

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The day before I wrote this letter the International Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) launched its global assessment of what we are doing to the biodiversity of the world. This is the largest assessment of the state of nature ever made by over 500 scientists around the world. It is grim reading as at least a million species are now threatened with extinction more than at any other time in human history. Frogs and amphibians have suffered a 40% decline due to drainage of wetlands, pollution and the spread of diseases. A third of the corals and at least a third of the marine mammals are threatened with extinction. They even report that about ten per cent of the domesticated animals that we eat have been driven to extinction.

Perhaps most affecting the plants that we so love is the serious loss of insects, as both the numbers and diversity of insects are declining rapidly. The falling insect population threatens a catastrophic collapse of nature's ecosystems. Insects are mainly threatened by the destruction of natural habitats to create farmland where many toxic pesticides are used. Insects play a vital role in pollination of both natural ecosystems and of many crops and we need to halt this decline.

The IPBES report does not just want to present bad news, it is also a plea for action such as strengthened laws that are properly enforced, changes

in economic and social incentives and increased monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystems. We really need to goad our politicians into action to save the ecosystems and the biodiversity that supports all life on earth. Perhaps the world is waking up at last to heed the prophetic voices that have been warning us for many years, such as Rachel Carson in her 1962 book *Silent Spring*. In 1976 I edited a book entitled *Extinction is Forever* to draw attention to the loss of plant species in the Americas. It has taken a long time for the world to wake up and if we do not heed this new warning the future of all species including our own and all the wild flowers we so love are at risk.

One of the solutions to the problems discussed above is restoration ecology, the rebuilding of some of the habitats we have lost or reduced. This is beginning to happen in many places, albeit still in a small way. This spring I was able to visit such a project on a large estate on the Lizard in Cornwall. It was heartening to see the efforts being made to restore both forest and heathland there. One of the plants that was doing so well in a restoration project was the rare Cornish heath (*Erica vagans*). It was spreading well in the regenerating forest. I hope that all our members have a good summer and see many interesting wild flowers.

GHILLEAN PRANCE

EDITORIAL

Another year over and I'm afraid I failed dismally to meet my New Year's resolution of maintaining my Record Book. I was fortunate to attend many of the meetings that were organised last year, accumulating many new finds and was reacquainted with some old favourites. But sadly, I'm ashamed to say, all the records are still confined to my field notebook. I need a few more long, dark winter's evenings to get on top of it. Summers are meant to be spent outdoors. However, many of you are more single-minded than me and have submitted your Record Books, which have been summarised in this issue by our dedicated band of Branch Secretaries. My thanks go to them for all their hard work in collating your records.

Ro FitzGerald makes an observation in her Branch report that, by participating in recording for the County Recorder, the records collected are 'nationally useful'. I'm sure many of us do submit our records to the National Database, either directly or via our County Recorders, but as many of us are out in the field recording, either for our own pleasure to build up entries in

our Record Books or on field meetings, this may sometimes be overlooked. I would encourage anyone maintaining records to make a point of submitting these data to their County Recorder.

Lyn Jones has kindly produced the centre page spread to this magazine. This is in the style of his web page **visual-flora.org.uk**. In this case he has produced a visual key to the difficult group of white-flowered members of the *Caryophyllaceae*. His stunning photographs, which home in on the key features, certainly aid identification with further features highlighted in the text. The idea is that you should remove this spread from the magazine, ideally laminate it, and then take it out into the field with you. If you are interested in using this technique to aid identification then I can highly recommend Lyn's website.

Finally, Mary and Claire Smith have made some interesting suggestions on how we can use maps to focus on potentially botanically rich areas. I commend their ideas to you.

ANNE KELL



Photos: Lyn Jones

**Copy date for Autumn magazine
1st August, 2019**

NOTICES

THE MEMBERS' WEEKEND INCLUDING AGM AND AFTERNOON TEA, 2019

Friday 6th to Monday 9th September at Wolvercote Village Hall, 1, Wolvercote Green, Oxford OX2 8AB

See insert for the full details and booking information, which are also on the website, together with a copy of the Treasurer's Annual Report.

**Bookings for the afternoon tea and field meetings by the end of July 2019 please, to Sheila Wynn, 17, Southfield Drive, West Bradford, Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 4TU. Phone: 01200 425813.
Email: wfs.gensec@gmail.com**

'Stace Exchange'

Several copies of edition 3 of Stace's Flora have been successfully exchanged. There are still some members who would be interested in receiving a 3rd edition. If you have one that you'd like to donate, please let me know. There are some 2nd editions still available. As before, we suggest that recipients provide the cost of postage and packing (£4) and make a small donation to the WFS.

Sheila Wynn, e-mail: wfs.gensec@gmail.com

Name changes in Stace 4

Available on the website is a list of the species names in the Record Book that have been changed in Stace 4 - a link to the page can be found on the website's home page: <https://www.thewildflowersociety.org.uk>

Change of role

In September, Nicola Dixon will be taking on a new role as Liaison Officer when she retires as a member of the executive committee. The new role will allow her to continue to run the popular e-mail alert service and work towards developing stronger links with the wider botanical community. In order to do this Nicola will work closely with the executive committee and continue to attend committee meetings. Nicola can be contacted at:

wfs.liaisonofficer@gmail.com

Nicola will continue to produce the invaluable 'Alerts' to notify members who have subscribed about forthcoming meetings and availability of places.

**Don't forget to submit those photographs for the photographic competition - digital or prints. Details in the Yearbook.
Deadline 20th August 2019**

BRANCH REPORTS FOR 2018

BRANCH A, KENT

Annual	New	Total
Jill Albery		191
Pam Smith		325
Cumulative		
José Gibbs	137	335
Rosemary Roberts	2	1063
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Doug Grant	7	1876
Susan Pittman	4	1252
Sue Poyser	21	1908

Jill provided a first diary showing existing botanical knowledge and very close attention given to her own patch, near Sittingbourne; some 60% of her records fell within her postcode. Wormshill is not far away and in a chalk meadow there she recorded Chalk Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and Chalk Knapweed *Centaurea debeauxii*. She found the habitat somewhat degraded, however, from former years, when the orchids had been a sea of pink. An April visit to Cornwall provided a different colour contrast, with Spring Squill *Scilla verna* and Danish Scurvygrass *Cochlearia danica* on the cliffs at Trevone.

Pam has increased her annual total from last year, with botanising in Hampshire, Sussex and Kent. She was fortunate enough to have Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* in her garden on the Isle of Oxney, the first record in that 10km square for some 50 years. As Oxney is still surrounded by ditch systems it

is perhaps unsurprising that her records include four Pondweed *Potamogeton* species: it is not often that one sees Hairlike Pondweed *Potamogeton trichoides* in a record book! This last plant came from a county recording group meeting and she was able to assist the meeting to a sight of Corky-fruited Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*) at Potmans Heath. This is rare in east Kent and recorders had lost sight of the colony's existence for nearly 40 years.

A holiday in Guernsey enabled José to add to her list the orchids which grow in the fields at Les Vicheries Lane, plus Yellow Bartsia *Parentucellia viscosa*, which appreciates the same habitat. The narrow Guernsey lanes were of course a delight, with the banks full of wild flowers. With the Kent recording group, she was able to appreciate some of the specialities of Ham Fen, including Few-flowered Spike-rush *Eleocharis quinqueflora*, and on an

arable weeds meeting at Chartham she saw Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine*.

Rosemary added a further two records to her cumulative diary, so I will mention both. The first was Chalk Milkwort *Polygala calcarea* at the Burham Down reserve. The second was Turkscap Lily *Lilium martagon* in a remote wood in the area of Ridley. We had both been tipped off about this and, by coincidence, I had visited the day before. Rosemary was really surprised to see this growing plentifully in a Kent woodland as she had only seen it growing wild previously in alpine areas of Austria and Switzerland. But it has as good a pedigree here as anywhere, having been reported in the *Phytologist* of 1841.

Doug's records were split between Norfolk and Kent, with the latter benefiting from his participation in county recording group meetings. Flat-stalked Pondweed *Potamogeton friesii* was identified at a Stodmarsh meeting by Alex Lockton, author of the Flora of Stodmarsh, who considers it locally abundant here, although only known in Kent in the lower catchment of the Stour. Doug added two more plants, both hybrids, from a meeting on the grazing marshes of the RSPB Northward Hill reserve. One was the cross between Clustered and Golden Docks *Rumex x knafii*, growing with its parents. The other was the hybrid between the grasses Marsh and Bulbous Foxtails, *Alopecurus x plettkei*, proving unexpectedly widespread by the marsh runnels.



Photo: Anne Kell

Susan has, with pleasure, resumed botanising after a break from 2015, and her records also include a hybrid, that between Goat and Grey Willows, *Salix x reichardtii* at Marden Meadows. Bulbous Meadow-grass *Poa bulbosa* was seen on compacted waste ground by the Medway, in an area probably affected by a history of cement works; while the nearby more natural habitats of Holborough Marshes gave her sight of Greater Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris*.

A couple of Norfolk records were shared by Sue and Doug, as they found Alkanet *Anchusa officinalis* naturalised on a coastal path near Blakeney, and Fibrous Tussock-sedge *Carex appropinquata* at Upton Fen. The East Kent fens accounted for Sue's listing of Slender Club-rush *Isolepis cernua*, some tufts of which were discovered at a county recording group meeting. Another such meeting, at Stodmarsh national nature reserve, gave her Purple Willow *Salix purpurea* and the hybrid between Almond Willow and Osier, Sharp-stipuled Willow *Salix x mollissima*. These, with the various hybrids seen at the WFS Chippenham Fen meeting, resulted in six willows being added to her list.

