Newsletter



WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY

Spring 1996

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Announcing:

A NEW JOURNAL FOR OUR SOCIETY

The Science Group of the Society's Committee is planning the publication of a Journal at a date to be announced this year. It is hoped it will give members a chance to write about work they have done and findings made since the publication of the Wiltshire Flora. The Journal will keep members informed of activities in the county and also make the production of any sequel to the Flora a much easier task. It will be produced in addition to this Newsletter.

The first edition will include articles on Black Poplars, Large-leaved Lime, Vicia villosa and Green-winged Orchids on a disturbed site. It will have the report of a survey on grasslands in the SE corner (New Forest fringe) and the control of bracken in woodland.

Please think about what you would like included in a subsequent edition,

Pat Woodruffe

RARE PLANTS

a December Talk by Peter Marren

At our first indoor meeting of the winter programme, Peter Marren formerly of the Nature Conservancy Council and now a freelance author and conservationist, gave us a well-presented and interesting talk on rare plants, or what we tend to call 'rare'.

In fact, many 'rare' species may have existed in small numbers since the Ice Age, he told us, and are not threatened, as they grow high up on isolated mountain sides, perhaps on inaccessible ledges and so out of danger. To survive, they may have had to adapt to lack or less of water and other adverse conditions.

Among his excellent slides, Peter showed us those he had taken (at some risk to himself) of the Arctic Blue Sowthistle, high up on Lochnagar; the Highland Saxifrage on Ben Lawers and the Arctic Saxifrage- all 'rare' species but still hanging on literally in some cases.

Several species of Orchid are down to only one or two plants, and are considered as threatened species, although they were once numerous, but is doubtful whether their artificial reintroduction would be desirable.

The Spring Gentian in Upper Teesdale is not very widespread. It cannot reproduce by seed dispersal as grazing animals snap off its flowerheads. Instead, it sends out underground shoots, forming clumps of Gentians which, it is interesting to speculate, may be 1000 years old in origin.

Some plants have become rare because of hybridisation; for instance the Fen Violet and the Pale Heath Violet hybridise easily, but the latter dominates and takes over.

Other rare species have managed to survive in only one or two places. For instance, the White Rock Rose at Weston-super-Mare and Berry Head; the Spotted Rock Rose on Anglesey and the Sand Crocus at Dawlish Warren. In the New Forest, Gladioli have managed to survive in a few places only in the shelter of bracken, safe from grazing ponies.

At the end of an enjoyable and absorbing talk, Peter was given a warm vote of thanks by Dave Green. After questions, discussion continued over an excellent cup of tea.

Moira Robertson

SUMMER MEETINGS 1996

Here is a list in outline of forthcoming meetings this summer. For fuller details, consult your Wiltshire Botanical Society calendar, of which further copies are available from the Editor.

Saturday 20 April 11am GR ST780340 STOURHEAD GARDENS Leader: Jack Oliver

Saturday 18 May 2pm GR SU 277643 GREAT BEDWYN and surroundings

Leader: Joy Newton

Sunday 19 May 10am GR SU 207368 PORTON RANGES
Leader: Phil Wilson
NOTE Send names & addresses with SAE by 18
April to: Phillip Wilson, 4 Prospect Place, Grove
Lane, Redlynch, Salisbury SP2 2NT.

Sunday 9 June 10am GR ST 974630 ROWDE MILL, nr Devizes

Leader: Jack Oliver

Wednesday 12 June 10am GR SU 101941 NORTH MEADOW, CRICKLADE NNR Leader: English Nature

Saturday 22 June 10am GR SU 058192
MARTIN DOWN NNR
Leaders: Albert Knott (Warden) and John
Ounsted

Sunday 23 June 10.30am GR ST 824607 WINSLEY area, or Bradford on Avon Leader: John Presland

Wednesday 26 June 10am GR SU 028867 SOMERFORD COMMON Leader: John Grearson

 Saturday 6 July
 10.15am
 GR SU 232005

 NEW FOREST
 PM
 GR SZ 262984

 [modified GR]

Leader: Vera Scott

Sunday 14 July 10am GR SU 500670 THATCHAM REEDBEDS, Berkshire Leader: Malcolm Storey

Tuesday 16 July 10am GR SU 116638
PEWSEY DOWN NNR

Leader: Albert Knott - English Nature

Saturday 27 July 11am GR ST 754941 WESTRIDGE WOOD nr Wotton-under Edge, Glos. Leaders: Clare and Mark Kitchen

Saturday 3 August 11am GR SU 249218
WHITEPARISH COMMON
Leader: David Allen

Sat.21 September 2pm GR SU 211248
PEPPERBOX HILL, nr Salisbury
Leader: Pat Woodruffe

Saturday 5 October 10am GR SU 197680 SAVERNAKE FOREST Postern Hill - FUNGUS FORAY
Leaders: Peter Marren & Malcolm Storey

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Saturday 12 October 10am GR SU 164601 PEWSEY nr Marlborough --- Bryophytes
Leader: Rod Stern

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY----

Saturday 27 April 10am
Seminar: Managing your Church for Wildlife
[organised by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust]
Redlynch Village Hall (see article)

Saturday 29 June
BENTLEY WOOD: Monotropa, Yellow Bird's Nest
Leader: Pat Woodruffe (see article)

We welcome members' friends to our meetings, beginners and experts alike. If you have queries about any meeting, or suggestions for the future, please contact: JOY NEWTON 1 Grasshills, Aldbourne, Marlborough Wilts SN8 2EH (01672)540356



Wildlife in Churchyards

Announcing a one day seminar on Wildlife in Churchyards on Saturday 27 April 1996 at Redlynch, south of Salisbury, sponsored by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

This seminar ties in with the Bishop's Prize awarded each autumn for the best churchyard managed for wildlife in Wiltshire. Over 20 churchyards were entered last year, as reported in the autumn Newsletter

Subjects will include grass management, walls, bats, fungi and the geology of gravestones.

Redlynch Seminar: starts 10am 27 April in the Village Hall. Cost, including ploughman's lunch, soup, coffee and tea, is £3.00. For information or bookings, telephone Richard Elkins (01725) 512641 or Tim Gimlette (01722) 716566.

