**

We perambulated a large part of the circumference of the site of the old Soham Mere without it must be said any great discoveries, save a good colony of the aquatic liverwort *Riccia fluitans* in a drain in what would have been the bed of the old mere. There was a decidedly odd comfrey along Mill Drove, which appeared to be a pink-flushed, white-flowered *Symphytum* x *uplandicum* (it was completely sterile). The hedges in this drove also had both native *Crataegus* species and their hybrid, together with *Malus sylvestris*, a combination becoming quite familiar in hedges on some of the fenland 'islands', where one presumes they must have been planted. A trackway leading from this Drove over to Wicken surprised us with a large population of *Rosa arvensis* and one adjacent rough field had bird-sown *Cornus sanguinea*, *C. australis* and intermediates between them. A new site for *Rubus cantabrigiensis* caused some interest and *Hirschfeldia incana* along the Soham Lode was also a surprise.

### **Excursions for 2012**

**Lucy Wood** – our usual April visit to an ancient woodland. This site is well-known as one of our very few localities for *Euphorbia amygdaloides*. It will also be interesting to see if this wood, which has been reasonably well recorded in recent decades, has followed its neighbours in acquiring a more varied fern flora recently.

**Lord's Bridge Radio Astronomy Observatory** – a large and varied site with some species-rich neutral grassland with *Anacamptis morio*. According to Nicholas Warner's article in Nature in Cambridgeshire most of the site was arable land before it was taken over for WWII defence purposes so most of the site's grassland interest has developed since then.

**Hauxton Pits** – the morning will be spent at this site which has not received our attention before. In the afternoon we will record *Orchis anthropophora* at **Haslingfield Pit** for the BSBI Threatened Plant Project final year.

The July visit is yet to be arranged but we are trying to arrange access to Wimblington Pits. Probably 21st or 28th July.

**Foul Anchor** again, this time to record *Bupleurum tenuissimum* for the BSBI Threatened Plant Project. Followed by an exploration of the vc29 part of the village of **Outwell** on the Norfolk border, from which we have relatively few records.

The final trip in September is to the two neighbouring parishes **Guilden and Steeple Morden** in the far southwest of the county, which we have not explored before. The proximity of the chalk and the extensive footpath network should provide for a productive day's general recording.

## Excursion programme for 2012

Excursions start in the morning at 10.00 (unless stated otherwise) and continue until the end of the afternoon or until participants have had enough. All excursions are on a Saturday.

Date	Locality	Meeting point – 10.00am unless stated otherwise
April 14th	Lucy Wood, Kirtling	Track south from road, east side of Toilyard Plantation, TL686570, Kirtling. Please ensure that you do not obstruct any paths/access when parking.
May 5th	Lord's Bridge Radio Observatory	Drive in at Station House gate, TL3953.5451 on the southeast side of the A603 Wimpole-Cambridge Road (first entrance when coming from Barton direction). A member of the Observatory staff (either Ian Northrop or Clive Shaw) will be at the Station House gate to meet us. For safety and security reasons please do not enter the site until you have met either Ian or Clive.
June 23rd	Hauxton Pits & Haslingfield Pit	TL435521 Entrance to pits is at 87 Church Road, Hauxton; this is also the entrance to Organic Health Food shop. (South side of road a little to west of St Edmund's Church)
July	TBC	
August 11th	Foul Anchor & Outwell	TF468181, by fieldgate onto washes just southeast of the bridge over North Level Main Drain
September 22nd	Guilden/Steeple Morden parishes	TL279441, St Mary's Church, Church Street, Guilden Morden

### NO DOGS PLEASE

*Please note that there is no guarantee that you will be able to park directly at the meeting point listed and should leave time to find a parking place and walk to the meeting point if necessary.*

ALL ENQUIRIES REGARDING CFG EXCURSIONS TO NM, PLEASE:

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