GEOFFREY KITCHENER

BRANCH M

HAMPSHIRE, ISLE OF WIGHT, CHANNEL ISLANDS, SURREY, SUSSEX

Annual	New	Total
Helen Dignum		559
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Janet Blizzard	122	886
Ellen Campbell	44	861
Janet Cullen	1	1310
Pippa Hyde	9	1675
Rachel Rabey	1	1769
Jacqueline Rose	118	1244
Jill Smith	4	1130
Pat Verrall	6	1864
Peter Whitcomb	3	1024

Helen started her first list this year and with much vigour and enthusiasm went on as many meetings as possible. On the Isles of Scilly she found Bermuda Buttercup *Oxalis pes-caprae* and Orange Bird's-foot *Ornithopus pinnatus*, while at Slapton she saw Strapwort *Corrigiola littoralis*. In Sussex she found Great Pignut *Bunium bulbocastanum*, an exciting new discovery this year.

Janet Blizzard also went to Scilly where she saw Sally-my-handsome *Carpobrotus acinaciformis*, Purple Dewplant *Disphyma crassifolium* and Cineraria *Pericallis hybrida* plus, the hard to find, Dwarf Pansy *Viola kitaibeliana* on Bryher. At the AGM in Devon she recorded Sea Daffodil *Pancratium maritimum*.

Ellen discovered a self-sown Japanese Red-cedar *Cryptomeria japonica*, a rare find indeed. At Rye Harbour she spotted Shiny Glasswort *Salicornia nitens*, while in the ditches

at Pevensey there was the very rare Rootless Duckweed *Wolffia arrhiza*.

Janet Cullen has now been revitalised after a cataract operation and is amazed at the new-found clarity of her sight. Unfortunately there wasn't much time left in the year for recording but she did find Little Mouse-ear *Cerastium semidecandrum* at Dungeness.

Pippa recorded most of her new records on the trip to Shoreham Beach including Starry Clover *Trifolium stellatum* and Italian Catchfly *Silene italica*.

Rachel had one new record to add this year - Curved Hard-grass *Parapholis incurva*; a nice addition to her list.

Jacqueline's favourite finds this year were the rare subspecies of Annual Knapweed *Scleranthus annuus* ssp. *polycarpus*, Suffocated Clover

Trifolium suffocatum and Shepherd's-cress *Teesdalia nudicaulis* at Lydd. On a trip to Kent she was thrilled to see Lady Orchid *Orchis purpurea* and Fly Orchid *Ophrys insectifera* for the first time. Her most unusual species was Glandular Plantain *Plantago afra*, a plant mostly seen in the Mediterranean area.

Jill recorded two interesting plants from Shoreham, namely Childing Pink *Petrorhagia nanteulii* and Oriental Poppy *Papaver pseudoorientale*. Locally she found two daffodils, Pale-flowered Daffodil *Narcissus macrolobus* and Large-flowered Daffodil *Narcissus nobilis*.

Pat didn't get to many meetings but she saw some interesting plants at Arnside including the rare Teesdale Violet *Viola rupestris* and Celandine Saxifrage *Saxifraga cymbalaria* which is naturalised all over the damp walls in this area.

Peter had a profitable trip to Teesdale and found the beautiful Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa* and the Wood Crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum*.

GARETH BURNSNALL



Bird's-eye Primrose

BRANCH N1
YORKSHIRE, CLEVELAND, HUMBERSIDE

Annual	New	Total
Charles Flynn		305
Katherine Glover		760
Kerry Morrison		581
Carol Wilson		323
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Anthony & Rita Grainger	105	1654
Carmen Horner	106	1731
Christine Newell	5	1242
Susan Simcox	120	947
Tom Simcox	126	962
Mary Sorsby	137	598

Photo: Peter Llewellyn

This is Charles' first full diary. He is a competent botanist and has reached an impressive total in his first full year of recording including many horsetails, ferns, rushes, sedges, and grasses which many new record books avoid. Charles is a member of many local societies including The Rochdale Field Naturalists' Society, The Halifax Scientific Society and co-founded The Upper Calderdale Wildlife Network. Much of his time is spent in Todmorden where he has carried out a biodiversity study of the park.

Katherine has had another very interesting year. She joined Hull Naturalists which has the local VC recorder as a member and at his suggestion has adopted her local village tetrad to record in. She was pleased to find Dwarf Thistle *Cirsium acaule* still growing there in Kiplingcotes Quarry. Some of the highlights of a visit to reserves near Ancaster included the rare Thrift *Armeria maritima* ssp. *elongata* and Man Orchid *Orchis anthropophora*. On Katherine's main holiday to the Western Isles she found Sea Spleenwort *Asplenium marinum* growing on a damp castle wall in Castle Bay and loved the profusion of plants including a lovely spread of Corn Marigolds *Glebionis segetum* on the machairs of the Uists. A visit to Newborough Warren on Anglesey brought swathes of Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris* and Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* was a new find at Cors Fochna. She was also very pleased to see all the UK species of *Ribes* in the same year.

Kerry is a new member and has made an impressive start with her first record book. She has been to lots of interesting places and has joined several WFS field trips. On the spring walk along the River Tees she saw White Butterbur *Petasites albus* and, on the Silverdale trip, Angular Solomon's-seal *Polygonatum odoratum*. Spring Gentian *Gentiana verna*, was flowering when she was in Upper Teesdale with the Harrogate Naturalists. Kerry is a volunteer at Harlow Carr (the RHS Northern centre) and so was able to see Purple Toothwort *Lathraea clandestina* in the woodland there.

Carol is another new member and this is her first record book in which she has also achieved an impressive total. She is an able botanist who is writing a flora of Westerdale, a valley in the North Yorkshire Moors. Carol goes out with the North Yorkshire Botany group and Vincent Jones, the local VC recorder. On their visit to the South Gare at the mouth of the River Tees she saw the two rare Pinks - Proliferous Pink *Petrorhagia prolifera* and Tunicflower *P. saxifraga*. On holiday in Norfolk one of the highlights of the trip was Greater Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris*. Nearer home she was impressed by the show of Northern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* on the North Yorkshire Moors.

Anthony and Rita are members of the Bradford Botany Group and went on their annual field trip to Guernsey and Herm last summer where they saw lots of the Channel Islands' specialities like Sand Crocus *Romulea columnae*. They particularly liked the Dwarf Pansy *Viola*

kitaibeliana at Pleinmount on Guernsey, Yellow Centaury *Cicendia filiformis* at Fort Hommett, also on Guernsey and three small clovers, Bird's-foot Clover *Trifolium ornithopodioides*, Western Clover *T. occidentale* and Subterranean Clover *T. subterraneum*. Nearer home they had a day studying Docks at an RSPB reserve where they saw Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* and Greek Dock *R. cristatus*.

Carmen is another member of the Bradford Botanists who also went to the Channel Islands and saw all the specialities there. On holiday in Skye she joined the Skye Botany group on a trip to the Isle of Soay where they saw a good colony of Hay-scented Buckler-fern *Dryopteris aemula*. On Skye she also saw the rarities of the area, Iceland Purslane *Koenigia islandica*, the two Saxifrages - Alpine Saxifrage *Saxifraga nivalis* and Tufted Saxifrage *S. cespitosa* plus Alpine Rock-cress *Arabis alpina*. On the way home they visited the Cairngorms and saw more upland specialities including Alpine Lady-fern *Athyrium distentifolium*, Starwort Mouse-ear *Cerastium cerastoides*, Highland Saxifrage *Saxifraga rivularis*, Alpine Speedwell *Veronica alpina* and Mountain Sibbaldia *Sibbaldia procumbens*.

Christine hasn't been far this year because of family commitments and illness. She did, however, manage a trip to Dorset where she saw Hairy Buttercup *Ranunculus sardous* growing by the roadside and Sulphur Cinquefoil *Potentilla recta* and Green Bristle-grass *Setaria viridis* in Bournemouth. Nearer home she found Woad *Isatis tinctoria* growing

on the canal towpath at Todmorden.

Susan and Tom also went to the Channel Islands with Bradford Botanists. Susan enjoyed visiting the Bridget Ozanne Orchid Meadows on Guernsey and seeing masses of Loose-flowered Orchids *Anacamptis laxiflora* whereas Tom was impressed with the Spleenwort hybrids - *Asplenium x microdon* and *A. x sarniense*, also on Guernsey. On a holiday to Mull they found Oak Fern *Gymnocarpium dryopteris* and lots of Greater Butterfly-orchids *Platanthera chlorantha* growing at Treshnish Headland.

Mary has had another interesting year. She enjoyed a visit to Anglesey where she saw Rock Sea-spurry *Spergularia rupicola*, Rock Sea-lavender *Limonium binervosum* and Golden-samphire *Inula crithmoides*. On another seaside visit on the other side of the country at Cleethorpes she found Lesser Sea-spurrey *Spergularia marina*, Common Sea-lavender *Limonium vulgare*, Prickly Saltwort *Salsola kali* and Common Glasswort *Salicornia europaea*. An outing with the Sorby Natural History Group to look at weeds in the Sheffield Botanical Gardens included Wall Germander *Teucrium chamaedrys*, Four-leaved Allseed *Polycarpon tetraphyllum*, Witch-grass *Panicum capillare* and Balm *Melissa officinalis*.

I hope everyone has a successful year and sees lots of new flowers.