Maureen Ponting

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AGM

Treasurer's Report

Jean Wall presented the accounts which had been audited by Cecil Newton. Income for 1995 (1994 in brackets) amounted to £1012.67 (£803.92) of which subscriptions amounted to £452.50. Total expenditure was £166.75. Balance at bank on 31 Dec 95 was £845.92 (£551.27). Membership stood at c70 (60). Barbara Last proposed and Malcolm Hardstaff seconded that the accounts be accepted.

The following committee recommendation was proposed by Jean Wall: That Membership categories should include Life Membership at £50,00 (£75.00 for two members at the same address). The proposal was seconded and carried unanimously.

Chairman's Report

Dave Green outlined the new BSBI plant mapping venture, Atlas 2000. Details are given elsewhere in the Newsletter. Wiltshire Botanists are encouraged to add to the species totals for each square. New species added to the list for a square should be returned to Sally Scott-White at the Devizes Museum at the end of the season (Oct 31). Species and sub-species are accepted.

The Black Poplar survey continues. Local Councils are beginning to take an interest in this rare tree. A symposium is planned for next year and details will be given to Councils and the NRA. It is possible that tree preservation orders will follow.

Secretary's Report

The Society continues to have a dearth of members from the Swindon area; currently, only one. Copies of the summer programme are available for potential new members from Jack Oliver (01672) 861251

Help is sought in cultivating a rare variant of a Brachypodium species found at Somerford Common (see separate item). The aim is to establish the extent to which its special characteristics (spikelet bunching) are environmentally induced.

Habitat Survey Update

From April 1st, Paul Darby, as Wildlife Sites Officer will spend more time visiting landlords and tenants and less on survey work. However, Paul reassured members that he would continue to organise volunteers on site surveys.

Other business....

Back issues of Watsonia and BSBI News are available to members from the Chairman or Secretary.

Continued. . . .

From last Autumn:

Bradshaw & Cadnam Commons Meeting

7 September 1995

Our first venue was West Wellow Common to see Persicaria minor, Small Water-pepper. Also noted was Radiola linoides, Allseed.

Growing on bog areas near Furzley were Viola palustris, Marsh Violet, Drosera rotundifolia and D. intermedia, Sundews; Anagallis tenella, Bog Pimpernel & Pinguicula Iusitanica, Pale Butterwort.

Further on, Utricularia minor, Lesser Bladderwort, was in flower. In a wetter season, it would not have been easy to get close enough to see the delicate pale yellow flowers held above the water on thin stems - the divided leaves with the bladders were clearly visible in the shallow water.

After lunch we tramped across Furzley Common in the rain to see Wahlenburgia hederacea, lvy-leaved Bellflower. Moving onto Cadnam Common, we saw Persicaria minor.

Chamaemelium nobile, Chamomile, was growing on all the sites visited, some plants in flower, and looking as if it had survived the dry weather much better than the grasses.

Nine people attended this meeting, and our belated thanks go to Roger Veall for showing us these interesting plants of acid heathland.

Vera Scott

FOR SALE....

Botanically-friendly photographic equipment NIKON 801 manual/automatic camera, NIKKOR 60mm AF Micro (1:1) lens (quite rare); NIKKOR 28mm AF wide-angle lens, NIKON SB24 Flashgun, BENBO Trekker tripod with ball head; assorted filters, purpose-made FOX-TALBOT padded haversack. All just serviced and in excellent condition. Test shots and provenance. For Sale by item or as complete kit at below-market price Box 1000 c/o WBS Newsletter 2 High St, Manton, Marlborough SN8 4HH (01672) 512361

Audrey Summers outlined suggestions for botanical survey work requuested by FWAG on behalf of farmers. The meeting agreed that members of WBS should participate. Anyone interested should contact Audrey (01672) 819268.

The Meeting then enjoyed a slide show organised by Maureen Ponting who taxed the worldwide botanical knowledge of members with some splendid slides. This was followed by much-needed tea.

Malcolm Hardstaff

COMMON WILTSHIRE PLANTS in the 1950s and 1990s

[Some of the illustrations used in this and subsequent Newsletters will be given a shorthand code which gives an indication of relative abundance in the county, comparing postwar with recent findings].

Donald Grose ended the 1957 Flora of Wiltshire with his attempt "... to assess the occurrence and frequency of the commonest plants throughout Wiltshire". He listed 100 sequentially, headed by Ribwort Plantain (Plantago lanceolata). The 1993 Wiltshire Flora measured spread rather than density. Furthermore, some of the commonest grasses, such as Rough and Smooth Meadowgrass (Poa trivialis and P. pratensis) were somewhat under-recorded, as some volunteers in the Wilts Flora Mapping Project did not readily separate difficult groups, such as all the different Meadow-grass species, with confidence. There is also a suspiciously uniform 96% total 2km sq. total total ceiling for the 7 current front runners, suggesting incomplete tetrad coverage rather than genuine blank spots in the county.

Despite such difficulties in making firm comparisons between the 1950s and 1990s flora, tentative ones are interesting, especially where there seem to have been big changes. For some species, such as the Stinging Nettle (Urtica dioica), there have been quantitative surveys in the 1990s quite as detailed as those carried out by Grose in the 1940s and '50s (see Newsletter 8, Oct '95).

Grose's 100 commonest Wiltshire species are given (as he gave) in his 1950s ranking 1st (Ribwort plantain) to 100th (Autumnal Hawkbit - Leontodon autumnalis); or 'unplaced' if not listed in his top 100. The 1990s codes will be in Roman numerals in recognition of the absence of firm comparability between 1950s and 1990s methods of measurement. I = 96%+ of Wilts. tetrads, II = 90-95%, III = 80-89%, IV = 70-79%, V= 60-69%, etc. Grose's 1957 statement that "Plantago lanceolata is by any reckoning our (Wiltshire's) most abundant plant" is no longer true. It is now not even in Group I.

In all the Kennet Valley there is only one chalky slope with thin topsoil where Ribwort Plantain occurs in the abundance described by Grose. Elsewhere, Rye Grass, nettles, Cow Parsley and large agricultural weeds such as docks and thistles are now the abundant plants. As for the short grass areas, in many places even Autumn Hawkbit (Leontodon autumnalis, Grose's 100th) seems far commoner than Ribwort Plantain, albeit only obviously so in the months July-September.

Some examples:



	1950s	1990s
	(position)	
Plantago major	15th	II comparable
P. lanceolata	1st	II decline
P. media	41st	IX marked decline
Anthoxanthum odoratum	23rd	V marked decline
Lolium perenne	8th	II prob. increase
Lamium album	unpl.	II marked increase
Anthriscus sylvestris	75th	II marked increase
Galium aparine	17th	I marked increase

In general, the bigger nutrient-loving plants, such as Stinging Nettle, Docks, Cleavers, Cow Parsley and White Dead-nettle, seem to have increased in abundance, while rosette or small weeds and grasses of poorer soils, (although still very common) predominate less often than 50 years ago in Wiltshire.

Jack Oliver

DEATH VALLEY and the MOJAVE DESERT

Another North American experience from Barbara and Dick Last made us feel we were really there, so striking were the slides, the photographs and the presentation.

After a geological introduction, we were taken through a variety of Californian habitats: the Mojave Desert, Death Valley, the Alabama Hills in the Sierra Nevada and Red

Rock Canvon.

Since the Mojave Desert has less than one inch of rainfall a year, most of the vegetation consists of greyish spiny shrubs and other plants resistant to water loss. For instance, we saw the Creosote Bush (Larnea tridentata), Bur Sage (Ambrosia dumosa), Hop Sage (Graya spinosa), Burro-Brush (Hymenoclea salsola) and various Yuccas and Cacti with their vicious spines. One of the Cacti, the Beavertail (Opuntia busilaris), had beautiful magenta flowers. Particularly striiking were the tall Joshua Trees- not trees at all but Yuccas in the Lily family. Among these prominent plants were perennials also adapted to the arid conditions and often with colourful flowers, such as the Desert Camus Lily (Zigandenus brevibracteatus) the purplish Mojave Aster (Xylorhiza tortifolia), two striking Evening Primroses, the 3 ft high pink-flowered Penstemon floridus austinii and the purple Sand Verbena. The Bird Cage Evening Primrose was particularly interesting. The stems grow up round the mature flowers. forming a circular cage which breaks off and blows round the desert, presumably to disperse the seeds.

By remarkable luck it had just rained-- a very rare event. Since this had produced snow at higher altitudes, it prevented a visit to see the Bristle Cone Pine, one of Barbara's objectives. However, it had enabled the appearance of masses of small desert ephemera, in colourful sheets over large areas for their very brief lives. We saw vistas of the lemon-yellow Desert Dandelion (Malacothryx glabrata), and the white daisy, known as the Desert Star (Monoptilon bellioides). Another attractive plant, though less abundant, was the Prickly Poppy (Argemone munita).

Moving on to Death Valley, 50 miles long, 20 miles wide, 2 miles deep and 280 ft below sea level, we saw a further range of plants enhanced by the recent rain. These included the beautiful Golden Cups (Camissonia brevipes), the Shredding Evening Primrose (Camissonia condensata) which discards pieces of its woody stem which birds then use for their nests; the Desert Five Spot (Malvastrum rotundifolia), a mallow with purplish petals, each with a conspicuous dark patch at the base; several different coloured Phacelias and the prostrate masses of Purple Mat (Nana dimissum). At one place there was a stream from a salt spring, with tiny fish, and with salt-tolerant plants like Pickleweed (Salicornia

rubra) and Salt Grass (Distichlis spicata) alongside. The temperatures here can reach 134°F

Moving on through another valley with delightful Phloxes, we arrived at the Alabama Hills, regularly used to shoot Westerns because of their striking scenery.

Particularly interesting here were Astragalus coccineus, with its scarlet flowers and woolly pods; a number of species of Lupin and the extremely spiny Indigo Bush (Psorothamnus tremontii). Then we were delighted by the spur-shaped rock formations produced by erosion of the soft mudstone in Red Rock Canyon, and the brilliant red Indian Paintbrush (Castilleja chromosa) and species of Mimulus and Limnanthes growing there. In Owl Canyon, we were shown the beautiful orange-red Mariposa Lily and the endangered Desert Tortoise.

Leaving botany further behind, we saw fascinating shots of a ghost town and other relics of silver mining, including a smelting oven.

We hardly need to go there after this comprehensive portrayal of the area. And we'd never be so lucky as to find the desert ephemerals in flower at the moment we went!

John Presland

PLANT TALK

From his studio in a Tisbury garden, WBS member Dr John Akeroyd produces a new quarterly magazine. Plant Talk, which gives an international view on plant conservation. to an readership already in 60 countries.

The current issue has articles on biodiversity, medicinal drugs from tropical rain forests, rare and endemic plants in Sri Lanka, micropropagation as a tool in conservation and a great deal more, including a piece about the work of the conservation charity Plantlife by another WBS member, Peter Marren.

Since the scope of Plant Talk is so wide, it would be impractical to expect each subject to be dealt with in depth. However, with the help of its distinguished international advisory panel, John Akeroyd, who is also an editor of Watsonia, has succeeded in shining a spotlight on just a few of the innumerable worldwide problems of conservation. Incidentally, he also makes Plant Talk

highly readable.

Plant Talk a quarterly publication on conservation worldwide £15.00 pa from Box 500, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 5XB Sample free copy on request.

LEMNA MINUTA AND L. MINOR VARIANTS

Professor Elias Landolt of Zurich and the two BSBI referees, Alan Leslie and Brian Wurzell, have all confirmed the Wiltshire findings of Least Duckweed (L. minuta - mostly 1-2x1mm: less rounded than L. minor and usually yellower-green) for canal, pond and rivers in VCs 007 and 008. Least Duckweed has now diminished in the Kennet and Avon Canal, having previously been superabundant before 1995. However, I have found it coating a large pond 3cm deep and feeding into a tributary of Fordbrook, near Pewsey, 2cm deep during Jan-March 1996.

More problematic is the small-frond variant of L. minor (mostly 2 -2.5 x 2mm) seen in the Upper Kennet and elsewhere. This may be a common genotype in Wiltshire. However, Professor Landolt says that common L. minor (mostly 4-6x4mm) can also become small and thick (like a small Lemna gibba) under harsh conditions as in winter in over-enriched (eutrophic) waters; or small and thin in pure rainwater (dystrophic conditions); or large and thin in favourable conditions (oligotrophic --mesotrophic warmer waters, as in some Vale of Pewsey and Dorset ditches in summer).

Jack Oliver

THE SOMERFORD COMMON BRACHYPODIUM

Dr Tom Cope of the Kew Herbarium (Grasses) has written back about the large B. pinnatum plants with bunched spikelets first noted by Joy Newton, Rita Grose and the author. It is a rare variant which they once brought into cultivation at Kew, but which had not ben investigated. Now they have only some pressed sheet specimens.