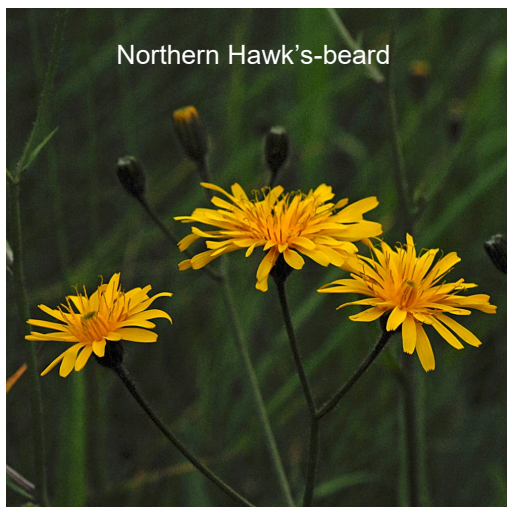
JUDITH COX

BRANCH N2 NORTHUMBERLAND, CUMBRIA, TYNE AND WEAR, DURHAM

Cumulative - Valhalla	New	Total
Richard Friend	280	634
Rob Kelsey	1	279
Kevin Storey	4	240

Photo: Peter Llewellyn

A busy year for a number of WFS members up North, many of them hoping for more opportunities to get into the field this coming season. We all have years where work and family matters take precedence making the times we do get into the field even more special.



Richard recalled a number of highlights last year. Finding new sites for Northern Hawk's-beard *Crepis mollis* in Allendale with John Richards and Lizzie Maddison was one such event. Another took a little more effort. Always determined to track down old records, Richard ended up cycling up a shooting track in

Weardale for 2 hours, then walking for another half hour, all of this to check a site for Yellow Marsh Saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus*. He recalled that it only took 30 minutes to get back down including falling off his bike. "I was rewarded by 80 plants in flower but will go by a different route this year." He found several new sites for Hoary Whitlow Grass *Draba incana* on a BSBI event in Upper Teesdale and an introduction to the fiendish complexity of *Atriplex* species on the Northumberland coast also brought new species. Finally, the botanical wonders of South Gare behind Redcar steelworks, including a bonus Pomarine Skua, brought many highlights.

Although Rob was out in the field last year, pressures of work have prevented submission of his records this year. However, he was delighted to find Swamp Meadow Grass *Poa palustris* on the banks of River Tweed near Norham in North Northumberland, a new record for Vice County 68.

Another busy year for Kevin with few openings for field work. Nevertheless he still tracked down some species new to his WFS record.

LIZZIE MADDISON

BRANCH N3

MERSEYSIDE, LANCASHIRE, CHESHIRE, GREATER MANCHESTER, NORTH WALES

Annual	New	Total
David Morgan		508
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Barbara Allen	61	1281
Susan Bowden	149	923
Bob Hodgkinson	3	220
Ted Phenna	30	1918
Sue Riley	27	1094
Jean Richardson	128	515
Dorothy Ross	7	944
Carol Winder	8	546

This year I welcomed eleven new members to the Branch. Unfortunately, our Spring meeting had to be cancelled due to snow. Other meetings went well and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the members who kindly volunteered to write the reports.

David has always been a keen botanist helping for many years with Atlas 2020. Since retiring in late 2017 he decided to join us. Already his first Record Book is starting to fill up with plants seen during visits to eight Counties in England. Recording in his home County of Cheshire with the BSBI group he saw Lavender-cotton *Santolina chamaecyparissus* and Sea Spleenwort *Asplenium maritimum*. Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* was seen at Beal, Northumberland and Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella* on the Long Mynd in Salop. At Bewdley, Worcestershire he found Common Cudweed *Filago vulgaris*. This is not common and is a nationally threatened plant.

Barbara had overlooked some plants seen on the Norfolk weekend last year - easily done. Two of them were, at Upton Fen, Red Duckweed *Lemna turionifera* and, at Sheringham, Milk Parsley *Thysselinum palustre*. These can be included this year. In VC59 she spotted House Holly-fern *Cyrtomium falcatum* by Chapel Brook, Cronton and enjoyed the summer wandering into Wales and a visit to Minera Quarry gave her Yellow Bird's-nest *Hypopitys monotropa*. She comments on how grateful she is for the help given on all meetings.

This year, during May, Susan spent a second holiday on the Isles of Scilly and was pleased to see many different species to those previously seen in late June. The Small-flowered and Rough-fruited Buttercups *Ranunculus parviflorus* and *R. muricatus* respectively were seen as remnants of bulb cultivation. I was pleased to see she had found Scilly Pigmyweed *Crassula decumbens* at

Bants Carn, St. Mary's. Nearer home at Crosby she was shown Sea Couch *Elytrigia atherica*. I mention this as the cross Sea/Sand Couch *E. x acuta* seems to have taken over along the west coast. Susan has travelled during 2018 and at Selkirk recorded Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustre* - see below.



Photo: Anne Kell

Bob is continuing to record in his local area finding Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber* and Silver Ragwort *Senecio cineraria*. Unfortunately, the hot weather had an impact in his area and even Lytham Green was burnt. He is now in possession of a book on Ferns and Horsetails and hopes to add some of these to his list next year.

Ted also made an early start to the season driving to New Hedges, Pembrokeshire in April giving him Tenby Daffodil *Narcissus obvallaris*. June brought him to Silverdale for the Branch meeting where we saw Fortune's Holly-fern *Cyrtomium fortunei* var. *clivicola*. I understand this differs from *C. fortunei* var. *fortunei* in being limited to 12 pairs of pinnae, whereas var. *fortunei* can

have 12-26. At Seata Quarry in Wensleydale he recorded Prickly Fescue *Festuca gautieri*. At home in Llandudno he spotted Chimney Bellflower *Campanula pyramidalis* on the sea wall.

Sue joined our Autumn Hunt where we spotted Bacopa *Sutera cordata* in the cobbles area behind the shops at Bare, Morecambe. This is a well known hanging basket plant. She was also with us on the Aysgarth meeting where we were successful in locating the Round-leaved St. John's-wort *Hypericum nummularium*. Visiting Seaford, Sussex, Meadow Barley *Hordeum secalinum* was a good find and on Parsonage Moor, Oxon she recorded Long-stalked Yellow-Sedge *Carex lepidocarpa*.

Jean made an early start by visiting Fingeringhoe Nature Reserve in Essex where she saw Early Forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima*. Locally she is helping with The Carbon Landscape Trust which aims to continue the restoration of derelict landscapes left by coal mining, peat extraction and iron and steel production in the North West. They are in the process of bringing 130 hectares back to nature. On one of these sites she spotted Slender Rush *Juncus tenuis* on a pathway, a typical habitat for this plant. She has been to the north of Scotland and at Bettyhill recorded Baltic Rush *Juncus balticus* in its native habitat. On the slopes of Beinn a Chroin was Alpine Willowherb *Epilobium anagallidifolium* and on the Northumberland meeting she saw Lindisfarne Helleborine *Epipactis sancta*.

Dorothy has travelled into four



Marsh Sowthistle on the Norfolk Broads

counties. Her annual holiday was spent in Norfolk and at Howe Hill she recorded the very handsome riverside plant Marsh Sowthistle *Sonchus palustris*. In Whitby she was puzzled over a strange sticky composite which Peter Jepson kindly identified for her as Coastal Gumplant *Grindelia stricta*. I was shown this plant many years ago by Mike Yates and it is good to learn it still survives. Slender Trefoil *Trifolium micranthum* was seen in grassland at Climping, Sussex, distinguished from *T. dubium* in racemes c.4mm and flowers 2-6, whereas *T. dubium* has racemes 5-9mm and flowers 5-20.

Carol had a good find locally with Grass Vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia* and this could prove to be a first for the monad. Disturbed ground in the

Yarrow Valley Country Park, Chorley produced Henbane *Hyoscyamus niger* and on a trip to Stratford on Avon she saw plenty of Mistletoe *Viscum album* growing on fruit trees.

I welcome back my three Valhalla members and David my new member. Perhaps I may receive more recording lists next year. I know this can be a chore, but I would love to hear from Branch N3 members with a short paragraph of their highlights during the year.

As I write this we have snow falling but the Snowdrops and Winter Aconites are peeping through. So as I look forward to the Spring I wish you all good hunting during 2019.

JULIE CLARKE

Photo: Anne Kell

BRANCH O **BEDFORDSHIRE, BERKSHIRE, BUCKINGHAM-** **SHIRE, HERTFORDSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE,** **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Annual	New	Total
Joy Lyon		311
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Roger Cope	19	1236
Susan Grimshaw	3	1182
Roger Heath-Brown	26	1892
Margaret Holmes	1	1027
Sue Kightley	12	1909
Barbara Spence	58	807
Diana Stroud	12	1927

Joy entered her plants on the WFS electronic diary only to find the data all lost a few days later! I'm sure we all sympathize with her. She has recorded a number of grasses seen on a course at Flatford Mill. Other sightings come from an Identiplant course, surveys for the local wildlife trust and various WFS meetings. In particular she has a whole host of good plants from the AGM meeting in Devon. Nearer to home a trip to the Meadow Farm nature reserve gave her both Tubular Water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa* and Narrow-leaved Water-dropwort *O. silaifolia*, while a visit to the Isle of Wight produced Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis* among other classic downland species.

Roger's additions come mainly from a trip to Pembrokeshire in June and a day in Cambridge with Alan Leslie. He was particularly pleased to see the tiny Allseed *Radiola linoides* in Pembrokeshire, along with Floating Club-rush *Eleogiton fluitans*. The

Cambridge trip produced Fortune's Holly-fern *Cyrtomium fortunei*, from a shady brook bank at Coldham's Common. But I think he got most satisfaction from tracking down Wood Barley *Hordelymus europaeus*, near Shefford, Beds, after two unsuccessful years of searching.

Susan unfortunately damaged her knee "doing at 70++ what I could easily do at 17"! This severely restricted her plant hunting. In spite of that a holiday on Arran yielded Giant Viper's-bugloss *Echium pininana* and Honey Garlic *Nectaroscordum siculum*, both thriving in the mild climate there. Back in England she also enjoyed spectacular displays of more familiar flowers, seeing great swathes of Water-violet *Hottonia palustris* and Ragged-Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*. However her most satisfying new find was Dorset Heath *Erica ciliaris*, on the Arne peninsula in Dorset, which she has been seeking for many years.