Dr Cope said that environmental chemicals can cause this variation in grasses, especially Lolium perenne, but there may also be a genetic propensity. If the latter, this would be additional evidence that the genus Brachypodium has affinities with the Glycerias rather han with the Wild Wheats and Couch genera.

We are asked to investigate whether this character persists away from the the environment which might have triggered it. Consequently, could WBS members please transplant some marked clumps (hard spadework!) or marked half clumps and re-grow them, and grow seedlings from the branched spikelets. I have started the latter from last season, but a lot have been eaten by Bank Voles and only twelve have survived.

Jack Oliver

CANADIAN GOLDENRODS

Douglas Kent, Research Fellow at Kew and the BSBI Solidago referee, has written and spoken on the telephone about our alien Goldenrods on the Salisbury Plain training Areas and elsewhere.

Solidago canadensis is always scabrid pubescent. If the plants are mostly glabrous, with only some hairs on lower side leaf veins and a few hairs on the stem, Solidago gigantea is likely to be the species. Neither 5. gigantea nor 5. canadensis match up well with the N. American true species; they are 'weedy taxa of hortal origin'.

German botanists have started to give them new species designations, as with the Canadian Asters also hybridizing in Europe, but we should keep to the designations above, as in Stace's keys. Other Solidago species are less common in Wiltshire.

Jack Oliver

LOOKING FOR THE LARGE-LEAVED LIME [Tilia Platyphyllos]

Tilia platyphyllos, the Large-Leaved Lime, is an ancient woodland species that is now nationally scarce. The nearest known record lies some 100m outside the county boundary close to Bath. However, according to a Westonbirt arboriculturalist, this species is possibly native in parts of Wiltshire.

T. platyphyllos is often found in coppice form, though specimens may be planted as ornamental trees. The leaves are relatively large (6-16cm long), with pale undersides covered in whitish hairs which also occur in the leaf axils. veins are prominent on both surfaces of the leaf.

The Wiltshire Flora Mapping Project recorded T. platyphyllos and T. x vulgaris as an aggregate species, so there is no up to date information on T. platyphyllos as a distinct species.

Dave Green would like to receive any records of T. platyphyllos, including a 6-figure grid reference, details of size of tree(s), number of specimens, a pressed leaf, and if possible, a fruit. Dave suggests concentrating on areas of woodland where records were made during the Mapping Project. A list of all the aggregates recorded during WFMP can be obtained from Dave Green 297 Bloomfield Rd, Bath BA2 2NU

Pat Woodruffe

MICHAELMAS DAISIES & GOLDENRODS: Autumn 1996

More records of the semi-naturalised Asters would be welcome this Autumn. Detailed location of sites, map references, sizes and heights of clumps will again be required. I would also appreciate photos and or pressed specimens which include at least part of the inflorescence and a section of the leafy part of the stem.

Nationally, the most commonly naturalised Aster is A.x salignus (Common Michaelmas-daisy); the hybrid between A. lanceolatus (Narrow-leaved Michaelmas-daisy) and the N. American (mainly coastal?) A. novi-belgii. However in Wiltshire the most frequently found Aster has been A. lanceolatus, a common roadside weed in Ontario and surrounding areas of Canada and USA, and originally introduced to English and Scottish gardens in the 1600s as the original 'Michaelmas Daisy'.

Two BSBI referees, Dr Alan Leslie and Dr Peter Yeo, have expressed surprise at the relative preponderance of A. lanceolatus in Wiltshire and have asked for any patterns to help explain this.

Many, perhaps most Aster patches derive from past garden throwouts. Unless shaded by trees, Aster clumps persist and enlarge, forming spreading patches or lengthening bands by roads, rivers, fields, dumps or waste ground. Seeding can occur, as on the railway enbankments at Trowbridge, where the third commonest Wiltshire Aster, A.x versicolor can predominate in a variety of colours in October. This is another hybrid, again involving. A. novi-belgii, but the other parent is A. laevis (again centered on Ontario).

Extensive spread of A. lanceolatus around South Tidworth, and possibly also in parts of the Salisbury Plain training areas (SPTAs), may indicate a more resilient naturalisation than the road, rail, field and riverside patches in other parts of the county.

A. lanceolatus (illustrated) is the Aster with masses of smallish (1-2.5cm) dull-white or faintly-lilac flowers with narrow leaves that do not clasp the stem at all. It is possible that in the army areas, A. lanceolatus did not just become established from garden throw-outs. The seeds could have accompanied the vehicles of the Canadian expeditionary forces (both World Wars)or US armies(& USAF) from 1943-46.

Another SPTA weed, Erucastrum gallicum, would seem to have come in as seed on the tracks or wheels of military vehicles returning from Europe. 10 or more Canadian regiments and supply and training units were based in Tidworth and on the SPTAs during 1914-1919 and 1940-45. Thousands of Canadians were on the Plain, and in the record wet winter of 1914-1915, they were in a 'sea of mud' which would have given seedlings of A. lanceolatus a chance to establish. By Christmas 1941 there were still 11,000 Canadians under canvas.



If A. lanceolatus occurs in any quantities on the SPTAs (as well as around South Tidworth), a military rather than horticultural origin becomes more probable.

I'd like any Wiltshire Aster records, but would especially like to know of patches or scatters on the SPTAs. The same considerations would apply to the Canadian/N. American Goldenrods, Solidago canadensis and S. gigantea. These two species can also occur on the SPTAs, and like the Asters, were not adequately considered in the 1993 Wiltshire Flora.

I would send out keys again, but Stace (pp. 847-852) deals with these Asters and Solidagos. Unfortunately his Aster inflorescence pictures are all of unpleasantly squashed herbarium specimens: the dead rather than the living, and, apart from the leaves, they look wrong. Blamey and GreyWilson's Illustrated Flora of Britain and N. Europe (pp. 394-7) uses the same up to date nomenclature as Stace. This Flora covers all the above taxa and other naturalised N. American Asters and Solidagos, with big realistic colour pictures for most species, but only details on small marginal colour pictures for the main Aster hybrids and S. gigantea. CTM (pp. 466-468) gives full descriptions of the naturalised N. American Asters, and shorter ones of the Solidagos.

Solidagos (120+ species) and Asters (500+ species) are notoriously difficult genera, and N. American Aster hybrids back-cross with parents and may be crossing with eachother (their sexual behaviour in Europe has been described as 'uncontrollably promiscuous').

However, only 5 N. American taxa seem to be naturalised in Wiltshire. Solidagos flower July-September and Asters mostly September-December, usually well after Michaelmas!

Records of these, particularly A. lanceolatus when it forms several patches or scatters, especially on the SPTAs, would be very welcome.

Jack Oliver

7

Book Reviews:

Butterflies and Odd Plants

This companion publication to the Wiltshire Flora displays the same fine quality of design, layout and finish as the Flora. Mike Fuller and editor Beatrice Gillam have produced a book to be proud of. It is another example of how an army of volunteer recorders thoughout the county play a vital role in the production of such a work. And indeed, many of the recorders involved in this project also worked with the Flora.

Wiltshire has just 48 species of butterfly. This enables each to be dealt with in considerable detail. Colour photographs and a tetrad dot map are used for each species.

The very early chapters cover habitats, the history of butterfly recording in the County and the mapping scheme that Mike Fuller coordinated, with great dedication, from 1982 to 1994.

From a botanist's viewpoint, the book provokes a number of interesting questions. For instance, while butterflies exploit plants, do any plants exploit butterflies? As far as I know, few butterflies are significant pollinators.

Relationships between butterflies and plants are undoubtedly complex. For instance, why has the Wood White become extinct as a breeding species in Wiltshire when its food plants - various vetches - are widespread? For a start, this butterfly is confined to woodland and there is almost certainly a link between its decline and the decline in coppice management of woodlands since the end of the last war.

A number of butterflies in this book have their distribution dot map alongside that of their food plant. This makes for interesting comparisons. Marsh Fritillary and Devil's Bit Scabious for example (interestingly, on chalk grassland, Small Scabious and, more rarely, Teasel, are also used as food plants). It is immediately apparent that the Marsh Fritillary is a rarer beast than Devil's Bit !

A number of conditions have to be just right, and only then will eggs be laid. The life cycle of the insect is then beset with problems, including parasitic wasps which can have a significant effect on populations of this nationally rare butterfly.

Honeysuckle is a widely-distributed plant in Wiltshire (except on expanses of chalk grassland with few hedges, or wood-land) but the White Admiral is confined to larger woodlands where Honeysuckle grows in just the right situations for egg laying.

There are many hours of fascinating reading in this book and I was constantly reminded of one plant that is probably the most important nectar source for our native butterflies - the humble bramble! A sobering thought indeed.

Needless to say, this book is highly recommended.

Paul Darby

THE BUTTERFLIES OF WILTSHIRE by Michael Fuller ed. Beatrice Gillan Pisces Publications 1995 -- hardback (£22.50 White Horse Bookshop, Marlborough)

Martin Cragg-Barber is well known to the Society for his interest and study of odd plants. He also cultivates a nursery of oddities at his home in Hullavington.

He has now produced a collection of plant aberrations, taken mostly from Gerard's Herbal of 1633. The popular editions of this Herbal however exclude odd plants in favour of medicinal and culinary herbs, so it's interesting to have a fuller list of plant dating from the 17th Century.

As Martin says in his introduction, it's a good starting point for the study of odd plants, and that's what makes his publication important. His other sources of information are Gerard's Catalogus of 1596, listing plants from his London garden, and Parkinson's 'A Garden of Pleasant Flowers' (1629).

Cragg-Barber lists over 170 plants, with some interesting comments and information. For instance, Gerard mentioned the mis-shapen Adder's Tongue which was rediscovered three years ago on the Common at Stockbridge.

The abnormalities described range from double flowers, different colour forms, variegated leaves and some curious oddities. Many are illustrated with reproductions of Gerard's woodcuts.

Gardeners will enjoy this publication, with its descriptions of familiar attractive aberrant plants still popular and in cultivation, such as double primroses. I should have liked to know more about Mr Hesketh's interesting-looking Primrose (where can we get our hands on it?). There's the Double Feverfew, and many double-flowered members of the Buttercup family; the variegated grass called Gardener's Garters and previously named by Gerard 'Ladies' Laces'.

Armed with this 17th Century information, we can discount modern farming practices, such as chemical sprays, as causes of deformities in these plants.

We hope that Martin Cragg-Barber will follow this collection with yet more aberrations and where possible, explanations of the causes.

Maureen Ponting

[Gerard's Native Plant Aberrations by Martin Cragg-Barber. A4 39pp at £4.00. Available from the Author at 1 Station Cottages, Hullavington, Chippenham SN14 6ET]

MOONRAKINGS*

This issue of the Newsletter has been delayed to include a preliminary report of the AGM on 16 March. Full Minutes will appear later.

Our grateful thanks to Rita Grose who produced the first seven issues of this Newsletter so successfully. We look forward a continuing supply of her own thoughtful contributions

.....also to Joan Woodgate for her help in preparing issues 3-7

Congratulations to Chairman Dave Green who has been appointed National Coordinator for the Flora 2000 Project.

.... and to our own illustrator, Katy Oliver (17), whose fine drawings appeared in the last edition of the BSBI (Botanical Society of the British Isles) Newsletter, accompanying father Jack's article on gene flow in daisies. She is possibly the youngest artist they have ever published.

Joy Newton is accompanying Maureen Ponting on one of her botanical forays this year - this time to the Burren in southwest Ireland, where they will be peering down deep scailps between the limestone pavement at the sometimes unusual flora.

Also interesting, if out of our district, is the Venezuelan Passion Flower, Passiflora lourdesae. It's has been saved from total extinction by John Vanderplank, Curator of the National Collection of Passiflora at Kingston Seymour, near Bristol. John hopes to return the plant personally to its original habitat in the Lower Andes, once it has been successfully propagated at Kew.

Barbara Last has, sadly for us, decided to step down from the Committee where she was one of the earlier members, from November 1992. What with her many botanical commitments (including river monitoring and Wiltshire Churchyards, not to mention her lectures - one reported in this issue) and her hip replacement, she has reason enough. We hope that she will continue to delight us with her articles and beautiful photographs.

Flowery language....actually overheard: this snippet between members of a botanical committee. "Our decision was euonymous".

Also genuinely overheard - and surely worthy of an HM Bateman cartoon ... at a photographic seminar for botanists run by the famed Heather Angel: " Do I need a camera that can focus?"