Next in alphabetical order is yours truly and under the new arrangements for members of Valhalla I get to report on my own year. My list has kindly been vetted by John Swindells. Much of my time has been devoted to recording for the Atlas 2020 project and this yielded my first ever new county record, Turkish Tutsan *Hypericum xylosteifolium*. I'm afraid my list included a number of garden escapes, leading me to think carefully about whether they were truly spreading under their own steam. However, one delightful native was Three-lobed Crowfoot *Ranunculus tripartitus*, thriving in a Kent pond.

Margaret had a hip replacement during the year and so hasn't been able to get out and about as much as she would have liked. However she does have one new record, from quite close to home – Argentinian Vervain *Verbena bonariensis*, flourishing on a very busy roundabout. It shows you don't have to be in the middle of the countryside to find something new.

Sue and Diana have botanised together. They have a number of good records from the Kent coast and were especially pleased with Oxtongue Broomrape *Orobancha picridis*. They had instructions for a site at Deal and were about to give up after an unsuccessful search, when they spotted a single plant in spectacular full bloom. Another highlight was Annual Beard-grass *Polypogon monspeliensis*, found much closer to home – in fact just 100 yards from Sue's house!

Barbara has used the new electronic

diary. Many of her records are from her home area where she has been "square bashing" over five tetrads, yielding Stinking Chamomile *Anthemis cotula* and Indian Pokeweed *Phytolacca acinosa*, amongst others. She also has a number of interesting plants from a holiday in Wharfedale, including Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa* and Spring Sandwort *Minuartia verna*.

In addition to diaries and lists of new finds, I received e-mails from Fay Banks, David Booth and Tim Harrison. Fay has done an impressive amount of Atlas 2020 recording, partly with me, partly with others and partly by herself. She found a host of interesting species at Frilford Heath Golf Club, including Subterranean Clover *Trifolium subterraneum*, Rough Clover *T. scabrum* and Knotted Clover *T. striatum*. Her highlights from trips with me were mainly arable weeds, including Night-flowering Catchfly *Silene noctiflora* and Prickly Poppy *Papaver argemone*. David Booth wrote reporting the sad death of his wife Rosemary (née Schwerdt), which was reported in the Winter issue of the magazine. He recalls a holiday on Newfoundland some 15 years ago, where they saw Burnt Cape Cinquefoil *Potentilla pulchella* and other extremely rare plants. Tim's e-mail gives plants seen flowering (or ferns with sporangia) on January 1st 2019, during a walk in the tetrad SU8892 (High Wycombe). He lists 37 in total, including Annual Wall rocket *Diplotaxis muralis*, Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum* and Bilbao's Fleabane *Conyza floribunda*.

ROGER HEATH-BROWN

BRANCH P GLOUCESTERSHIRE, HEREFORDSHIRE, WILTSHIRE, WORCESTERSHIRE, SHROPSHIRE, SOUTH WALES, IRELAND

After recent geographical reorganisations, this is quite an enormous branch now, with 60 members spread through parts of Ireland and West Britain. This makes my secretarial post very interesting and also keeps me on my toes as levels of botanical skill go from absolute beginners up to BSBI County Recorders! My winter post has included Record Books, a Beginners Diary, a poem, photographs and letters and e-mails with plant lists and memories. As communications are so varied, I'm again going to report members' news individually (in alphabetical order) without numerical ranking.

Mornee Button has been a loyal

member for years, doing valuable recording in Gloucestershire (with emphasis on the Cotswolds). 2018 was a really difficult year for her, dominated by horrid health problems. However, she wrote one of her lovely informative winter letters to me, noting her enjoyment of her garden plants and birds and I'm sure members will join me in wishing her happier (and wilder) times in 2019.

Monica Davis had a week in the Isle of Wight in May and saw one of the characteristic brilliant displays of purple Hoary Stock *Matthiola incana*. Usually a garden escape, this may be native here, and looks spectacular on the edges of the chalk cliffs. A photograph reminded me of the thrill



Hoary Stock on the Isle of Wight

of seeing these populations and Monica also sent another very evocative picture of a nice find near home in Gloucestershire – Rosy Garlic *Allium roseum* on a ring road at Warmley with cars racing past!

Ruth Dawes has been recording (like many of us) for the BSBI 'Atlas 2020' scheme round her home in Oswestry. She sent me a delightful note titled 'Meandering the Monty' about days on the Montgomeryshire Canal. Highlights included Large Bitter-cress *Cardamine amara* 'with its purple anthers', pretty Flowering Rush *Butomus umbellatus* and the rare Floating Water-plantain *Luronium natans*, which has always eluded me. Less welcome finds included the introduced Pickerelweed *Pontederia cordata*, but seeing a Stoat and a Grass Snake swimming and a Carrion Crow cracking Ramshorn Snails, must have made up for anxieties about invasive water plants!

Caroline Giddens was a bit tied to home, but managed a Diary addition with the unusual find of Japanese-lantern *Physalis alkekengi* in a pavement crevice 'behind a post box' in Minehead. With her list at 1879 now she says Parnassus 'seems a long way off', but this is still a wonderful total!

Judy Gosnell has been a member for some time for the admirable reason of wanting to support the WFS and its aims. In her first e-mail to me she said dismissively that she 'had no knowledge of botany' (and no liking for keeping lists) but it then became clear that she sees, knows and remembers plenty of good plants on her Wiltshire walks. For instance she

noted how Great Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* disliked the hot summer drought, but that Burnt Orchids *Neotinea ustulata* and Purple Milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus* had a marvellous year in eastern Salisbury Plain sites. She also mentioned one of my favourite winter-flowering stalwarts Field Madder *Sherardia arvensis* spotted on a January walk. I look forward to hearing more!

Ruth Harding is a different kind of recorder, always sending in a neat, careful Record Book, showing a great love of plants and careful attention to their habitats. 2018 included moving house, so she felt that her records might be 'down' from previous years, but she still attended two BSBI meetings and, as usual, monitored several SSSIs. Nine sedges were recorded and a lovely range of orchids including, the threatened and declining treasure, Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio* in a churchyard refugium and both Greater and Lesser Butterfly-orchids *Platanthera chlorantha* and *P. bifolia* at a single special Ceredigion site.

Anne Hercock is a new member based in Monmouthshire. She launched into an active first year, doing the Autumn Week Hunt and then Winter Months, posting records on line and sending me a lovely selection of photographs. A special find, identifiable from a close-up, was the rare blue variant of Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis* ssp. *foemina* in an arable field near the lower River Wye. Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* was in good flower on a Gwent Wildlife Trust reserve – as Anne says 'hopefully the new M4 will not be allowed to destroy this place'.

Her top 'entirely chance' holiday find, by Derwent Water in the Lake District, was the elusive Touch-me-not Balsam *Impatiens noli-tangere* – what a thrill!

Viki Hess, another new member, is based in Wiltshire, and sent in an interesting Record Book. She botanised extensively round home in Corsham, finding nice plants including the declining Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus* growing as a garden weed. She also visited rich sites such as the Pewsey Downs several times, seeing specialities such as Squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica* and the very rare Field Fleawort *Tephrosia integrifolia*. Her book did contain a mysterious date though, as the Lodden Pondweed *Potamogeton nodosus*, seen from the famous view-point on Bradford-on-Avon bridge, seemed to have been recorded in the last century. Delightfully, Viki explained that it had been her birthday treat and the excitement had made her enter her actual birth date by mistake!

Peter Hilton botanised in Turkey as well as joining two Somerset meetings and bravely reports enjoying both in spite of finding the very restricted pioneer flora of some newly vegetated intertidal habitat by the River Parrett a bit boring! He's an extremely busy person, so his presence at WFS meetings is always a real plus.

Graham Lavender is deeply involved with Atlas 2020 recording, running the small South Somerset group which I'm lucky enough to belong to. He has been making great advances into critical species, gaining experience with Eyebrights,

Hawkweeds and Whitebeams among other genera. His courage and dedication with these groups have made them much less intimidating to the rest of us, so they now seem exciting rather than just scary!

Simon Leach also has an unusual enthusiasm (as well as for the cricket played at top level by his son Jack!) for Dandelions! He, Graham Lavender, and Jeanne Webb (known to some members, with her husband Tim, as Flora Guardian of the Rough Mallow *Malva setigera* population on the Somerset coast), have become tremendously keen on *Taraxacum* following an inspiring study weekend with the great expert John Richards. Not only have many specimens been collected and beautifully pressed and mounted for the Taunton herbarium (TTN) but they have found species not only new to Somerset but to the whole of Britain!

Steve Little is also a good supporter of Somerset meetings, as well as being very active in his own county of Gloucestershire. He and fellow WFS member Dave Albon were part of a group which found a whole grazing marsh field full of the rare Pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium* on the Wildlife and Wetlands Trust reserve at Steart – a find which caused much local excitement. Nearer home recording in urban Cheltenham produced some exotic finds, proving that it's worth botanising wherever you are!

Eliza Sackett joined the WFS in May and I can testify to the energy and enthusiasm with which she's begun her membership. She's almost a neighbour in the Quantocks, so we have had most enjoyable botany

outings together and her keenness to learn has been a tonic to me, making me think properly about *why* common plants are what they are! Eliza elected to start with a Beginner's Diary, which admirably she almost managed to complete (praising the way it's arranged and listing any extra plants separately) and she tells me she is sensibly doing this exercise again during 2019 to 'fix the identifications of common local plants properly in her brain'. One of Nether Stowey's more unusual plants Pink-headed Persicaria *Persicaria capitata* has long been established opposite Eliza's house, so this was one of the first plants she recorded!

I'm sure we all extend sympathy and good wishes to Beryl Savigar, who had disabling health problems in 2018 and could do no botany. However, she tells me she is looking forward to using Stace's *New Flora* to search out and identify some new plants during this year.

Sue Townsend is another kind member who has no wish to make lists but likes to support the WFS. She directs her botanical energies to making records for the Shropshire BSBI County Recorder, which means they are nationally useful.

Janet Vernon sent me a lively account of varied botany adventures, including being part of a Chris Packham 'Bioblitz' at a local Shropshire reserve, when many species were recorded in spite of it being a 'scorching July day on bone-dry heathland'. She enjoyed vistas of Marsh-orchids *Dactylorhiza* spp. and Bloody Crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum* in Northumberland, and reported a very nice detail about the

'sweet honey scent' from the 'tiny flowers' of Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*. To cheer my winter days (and send me to put the kettle on) she included a poem called 'Winter Sun', including the lines

...when bracken morphs
to the colour of coffee
and oak leaves fade
to amber and toffee...

This was a delightful gift for a winter-worn Secretary! She also enlightened me when I complained in correspondence about the current fashion for extreme close-up photographs of plants. I find these beautiful of course, but lacking many of the features showing a plant's habit and habitat needed to identify it. Janet most cleverly uses such photos to encourage would-be naturalists to use a hand-lens – something which most of us rely on, but which of course has to be experienced before its essential need is recognised.

Tony Watts, a Somerset member, keeps a life list but does no separate annual recording. He reports that wild flowers have been important to him



Bloody Crane's-bill

Photo: Janet Vernon

since he received a botany book as a school prize when he was 14 and maintains his membership to get the magazine (good!) and to 'support the work you do'. We often concentrate on reporting exciting finds, but need to be gratefully aware of the importance of 'silent' members to the health of the Society.

Pauline and Richard Wilson must be known to many members, both because they are joint Secretaries of the Spring Week Hunt and because of their active botanical life in Gloucestershire and adjoining counties. Members frequently tell me of help Pauline has given them, of good days out with her U3A group, of lessons on difficult plants. As a former Valhalla member Pauline is only adding new species to her list and tells me of a number of rarities. However, I most enjoyed her saying 'I love finding the unexpected' and relating having great pleasure in finding and identifying several Yellow-cress *Rorippa* species from a difficult and rather despised genus! She and Clive Lovatt also found Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* in a local reserve, calling this quaint fern-ally 'such a gem'.

I would like to welcome Aaron Woods most warmly back to the WFS. He was a Junior in the late 1980s (so I will have been his Secretary twice!), but after 1999 his working life took over and it's only now that he is settled managing 17 acres on the Worcestershire-Herefordshire borders that he can keep regular records again. He will be farming to benefit biodiversity (moths and insects have also become a passion) and tells me he has never given up

botanising, so I look forward to fascinating future news from him.

David Wright again concentrated on botanising in his home area near Bangor on the north-east Irish coast. His big effort for the year was getting to grips with more sedges, grasses and rushes, using a number of good guides such as the *Identification Guide to Ireland's Grasses* (Fitzpatrick, Weekes & Wright, National Biodiversity Data Centre, 2016). Results were impressive, giving me much more from these groups than I usually see in submitted Record Books! These plants are a very important element to consider when doing detailed recording in a limited area. His favourite find though was Tuberous Comfrey *Symphytum tuberosum*. Not only is it a charming plant (I do agree!) but it is in a site (in the woods of a great local estate) which has been known since 1886, giving it as David says 'a nice sense of longer-term continuity and connection'.

Thank you to everyone who bothered to contact me, and PLEASE keep your news and views coming – sharing them is such a good part of branch membership. Forgive me if I have failed to include anyone's news – Marian Davidson, Martin Fowler, Anne Griffiths, Barbara Hackett and Chrissy Marshall were all in touch with me during 2018 with interesting questions about photography, the Beginners Diary, using keys and other topics, but without an end-of-year update I couldn't summarise their doings for the report. I hope health and weather will allow you all an excellent season in 2019.

ROSEMARY FITZGERALD

BRANCH T

CORNWALL, DEVON, SOMERSET, DORSET, WILTSHIRE

Annual	New	Total
Margaret Evelyn		148
Chrissy Marshall		119
Pat Parker		65
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Lesley Philpott	3	1022

It's been sixteen years since I joined the Wild Flower Society and I certainly never imagined at that time I'd find myself a Branch Secretary. Although I suspect my willingness to do the job, rather than any expertise I've built up over the intervening years, is the primary reason why I find myself in the role, it's still a pleasure to be able to return something to the Society and help other local botanists develop their interest in plants. Four members have provided me with Record Books (Diaries) or updates to their species lists for 2018, including two Beginner's Diaries.

Margaret lives in Dorset and has made great use of the locality, despite limited mobility restricting her activities. There are some great species in her list, such as Dwarf Thistle *Cirsium acaule*, Hairy Rockcress *Arabis hirsuta* and Lesser Meadow-rue *Thalictrum minus*. A visit to the coast added, amongst others, Common Sea-lavender *Limonium vulgare* and Sea-rocket *Cakile maritima*. She has also found gutters a fruitful habitat for her diary, providing a home for Thale Cress *Arabadopsis thaliana*, Bittersweet

Solanum dulcamara and Common Cornsalad *Valerianella locusta*. Car parks threw up some good species too, such as Wall Lettuce *Mycelis muralis*. It was pleasing to see she was confident enough to start on some of the trickier groups of plants - grasses, for instance, and some of the similar, easily confused species such as Willowherbs *Epilobium* spp., Medicks *Medicago* spp., Clovers *Trifolium* spp, Fleabanes *Erigeron* spp. and some of the yellow dandelion type plants, particularly *Leontodon* and *Scorzoneroideis*. I can see there is plenty of room to increase her total next year, even with a restricted range of available sites, by discovering more of the flora of the places she is able to visit. I hope my suggestions of species to look out for will help her.

My first Beginner's Diary came from Chrissy, who lives rather closer to me in Buckfastleigh, Devon. She made good use of the variety of habitats near her, visiting woodlands, moors and wetlands, as well as some coastal spots. This gave her a very good total for her diary - I counted 119 species. I'm sure having completed the Identiplant course in

2016 must have helped with her confidence in identifying so wide a range of plants. There were some wonderful highlights, including Deptford Pink *Dianthus armeria*, which thrives around Buckfastleigh, along with a species with a south west stronghold, such as Bastard Balm *Melittis melissophyllum*. On Dartmoor she saw Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* and, of course, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*. In local woods she saw Common Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* and Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, in hedgerows she found Greater Celandine *Chelidonium majus* and Black Horehound *Ballota nigra*, and on the coast Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* and Sea Campion *Silene uniflora*. I think she is more than ready to switch to the full diary and I have given her a few little challenges to help focus her efforts in 2019. I'm certainly expecting a more substantial total when I get her diary next year.

Pat sent me her neatly annotated Beginner's Diary with 65 species recorded, a good total for a neophyte botanist. She, like Margaret, lives in Dorset and similarly took full advantage of the many great opportunities to see plants that such a location offers. She found pleasure both in finding common species such as Sweet Violet *Viola odorata* and in learning to identify them correctly, including one of those tricky dandelion-like flowers, Smooth Sow-thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*. Her list included not just the species printed in the diary, but also a number of additional ones that she added in, all correctly placed in the categories the diary provides. She saw a good

range of plants, from the familiar (but no less attractive for it) Lady's-smock *Cardamine pratensis*, Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* and Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, through to less common flowers such as Sainfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia* and Early-purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*. Some of the more recent alien species made an appearance too - Prickly Lettuce *Lactuca serriola* and the dreaded Skunk Cabbage *Lysichiton americanus*. Finally, there were also some local specialities, amongst which were Early Gentian *Gentianella anglica* and Early Spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes*. I've seen neither of these myself so am a little jealous. I look forward to seeing how Pat's list, and her confidence as a botanist, grow in future years.

Lesley's three new entries came from the coast of Norfolk at the end of June. Birdwatching and exploring the area gave her Matted Sea-lavender *Limonium bellidifolium*, Shrubby Sea-blite *Sueda vera* and Dense-flowered Mullein *Verbascum densiflorum*. Her holiday in Croatia can't be counted, of course, but she reports that she did see some wonderful plants. The waysides and hills were covered in the gold of *Dirtrichia graveolens* and there were non-botanical delights to enjoy too. She tells me that on one day the Red Admirals must have had a mass hatching and were floating by in their hundreds and a Scarce Swallowtail was also seen. Most spectacular was an Oleander Hawkmoth just resting on a white wall, of which she kindly sent me a photo.

TIM PURCHES

BRANCH U **STAFFORDSHIRE, WEST MIDLANDS,** **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, WARWICKSHIRE,** **DERBYSHIRE, LEICESTERSHIRE, LINCOLNSHIRE**

Annual	New	Total
Marion Storm		131
Alan Swinscoe		119

Cumulative - Valhalla

Patricia Cox	10	520
Jackie Ellis	99	864
Dorothy Evans	14	1746
Alison Gregory	2	1406
Jackie Hardy	131	784
Sian Matthews	17	690
Richard Pykett	48	790
Marjorie Shepherd	4	948
Mary and Claire Smith	19	1472

For her second year of keeping a diary Marion has concentrated on recording flowers locally. Too locally sometimes, with Ground Elder *Aegopodium podagraria* in the garden! It's good to see that the roadsides close to Marion's home still support a varied flora throughout the months from March to August. Namely, Colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara*, Wood-Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Ramsons *Allium ursinum*, Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* and Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*. Marion has also included a number of grasses with Wavy Hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and Mat-grass *Nardus stricta* being of particular interest as she lives close to the division between the limestone and gritstone areas.