We have an exceptional range of meetings this summer ... 16 in all, thanks to a hard-working committee and especially Joy Newton. You should have received a separate copy of the Calendar before the AGM. If you'd like another for your mantel, or know a potential member who would, Jack Oliver (High View, Rhyls Lane, Lockeridge) will send it out on receipt of an SAE.

Four people (to date) have been farsighted enough to take out Life Subscriptions to the Society.

*Moonraker...some Wiltshire rusticks, seeing the figure of the moon in a pond, attempted to rake it out... Grose (1787)
Moonraking...pursuing vain thoughts, woolgathering)
OED
[Some say that brandy had been hidden under

the water, and the 'moonrakers' feigned feeblemindedness to avoid a search by the excisemen]



HUNTING FOR YELLOW BIRD'S NEST

I am organising a day's hunt for Monotropa - Yellow Bird's Nest - in Bentley Wood at the end of June. This saprophytic plant was described by Grose in 1957 as 'frequent' in area 5 (SE Salisbury). However, during the WFMP years, only three sites were recorded in the entire county. In 1993, one plant was spotted in the northern part of Bentley Wood, growing among beech and Scots Pine. The same plant produced a spike in 1994 but not in 1995.

There are many acres of woodland in Bentley which have the potential to support this plant. Please realise that this will be like looking for a needle in a haystack, but if you are willing to spare the time, I should be delighted to see you. The walking is easy, since the plant grows in deep leaf litter where few other ground flora plants can survive.

Meeting Details...

Saturday June 29th at 10am. Meet at the Livery Gate GR 239297.

Binoculars could be useful. I suggest a picnic lunch if you wish, and possibly a walk around other parts of the wood afterwards.

Pat Woodruffe

ATLAS 2000 in WILTSHIRE

The Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) and the Biological Records Centre (Institute of Terrestrial Ecology) have now launched a major new project to produce an update atlas of the vascular plants of Britain and Ireland.

The Atlas of the British Flora, published in 1962, was the result of BSBI's landmark project to map the Britain's and Ireland's vascular plants. While it is still the standard reference on the distribution of our native and the commoner naturalised plants and is widely used, it is now seriously outdated. Distribution of many species has changed. Some have been affected by changes in agricultural practice (including conversion of pasture to arable and intensification of existing farm regimes) others by land-use changes, such as afforestation and building. This has been confirmed by the results of recent recording projects, such as the BSBI Monitoring Scheme (1987-88) and the Scarce Plants Project (1991-2). Stace's New Flora of the British Isles (1991) highlighted the many alien taxa now widespread in the countryside and not included in the 1962 Atlas.

The WBS Science Group and Committee have agreed to ask our members to help in continuing to gather records in Wiltshire for Atlas 2000. In Wiltshire we are fortunate in having already undertaken detailed recording for the Wiltshire Flora Mapping Project (WFMP) between 1984 and 1991, culminating in the production of the Wiltshire Flora in 1993. As the result, The Wiltshire Biological Records Centre already contains a modern set of records across both vice-counties.

We can add to our present records by finding species new to a particular 10km square. The recording basis is to tick off any new plant species found within each square. The Wiltshire Biological Records Centre has produced existing lists of species for each 10km square during the WFMP. These are available, with instructions, from Jack Oliver (High View, Lockeridge: send SAE and 2 first-class stamps).

Any new 10km records should be sent to Sally Scott-White at Devizes Museum by October 31 each year.

This information will be assessed and forwarded to the Atlas 2000 project. An update of finds will be published annually, in the WBS Newsletter or Journal.

Dave Green Recorder VC7

STRANGE HAPPENINGS in an old RECTORY GARDEN

Some four or five years ago, I was called to the old rectory garden in Hullavington by Mr and Mrs Gallagher to help them keep a semblance of order. Now that Mrs Gallagher has moved, perhaps it's time to put on record some of the strange things that went on in the garden.

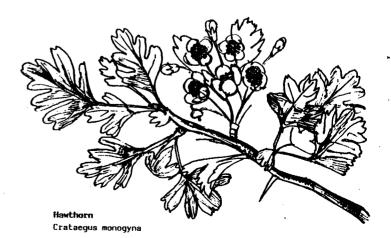
Each spring, the garden always boasted a fine display of garden bluebells (thicker petalled and broader leaves than the true native bluebell). One or two clumps always seemed to have flowers with extra petals, and a flower was once discovered with two strange petaloid tubes coming out of the individual flower stalk.

Growing in the lawn, a strange ribwort plantain was once noticed with clusters of small flower heads surrounding the central cone. This seemed to be quite an old form: a similar illustration of 'Strange Plantain' was recorded by Gerard in his Herbal of 1630. Another of Gerard's old forms was discovered in the lawn - a daisy with an extra flower growing from the middle of a flower.

At the back of one of the old yew trees, there was an ivy with interesting sectors of white. This has been propagated, and though it reverts to all-green and white-margined shoots, the interesting intermediary character can be retained. It has now had the name Hedera helix (lopsided) bestowed on it. Another botanical marvel goes by the name Aegopodium podagraria 'Hullavington'. This is a very subtle variegated (two shades of green) form of a rather familiar ground-cover plant: the Ground Elder.

Last year, one of the loganberries up against the churchyard wall boasted double flowers. Further down the garden towards the old pond, a hawthorn grows with nearly all the branches weeping. We have not tried to propagate this because an even more pendulous form was also discovered, in the Forest of Dean.

Martin Cragg-Barber



WILTSHIRE PLANT RECORDS IN 1995

A more complete list for 1995, including a few from earlier years, will be published in the Botanical Society's Journal. Some 2000 records were received this year and the WBS Science Group is considering what to do with them since there are problems in processing such large numbers. Selected records are listed alphabetically below. I am indebted to Dave Green and Ann Hutchison, BSBI Recorders for VC 7 & 8, for comments which have enabled me to compile these notes. Please inform me if there are errors or omissions.

Malcolm Hardstaff

NOTEWORTHY VC7 RECORDS

Alopecurus aequalis (Orange Foxtail) found by J. Newton in Aldbourne Chase Dewpond is the 1st recent vc record and the second county record. Mat. herb. DG Anacamptis x Gymnadenia = x G. anacamptis Aldbourne, wild garden, 90 plants with both parents. J. Newton.

Campanula poscharskyana (Trailing Bellflower) a thriving garden escape noted by J. E. Oliver at two new riverside housing estate sites on the Kennet at Marlborough (River Park and Town Mill).