To compensate for being unable to get out much this year, Alan became not only especially observant of plants very close to home, but also encouraged them even closer by digging a small vegetable plot in the back garden. This resulted in a haul of 'wild flowers' including Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata*, Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica* and Prickly Sowthistle *Sonchus asper*. In the village, the pond on the green produced Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus* and Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*. Procumbent Yellow-sorrel *Oxalis corniculata* continued to spread, clustering along the pavement edge by the bus stop and finally, no doubt greatly to the vicar's disgust, Alan recorded Biting Stonecrop *Sedum acre* in the gutters of the church. Two very nice firsts for



Photo: Anne Kell

Dodder on gorse at
Beeston Regis, Norfolk

Alan were Prickly Lettuce *Lactuca serriola* and Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*.

Patricia rejoices that not having to record in flower has finally enabled her to enter Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum* and Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* in her cumulative diary. They were last recorded in flower many years ago, but have been seen at the wrong time of the year ever since. A new record was Garden Pansy *Viola x wittrockiana*. This appeared on a number of lists and, if Branch U's records are anything to go by, it seems the garden escapes fared better in the drought conditions than the wild species. Patricia also notes Sweet William *Dianthus*

barbatus, Annual Sunflower *Helianthus annuus*, Fringecups *Tellima grandiflora* and Japanese Anemone *Anemone x hybrida*. The latter was growing out of a drainage hole in a 2 metre high retaining wall so we can safely assume it was unplanted and unmanaged it.

Jackie Ellis attended her first WFS meeting in 2018 and discovered for herself just how friendly our members are. Botanically, Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* was the highlight of the day. She also attended the BSBI annual meeting in Wales where she saw a number of hybrids, although Jackie's favourites included Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine*, Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* and Thread-leaved Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus trichophyllus*. On her own she made a successful search for Early Spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes* in Dorset in April and, in August, succeeded in finding Violet Helleborine *Epipactis purpurata* in Shropshire - quite an achievement. Jackie admits that on checking back over previous records she realised that a number of commoner plants had been missed from her cumulative list so she hurried out to correct that omission.

Dorothy joins us from Valhalla and has made a point of attending not only the AGM but a number of other WFS meetings. From the former we liked Diaphanous Bladder-fern *Cystopteris diaphana* and Tunbridge Filmy-fern *Hymenophyllum tunbrigense*; from one of the latter Wood Bitter-vetch *Vicia orobus*. A priority in her home county was searching for Wild Pear *Pyrus pyraeaster* as the site is now threatened

by the building of HS2. Her search was successful and she describes a fine tree, looking wonderful in bloom on a sunny afternoon. A tremendous find in Pembrokeshire was Shore Dock *Rumex rupestris*. Dorothy's final new record for the year was, the often elusive, Potato *Solanum tuberosum*. This appeared casually popping up on a building site in the centre of the city.

Alison is another welcome addition to the Branch, also joining us from Valhalla. As she no longer drives it means she has few opportunities to add to her records, although she hopes future holidays will help in that regard. This year, although she was unable to attend the AGM, she was in the area shortly afterwards and was able to track down both the Sea Daffodil *Pancratium maritimum* and the subspecies of Sea Mayweed *Tripleurospermum maritimum* ssp. *vinicaule*. Having seen the wonderful photographs of Sea Daffodil in the magazine we are very envious of Alison's record for the former.

Jackie Hardy made excellent use of WFS meetings this year, with the walk up Ben Lawers being a highlight. The Scottish locations provided a number of alpine specialties that the less fit amongst us can only sit back and envy. Despite the obvious attraction of rarities Jackie's recording is thorough so she has covered everything, from the common Barren Brome *Anisantha sterilis* to the rare Mountain Sorrel *Oxyria digyna* to the very rare Alpine Milk-vetch *Astragalus alpinus* and virtually every group in-between. Ferns are represented by Parsley Fern *Cryptogramma crispa*; trees by

Wild Service-tree *Sorbus torminalis*; sedges by Rock Sedge *Carex rupestris*; water plants by Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii*; colourful flowers by Musk Thistle *Carduus nutans*. Following such a successful year Jackie has already signed up for this season's Scottish meeting.

In common with most of us, Sian found the hot weather in the summer exhausting and not conducive to plant hunting. But she persevered and managed a good range of plants. We were amazed by her record for Sea Wormwood *Artemisia maritima*, seen on the verge of the A52 slightly south of the city of Nottingham. She says it was abundant and it was hard to comprehend that it is still rare inland. Spring Starflower *Tristagma uniflorum* was a pretty find, as was Summer Snowflake *Leucojum aestivum*. A great deal less showy was Little Mouse-ear *Cerastium semidecandrum* so it was well spotted on the top of an old brick



Photo: Anne Kell

Summer Snowflake

wall. Sian tells us that Austrian Chamomile *Anthemis austriaca*, which she recorded on the edge of the pavement, is increasingly used as a component of municipal 'urban-meadow' type plantings in her area from whence it spreads.

Despite the rule changes, when Richard is botanising on his own he prefers to record only those plants in flower. This certainly fixes the 'jizz' of the plant better in the mind.

Weasel's-snout *Misopates orontium* doesn't exactly leap out in leaf but complete with flowers was a good find in Cornwall. Much easier to spot was Deadly Nightshade *Atropa belladonna* on a street in the centre of Nottingham. Of the plants seen at the AGM we liked his modest specimens such as Cornish Moneywort *Sibthorpia europaea*, Strapwort *Corrigiola litoralis* and Shrubby Hare's-ear *Bupleurum fruticosum*. As noted earlier garden plants seemed to last well this year and Richard added Hedge Veronica *Veronica x franciscana*, Silver Ragwort *Senecio cineraria* and Garden Tulip *Tulipa gesneriana*, amongst others, to his list.

Tree-mallow *Lavatera arborea* was Marjorie's first new find for the year. This was in the grass verge at the edge of Chesil Beach in Dorset. Her other records all came from a meeting at Grin Low near Buxton. Here, Creeping Willow *Salix repens* is a must-see as it is a rare plant in the county. Luckily it was growing strongly and had spread quite considerably which is good news. Marjorie's other additions on this trip were European Larch *Larix decidua* and Druce's Cranes-bill *Geranium x*

oxonianum. Both of these tend to be ignored because it is essential to study and key them accurately. The wind had brought down many tree branches enabling Marjorie to see the erect cone-scales of the larch quite clearly. The deciding factor in identifying the hardy geranium proved to be the ground colour of the petals.

It seems very strange commenting on our own records and we must thank John Swindells for checking that they are all valid. Our most astonishing find was Holly-leaved Naiad *Najas marina* in Sussex. Previously known only from the Norfolk Broads it mysteriously arrived in Sussex around 2015. That we weren't seeing things was confirmed to us by a gentleman who has worked on the site for many years. Drainage culverts are often useful and we were pleased to find White Wood-rush *Luzula luzuloides* in one at the edge of a vast new housing estate. We can only suppose it was a garden relic of an old property that once stood on the site. Dumped garden rubbish frequently provides us with much amusement and finding Cabbage-palm *Cordyline australis* nicely settled in by a stream was no exception.

MARY AND CLAIRE SMITH

BRANCH V GREATER LONDON, MIDDLESEX

Annual	New	Total
Ann Allen		194
Jane Lowe		504
Clare Million		365
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Robin Blades	10	1220

My quartet of London botanists roamed widely this year and, despite the drought of the late summer, brought back a fine crop of records.

Ann revisited a favourite site in the Chilterns that I know well. This is College Lake Reserve near Tring in Hertfordshire. Originally owned by Rio Tinto, the vast mining conglomerate, it once housed a giant cement factory. Following its closure in the 1980s, the land was transformed into the marvellous nature reserve that we now enjoy. The late Graham Atkins initiated and oversaw this transformation and we owe him a great debt. Now managed by the local Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), it contains a mixture of chalk grassland, a field full of rare arable weeds and a rich complex of wetlands. Ann has been visiting the reserve for many years and her diary always includes some of its special plants. This year she noted Dragon's-teeth *Tetragonolobus maritimus* that I remember seeing there more than thirty years ago, Straw Foxglove (*Digitalis lutea*) and Large Trefoil *Trifolium aureum*. Earlier in the year she joined a walk that I led through Queen's Wood in North London. One of the highlights was a very thorny

Wild Pear *Pyrus pyraeaster* that was in full flower. Ann was also *pleased* to see the two lowland Birch species, Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Downy Birch *B. pubescens*, growing *close together*, so that their distinguishing features could be compared.



Dragon's-teeth

Photo: Ken Southall

Jane sent me a most helpful covering letter with three excellent photographs of some of her more noteworthy discoveries. These were all Surrey plants: Marsh Gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, seen at Chobham Common; Woolly Thistle *Cirsium eriophorum* from Happy Valley, near Coulsdon; and Fly Orchid *Ophrys insectifera* from



Fly Orchid

Brockham Quarry. Back in London in April, she joined a London Natural History Society (LNHS) field meeting to Mile End Park in Tower Hamlets where John Swindells pointed out Toothed Medick *Medicago polymorpha*, apparently a widespread casual though I have not seen it in

London. Much later in the year, at the beginning of December, she recorded another plant that is certainly becoming more widespread in London - Narrow-leaved Ragwort *Senecio inaequidens*. This was growing at the end of a platform at Clapham Junction Station. A little further out, but still well within the LNHS recording area, she noted Water Bent *Polypogon viridis*. This inconspicuous grass has also been spreading rapidly in many parts of the Capital. Jane saw it in May on top of a wall in Kidderminster Road, Croydon. Much further afield at the edge of an arable field at Alfriston in East Sussex, she added a plant that has largely disappeared from the London area - Rough Poppy *Papaver hybridum*.