Carex divulsa ssp. leersi (Grey Sedge) recorded by J.E. Oliver at Limpley Stoke, River (Bath) Avon, is the 1st recent vc record.

Carex laevigata (Smooth-stalked Sedge) P. Darby found several clumps in NE part of Seagry Wood, tentatively identified by DG and will be the 2nd VC record Cephalanthera damasonium (White Helleborine) 7 flowers on a track to Highelear Down, not seen for 15 years at this site. J. Newton

Epilobium x limesum (E. parviflorum x montanum) River Kennet at Manton and Preshute. J.E. Oliver - will be the 1st record if confirmed.

Epipactis palustris (Marsh Helleborine) found by D. Green and S. Whitworth in the Cotswold Water Park at the base of sapling Salix cinerea ssp. oleifolia, on the edge of a shallow gravel pit: the 2nd vc record.

Frangula alnus (Alder Buckthorn) an interesting record by D Hodgson by the River Thames at Marston Meysey. (DG asks for a specimen)

Gallum saxatile (Heath Bedstraw) locally abundant on a wall in Seagry Wood, P. Darby. This is a new record for this wood.

Juncus subnodulosus (Blunt-flowered rush) was found in New Lake, Coate Water by D. Green, 1st site record and 4th county record.

Lemna minuta (Least Duckweed) J.E. Oliver continues to track the spread of this duckweed, producing records from the dewpond N. of Walker's Hill,

Coate Water, the large pond NW of Bristow Bridge (2-3cm deep here) and the stream feeding Fordbrook.

Mentha x smithiana (Tall Mint) in the bed of the dried up River Bourne at Aldbourne, J. Newton, is the 1st recent vc record and confirms a D. Grose record.

Oenanthe pimpinelloides (Corky-fruited Water-dropwort) in a marshy field between Whaddon and Staverton, a single plant extends the known and very limited population: P. Darby.

Orchis morio (Green-winged Orchid) was found by J. Newton on Bailey Hill, Boydon, 6 plants.

Rumex conglomeratus x R. sanguineus = R.x ruhmeri found by J. Oliver at New Bridge, Avebury

Salix cinerea ssp. cinerea (Grey Willow) found by J.E. Oliver and J. Newton at Coate Water, Swindon. The record, the first since 1953 has been confirmed by M. Meikle.

Scrophularia umbrosa (Green Figwort) found by M. Ponting along the R. Kennet at Manton is the first record for vc7. Its other site is the "Shalbourne stream"vc8. Sedum telephium (Orpine) is a good find by J.E. Oliver by the River Kennet at Winterbourne Monkton.

Viscum album (Mistletoe) two records this year for vc7: at Turleigh near the farm boundaries (J. Oliver) and on the S. side of the M4 at Leigh Delamere Services (M+C Kitchen). The latter is a new 10K record.

NOTEWORTHY VC8 RECORDS

Agrostemma githago (Corncockle) Two plants of this British Red Data Book species found by J. Presland on a building site in Trowbridge.

Agrostis castellana (Highland Bent) occurs over the border in Hampshire and has now been found in vc 8 by R.M. Veall at Whitsbury. Confirmed by P. Bowman, this is a 1st vc8 record.

Bromus inermis (Hungarian Brome) recorded by P. Wilson and M. Reed, is a first vc record. They found it in the Avon Project LNR at the southern end beside a made-up footpath.

Campanula portenschlagiana (Adria Bellflower) is one of the introduced bellflowers. J. Presland found it naturalised on a wall in Winsley.

Campanula posteristring main (Trailing Bellflower) is naturalised on a wall in Bradford-on-Avon (J. Presland).

Cirsium tuberosum x C. acaule is perhaps a new site for this rarity. D. green found 40 plants near a footpath much used by botanists!

Cuscuta epithymum (Dodder) found by B. Gillam on herb-rich grassland, West Down SPTA, two patches 0.5msq c. 12m apart. A new site, 8th on downland.

Datura stramonium (Thorn Apple) turns up from time to time. C. McQuitty found it in a newly made garden in Burbage.

Doronicum pardalianches (Leopard's-bane) was seen again at Batscroft by P. Woodruffe and D. Wood. It is likely to be a garden throw-out.

Epipactis purpurata (Violet Helleborine) a first VC record for this species, a single specimen seen by G.W. Green and photographed by Dr. G. Cardy in 1992 in a newly-felled area in Biss Wood. It has not reappeared since.

Erucastrum gallicum (Hairy Rocket) continues to inhabit disturbed soil on the SPTA. The latest records by D. Graiff are at Porton and Boscombe Down and show that the species is spreading.

Fumaria parviflora (Fine-leaved Fumitory) found by J. Notman at Easton Down, is the 3rd record.

Gaudinia fragilis (French Oat-grass) at Mere, West Swainford, in unimproved hay meadow!. This find, by P. Palmer will be a first vc record if confirmed.

Gentiana amarella (Autumn Gentian- White-flowered) at Porton, Easton Down, found by J. Notman.

Gentianella anglica (Early Gentian) is a Wiltshire speciality. Records this year: Great Cheverell Hill/Down (J.L. Presland, P.R. Sneyd), Middleton Down (B. Last), Knowle Down (A. Summers). Records for this nationally scarce plant are welcome.

Hieracium acuminatum (Hawkweed) was found by R.C. Stern at West Harnham Chalkpit, together with an unnamed glandular species similar to H. exotericum. Hieracium maculatum (Spotted Hawkweed) was recorded at Lavington Folly (R.C. Stern) and Fonthill chalkpit (B. Last).

Hieracium trichocaulon (Hawkweed) found by R.C. Stern at Hamptworth Common on a roadside verge.

Hypericum humifusum (Creeping St. John's-wort) was found by B. Last and P.M. Woodruffe in an unusual site at Midleton Down. The species is usually associated with acid soils.

Hypericum maculatum (Imperforate St. John's-wort) was recorded in Biss Wood by the ENSurvey in 1980. This needs checking/updating.

Hypericum x desetangsii (Des Etang's St. John's-wort) spotted by R.M. Veall in Martin Down carpark is the second vc record. (1st at Whitsbury Hill in 1990). Juncus subnodulosus (Blunt-flowered rush) 50+ plants in Jones's Mill, Pewsey is a new vice- county record by D. Green.

Lemna minuta (Least Duckweed) in the source of the Mill Race, Summerham Brook at Littleton Panel: R. Grose and A. Summers, confirmed by Prof. Landolt (Zurich).