Clare also sent me a very helpful covering letter in which she told me, "Although flower recording has often been incidental to other activities such as walking or bird-watching, it has greatly enhanced both". Her walks have taken her to some botanically rich places including parts of the North and South Downs where she saw a wide range of orchids. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these was the Musk Orchid *Herminium monorchis*, which she was shown on June 9th while on a course with Simon Harrap. This was at White Downs, close to the North Downs Way in Surrey. But her own "top flower for 2018" was Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* which she found for herself while walking on the South Downs near Singleton in West Sussex. She also visited Thursley Common where she saw Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and Lesser Bladderwort *Utricularia*

Bermuda Buttercup

minor as well as its two Sundew species *Drosera rotundifolia* and *D. intermedia*. On an April trip to the Isles of Scilly, she saw two of the Island's most ubiquitous weeds: Three-cornered Garlic *Allium triquetrum* and, the confusingly named, Bermuda Buttercup *Oxalis pes-caprae*. Much more local on Scilly was Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*, growing on St Mary's.

Robin generally includes at least one London specialty among his carefully annotated list of additions. This year it was the turn of Walthamstow Yellow-cress *Rorippa x armoracioides*, the hybrid between the native Creeping Yellow-cress *R. sylvestris* and the alien Austrian Yellow-cress *R. austriaca*. He was shown it in early July during a poorly attended Bioblitz meeting at its classic location at Walthamstow Reservoirs where it was first found, new to Britain, by Brian Wurzell in 1971. It has now been noted from a few places as far north as Oban in Scotland and Stace awards it 3 stars as a naturalized 'neonative'. In August Robin was walking in the Saffron Walden area of Essex, when



he came across "a few dozen plants" of the Woolly Thistle *Cirsium eriophorum* on a hillside above Debden Water, east of Newport. This stately plant is very scarce in Essex and it turned out that Robin's site was one mentioned in Jermyn's *Flora of Essex* with records dating back to 1933. This plant can be notoriously shy in flowering and I wondered whether his plants, and those recorded by Jane Lowe in Surrey, might have benefited from the start of the long, hot summer - in contrast to so many others that shrivelled up as the drought took over.

Photo: Sue Grayston



I write this report in late February with the temperatures at Kew exceeding 20 degrees and many spring flowers already out. I look forward to hearing of your future records in this uncertain climate.

DAVID BEVAN

Bogbean

Photo: Anne Kell

BRANCH W, SCOTLAND

I'm writing this report later than usual, so my botany year is already well on the go. Yesterday saw an exciting (if unsuccessful) attempt to re-find an old site for Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* – this involved going in over boots in a very cold stream and trying not to lose those wet boots in deep sticky mud, but flowers such as Wood Anemones and Kingcups were just out and we heard the first Chiff-chaff call, so really felt the uplift of spring. I'm hoping that this moment will come to Scotland before long and rouse energy and enthusiasm among the members of Branch W, because sadly little news came in for 2018. I know that people had huge disturbances, such as moving house, and last year seemed to be an unlucky one for some members' health, but the branch reports are such a valuable feature of the WFS, so my fingers will be well crossed for more news during 2019. Please contact me at any time – it needn't just be when I ask at the end of each year.

Hilary Blyth had a very difficult year when a family bereavement led to her having to manage property at long distance and her botany notebook was lost during one of the rushed journeys – a nightmare we can all sympathise with! However her sharp eyes and keen observations made her able to send me some remembered highlights, including a beautiful show of Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* in Argyll. Finding White Melilot *Melilotus albus* 'where the cinema was burned down' was an exciting confirmation of an old

record as well as being in a dramatic site! And, as well as flowers, Hilary delighted in a comical flock of tiny Twites haunting the museum café at Kilmartin – I'd love to have seen those.

Helen Jackson is one of my most valued correspondents, not just because she writes *such* a good letter, but we share an appreciation of good postcards. This winter my offering of a picture of artichokes gained me a wonderful Scottish Mineral Collection card of a 'slab of stalactitic agate'. Her near-Parnassus total is now 1897, with the very interesting addition in 2018 of Wall-rue x Forked Spleenwort *Asplenium x murbeckii*. This is a really rare plant, now known only from Arthur's Seat where it was originally discovered in the 1860s. Helen, with her sister who was visiting, set off to find the location they had been given armed with the details and picture from *The Hybrid Flora of the British Isles* on a mobile phone! Although some features were difficult to interpret at first, they did manage to find the right plants, which must come right into the category of 'not many people can have seen that'! This must be a very special addition to Helen's list.

Lyn Jones is an extremely active member and he was not only working hard to develop his electronic plant key (visual-flora.org.uk), but leading a successful mountain meeting in Perthshire, which has been fully described in the magazine. His impressive (and enviable!) list of rarities and arctic-alpine flowers from

this time included lovely Mountain Avens *Dryas octapetala*, one of our precious relics from the end of the last Ice Age, the obscure Mountain Sandwort *Minuartia rubella* and another little plant which can be very difficult to spot Mountain Bog-sedge *Carex rariflora* which was flowering unusually freely, possibly because of the hot summer. He also took part in a thrilling climb in Glencoe, with staff from National Trust for Scotland, to find that most curious of rock plants Highland Saxifrage *Saxifraga rivularis*. Like Killarney Fern, it seems to need to grow in constant water seepage or spray, and the only time I ever saw it (in the Cairngorms) both flowers and leaves looked translucent, just as it is in the photograph Lyn sent me.

Alison Wilson says her botany took 'rather a back seat' in 2018, though she did attend one of Angus Hannah's popular 'house parties' in



the Clyde area. When she wrote to me she was looking forward to the BSBI New Year Hunt, preparing to examine each flower for the essential open petal!

Wishing all members a most enjoyable flowery time in 2019 and please tell me something about it!

Photo: Lyn Jones

ROSEMARY FITZGERALD

BRANCH Y ESSEX, CAMBRIDGESHIRE, NORFOLK, SUFFOLK

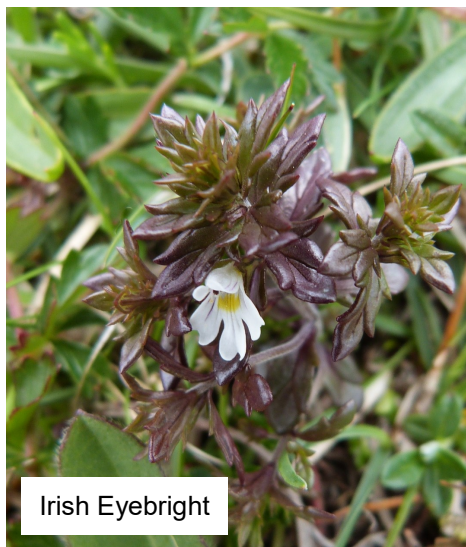
Annual	New	Total
Anne Cooper		463
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Nicola Dixon	89	1559
Barbara Mathews	4	1507
Graham Peck	6	1803
Parnassus		
Sue Grayston	218	2154

Anne presents a lovely diary with a wonderful array of plants. She walks her dog every day and has only just realised that she has never ever recorded Yarrow *Achillea millefolium* and Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* and yet she's walked past thousands of plants every year! Her move from Ipswich to Melton has enabled her to see so many wild flowers within easy walking distance of her home, which really pleases her. She had a holiday in Teesdale and revelled in its flora admiring Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata* and especially Spring Gentian *Gentiana verna*. But her trip to Holme on the north Norfolk coast disappointed her as the drought caused by the long, hot summer had badly affected so many plants, such that the Common Sea Lavender *Limonium vulgare* normally seen in swathes of purple was reduced to small patches. Her personal favourite of the year was Marsh-mallow *Althaea officinalis* with each pink flower seeming to be so delicate and noting that even the stamens and stigmas are pink.

Nicola again sends me a well catalogued list of her new additions. She has been on many meetings but she admits that her highlights would have to be Pyramidal Bugle *Ajuga pyramidalis* and Spring Gentian *Gentiana verna* (that's two honourable mentions for this flower!) from our trip to the Burren in western Ireland. We had a week of unadulterated sunshine unknown for that part of the world. The meeting in the New Forest brought many special plants to our gaze amongst which were the delicate mats of Coral-necklace *Illecebrum verticillatum* and the small but colourful Wild Gladiolus

Gladiolus illyricus. Our AGM meeting in September at Slapton Ley in Devon also afforded her Sea Daffodil *Pancratium maritimum* and, at its only known location in Britain, Strapwort *Corrigiola litoralis*, which, with careful management, is slowly increasing its population.

Barbara bemoans the fact that she misses contact with the group, but she has transport problems and volunteers a lot which takes up many of her weekends. She has managed to add four species to her list which are Spiny Bear's-breech *Acanthus spinosus*, which managed to draw blood from her (I think the clue's in the name!). Other additions were Common Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* carpeting the ground in a churchyard at Sandringham, a garden escape in the form of Garden Petunia *Petunia x hybrida* and, finally, a population of tall and strong Greek Dock *Rumex cristatus*. She hopes to see more of us in 2019.



Irish Eyebright

Photo: Anne Kell

With the changes announced last year about which secretary comments upon their diaries Graham Peck has now come into my camp from John Swindells. He managed to add six species to his list and it's good to see that he sent specimens to referees to confirm a couple of them. Two of these are to be found at Landguard near Felixstowe, namely Glabrous Whitlow-grass *Erophila glabrescens* and, growing on the shingle, Ray's Knotgrass *Polygonum oxyspermum*. I was surprised that he hadn't recorded Flattened Meadow-grass *Poa compressa* before. It can normally be found growing on the tops of walls. He had to move slightly into Norfolk to get his rare Green-leaved Willow *Salix x rubra* which he sent to a referee. Another referee also aided the identification of Juneberry *Amelanchier lamarckii*.