Lonicera xylosteum (Fly Honeysuckle) found by R.C.Stern at the summit of Beacon Hill (Fonthill), an unusual record for a species considered alien pre-Kent, possibly planted here.

Monotropa hypopitys (Yellow Bird'snest) found by J. Holman on the old railway line, Downton

Muscari comosum (Tassel Hyacinth) found by A. Woods in an abandoned garden and off the track from Cheverell Hill Farm. 1st vc record for this introduction.

Myosurus minimus (Mousetail) was spotted by R. Grose on a footpath through a hayfield at Woodborough, conf. DG.

Myriophyllum spicatum (Spiked Water-milfoil) in the River Nadder near Ugford, found by J. Acornley.

Neottia nidus-avis (Bird's Nest Orchid) is scarcer than records suggest. In 1995 it was seen by B. Last at Perham Down and by P.M. Woodruffe and D.J. Wood in Oakridge Copse.

Nicandra physalodes (Apple-of-Peru) found by J.C.P.Rollinson in a garden in Mere, presumably from another Mere garden. 1st record since Flora of Wilts.

Ornithogalum pyrenaicum (Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem) found by P.M. Woodruffe in a protected verge at Farley, where it has not previously been seen to flower. It was also recorded by N. Dixon at Broughton Gifford, The Common, under S-facing hedges. This updates a well-known colony.

Parentucellia viscosa (Yellow Bartsia) c. 10 plants found by P. Mobsby in sandy soil, Centre Parcs. Only 3rd record for vc8, a NSP but introduced in S. Wilts. Parts quadrifolia (Herb Paris) J. Notman found a colony of 5-leaved plants in Bentley Wood.

Phacelia tanacetifolia (Phacelia) planted on set-aside but has escaped to roadsides at Easton Royal and Burbage, both records by R. Grose.

Polygonum minor (Small Water-pepper) was found by R.M. Veall at West Wellow Common, a new site on drying mud in a damp hollow.

Polypodium interjectum (Intermediate Ploypody) Two records by J.E. Oliver, one in the Smallbrook Meadows Nature Reserve, the other near Tisbury.

Ranunculus ficaria chrysocephala (Greek Celandine) was identified by J. Akeroyd, leading a BSBI expedition in the Tisbury area.

Rosa agrestis (Small-leaved Sweet-briar) recorded by P.D. Stanley at 5 sites in the Whitsbury/Danerham area. (An impressive record, the first received since the turn of the century AH).

Rosa rubiginosa (Sweet Briar) a single bush on chalk in a hedgebank north of Ham Wood, Great Durnford (D. Green).

Rosa sherardii (Sherard's Downy-rose) another D. green record, this at Lower Westwood, a single bush. This updates previous records by some 70 years!

Rosa x bishopii (R. agrestis x R. micranthra) a brilliant record by P. D. Stanley of a rare hybrid, identified by AL Primavesi

Rosa x verticillacantha (R. canina x R. arvensis) another good find by P.D. Stanley, near Whiteparish, the 3rd vc record

Rumex sanguineus var. sanguineus (Red Wood Dock) a rare variety found in the layby at Langley Woods, conf. P. Wilson.

Sorbus torminalis (Wild Service Tree) Two record for this species: at McReath's Wood (D.J. Wood) and Bushy Copse - a mature specimen (P.M. Woodruffe and D.J. Wood.

Tragopogon porrifolius (Salsify)in an unusual site, Castle Hill, Mere, where bare ground provided an opportunity for this opportunist species. P. Hawkings. Umbilicus rupestris (Navelwort) a patch c.2x3m found by J. Ounsted and B. Last, W. of a track to Ansty from Swallowcliff, near Tisbury, BSBI meeting. Utricularia minor (Lesser Bladderwort) at Furzley Common in a wet bog inaccessible in normal weather is a second site for the species. Also at Cadnam Common: both records by R. M. Veall.

Veronica hederifolia Ssp. lucorum (Ivy-leaved Speedwell) identified by J. Akeroyd at Swallowcliff and by R.M. Veall on a roadside bank at Odstock Hospital. Veronica x lackschewitzii is reported by J.L. Presland in a nature reserve in Trowbridge, possibly introduced, and by D.J. Wood at Harnham Water Meadows water carrier. VC recorders need confirmation if these records are to be accepted.

SUGGESTED DETAILS FOR PLANT RECORDS

Latin Name (Common Name), Vice-County, Grid Ref.(6 fig.) Recorder,

Date(Yr/M/D),

Locality and other notes

LIST OF RECORDERS (and approximate number of records entered). Please let me know where I have incorrectly identified, or failed to identify, the owners of initials.

AD A Dale (2), AG----(1), AH A Hutchison (1), AS A Summers (3), AW A Woods (2), BC B Chadwick (3), BG B Gillam (2), BL B Last (54), CK C Kitchen, CMc C McQuitty (3), DF D Forbes (3), DGra D Graiff (5), DG D Green (20), DH D Hodgson (11), DJW DJ Wood (20), DL -------(1), DS D Shaw (1), DSI D Simpson (1), DW D Wall (1), EB -------(1), EG E Gauge (2), ENST English Nature Survey Team (4), ER E Rolls (1), GWG GW Green (1), GY G Yerrington (2), JA J Acornley (23), JAk J Akeroyd (2), JCPR JCP Rollinson (1), JE J Evans (1), JEO J E Oliver (144), JH J Hodgkinson(6), JLP JL Presland (34), JN J Newton (50), JNo J Notman (26), JO J Ounsted (3), JT J Tucker (1), JW J Wall (3), MH M Hardstaff (1), MK M Kitchen (1), MP M Ponting (5), MR M Reed, MPr Mrs Pragnell (1), MT ------(1), MWi M Wildish, ND N Dixon (1), NLa N Langdon (1), PD P Darby (10), PDS PD Stanley (3), PH P Hawkings (1), PM P Mobsby (1), PMW PM Woodruffe (34), PP P Palmes (1), PRS PR Sneyd (1), PW P Wilson (35), RC R Chapman, RCS RC Stern (15), RG R Grose (3), RMV RM Veall (64), RW R Walls (1), SG S Grinstead (1), SH S Hunt (1), SW S Whitworth (1), TD -------(1), WBS Wilts Botanical Society. WT Ancient Woodland Survey 1984 (1).



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