Again, with those changes mentioned above, I had the pleasant task of looking at Sue's new plants which she has accrued over the previous three years (!) which means that she is now a Parnassian. The places that she visited in that time cover virtually the whole of the British Isles! From the far south, in the Channel Islands, to count Yellow Centaury *Cicendia filiformis* and the umbellifer Longleaf *Falcaria vulgaris*. Heading northwards to the Lizard to see Wild Asparagus *Asparagus prostratus* draping the rocks and Pale Dog-violet *Viola lactea*. Eastwards to the New Forest to see two new Bladderworts, Intermediate and New Forest,



Utricularia intermedia and *U. bremii*. To the far west on the Burren, in County Clare, to see by the roadside Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala* and an immediately identifiable rare Irish Eyebright, commonly with purple leaves, *Euphrasia salisburgensis*. To the far north to the Isle of Skye to find the unusual Spineless Acaena *Acaena inermis* and climbing up the slopes on the Old Man of Storr to kneel down on sodden ground in the pouring rain to see the minute Iceland Purslane *Koenigia islandica*, which has a strange worldwide distribution with the Isle of Mull and Skye at the southernmost limit of its Icelandic and European distribution (and therefore a potential indicator of climate change in the British Isles) and Tierra del Fuego on the tip of South America. Such is our hobby, interest and enjoyment (if you can call it that!) of finding wild flowers in all sorts of habitats and to appreciate all that Mother Nature puts before us.

STEPHEN CLARKSON

Photo: Anne Kell

PARNASSUS REPORTS FOR 2018

PARNASSUS 1

	New	Total
Phyl Abbott	15	2519
Rodney Burton	7	2504
Marion Chappell	28	2949
Julie Clarke	22	4164
Stephen Clarkson	45	2836
Heather Colls	33	2594
Judith Cox	60	2671
Paul Harnes	5	2635
Carol Hawkins	39	3249
John Hawksford	2	3001
Graeme Kay	9	3030
Alan Leslie	95	2954
John Palmer	0	5820
Ron Parker	22	2866
Chris Pogson	1	3346
Ted Pratt	164	3002
Jesse Tregale	98	3550

I need to begin with a statement about Sell & Murrell's *Flora of Great Britain and Ireland*: I do not have it. When the first volume was published I thought it was prohibitively expensive and I did not change my mind when vol.4 came next, though its up-to-date account of the dandelions and hawkweeds would have been very useful. I have mentioned before (in my first report on Parnassus 2, in the Autumn 2014 magazine) my unhappiness with one of the new taxa in that volume, a supposed subspecies of Cleavers *Galium aparine* ssp. *agreste*. Geoffrey Wilmore had asked me, then BSBI referee for *Galium*, to confirm the identity of a specimen of this, which I would not do. Now that the set is complete I have had to admit to myself that I can afford it and have started clearing a space on my shelves.

Almost all of Phyl's 2018 additions come from a visit with the excellent Bradford Botany Group to the South Gare, near Redcar. In this company one can surely be confident that the hybrid of Spear-leaved Orache and Grass-leaved Orache *Atriplex x hulmeana*, Schmidt's Elephant-ears *Bergenia x schmidtii*, Uig Hawkweed *Hieracium uiginskyense* and Small-flowered Evening-primrose *Oenothera parviflora* have all been correctly named.

Like Phyl, I mostly have additions these days from group field meetings. In 2018, I saw enough at the WFS AGM weekend to give me a leg-up out of Parnassus 2. The only other one was Honey Spurge *Euphorbia mellifera* by a street in Orpington, found when I was leading a group myself for almost the last time. The

group of seedlings by the pavement which make it countable are at the bottom of the picture; the flowering parent plants which make it identifiable are at the top, at the bottom of someone's drive. In flower, this is a spurge like no other; it has no latex, and, when in flower, the cup-like involucre is full of a sweetly scented liquid which is very attractive to bees.

Near where she lives, Marion saw various unusual garden escapes, including Blue Thimbleflower *Gilia capitata* below a wall in Preston and Cowherb *Vaccaria hispanica* in woodchip at Leyland Station car park. Another Lancashire plant was the rarity Narrow Small-reed *Calamagrostis stricta* in its only known locality in the county by the River Darwen. Further from home and away from any guidance, Marion found Busy Lizzie *Impatiens walleriana* in a pavement gutter at Louth in Lincs.

"They are all favourites," said Julie, but she admitted particularly enjoying the cultivar 'Atropurpureum' of Brook Thistle *Cirsium rivulare*. After a Cumbria Flora Group meeting Julie wanted to check this on a roadside near Penrith, where it had previously been seen in 1988 and took Lynne Farrell with her. I was particularly impressed by two rare but well documented hybrids, between Alpine and Spring Cinquefoils *Potentilla crantzii* x *P. tabernaemontani* in Grass Wood, Grassington and between Soft and Great Soft Rushes *Juncus effusus* x *pallidus* on Mickletown Ings, West Yorkshire.



Julie went to the trouble of scanning reports from BSBI Referees to show to me; Dr Leaney's fully illustrated page confirming the identification of *Symphytum tuberosum* x *uplandicum*, in effect a triple hybrid, carried over from 2017, was remarkable.

Stephen's catching-up process, mentioned by Chris Pogson in his last report, is proceeding apace and should be completed in 2019. The WFS meetings to Hampshire, including the New Forest, in June 2018 and to Perthshire in the following month gave him so many splendid rare plants that it is hard to know which to choose. I have seen so many reports of New Forest Bladderwort *Utricularia bremii* recently that I imagine the way to it is getting quite well trodden, but the Portsdown population of Field Cow-wheat *Melampyrum arvense* is not something I knew about before. Reaching such plants as Mountain Sandwort *Minuartia rubella* on Ben Lawers and Purple Oxytropis



Photo: Peter Cox

Oxytropis halleri on Ben-y-Vrackie must require good guidance and better fitness than I command. Back in East Anglia, he lists Weeping Crack-willow *Salix x pendulina* from New Buckenham Common, Norfolk, which is only very rarely found anywhere near countable.

The high spot of Heather's year was no doubt the Starfruit *Damasonium alisma* which she made a special trip on the M4 from Wales to Bucks to see in flower, having been to the site six years before and drawn a blank. She saw Tower Cress *Pseudoturritis turrita* at Gayton churchyard, Northants which she says is its famous site, but for me the *locus classicus* for this species is a wall at St John's College, Cambridge, where it is not publicly visible. At the BSBI Welsh AGM she was shown three new knotgrasses which have appeared in many diaries with record

dates well before the publication of vol.1 of Sell and Murrell at the very start of 2018; one of them, Creeping Knotgrass *Polygonum chamaechyton* was not published as a species new to science until it came out in that volume, so its name had no formal existence and in theory could not be used. In his lifetime, Peter Sell had supplied a draft of his key of species related to Knotgrass *P. aviculare* to a regular correspondent and it may have been circulated further without any mention of this theory. *P. chamaechyton* was shown to me at the 2015 AGM on the South Gare at Redcar and I was struck by its distinctive habit, but I will wait until I have seen the book before counting it.

Vincent Jones provided the identifications then, and he did also for Judith Cox in 2017, but she has waited until she has seen the volume mentioned before counting it - good girl. In late April 2018, inspired by an article in BSBI News, a visit was paid to the streamside below the RHS Harlow Carr gardens to see naturalised Aconite-leaved Buttercup *Ranunculus aconitifolius* and Caucasian Pennycress *Pachyphragma macrophyllum*. One-third of Judith's additions for the year result from three days on the north Lancs coast with Julie Clarke; of these I would pick out Lancastrian Whitebeam *Sorbus lancastriensis* which is not uncommon on limestone around Morecambe Bay, but it had eluded her for years, and Birch-leaved Bellflower *Campanula betulifolia*, a chasmophyte from NE Turkey which was on a wall at Arnside. I cannot recall having heard of this outside gardens in Britain

before. Nearer home on a vegetable plot in Yarm there was a stray Sweet-William Catchfly *Silene armeria*, another beautiful plant, as can be seen from her husband's photograph.

Paul Harmes has had only limited time recently for UK botanising; he leads tours for Naturetrek, and his name is one of those on the title page of the splendid Flora of Sussex reviewed in the last issue of this magazine. Ted Pratt gave him directions for *Drosera x obovata*, the hybrid of Great and Round-leaved Sundews, near Studland and his short list also includes the much rarer hybrid of Southern Marsh-Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and Narrow-leaved Marsh-Orchid *D. traunsteinerioides*, seen at Mapledurwell Fen in Hants in 2017.

The plants I was most pleased to see in Carol's list were ones which she had found herself locally, Purple Mullein *Verbascum phoeniceum* on a roadside at Wymondham, Norfolk, which may be a new vice-county record, Spotted Spurge *Euphorbia maculata* infesting her front garden and beyond, almost certainly another v.c. record, and a dandelion *Taraxacum sublaeticolor* in her garden. Great credit is due to her for finding a scientific name for Fodder Radish, which is mentioned in Stace without one. The name is *Raphanus sativus* var. *oleiformis* Pers.; this is also the name given by one of the agricultural seed suppliers whose websites she found. *Oleiformis* means shaped like an olive, or an olive tree, or oil, none of which make sense; there is an apter and slightly later name ... var. *oleifer*, which means bearing oil, but the earlier

name is the one which must be used. The websites offer Oilseed Radish as an alternative to Fodder Radish, so perhaps the same seed does for both crops.

Like mine, John Hawkford's botanising is mostly local recording, though mine is for a new flora of the London area as much as for Atlas 2020. His two 2018 additions, just enough to tip him past 3000, are in relation to his local natural history society, the New Mills NHS. Garden Honeysuckle *Lonicera x italica* was in the hedge by a canal towpath near Denford, Staffs, found while preparing for a society meeting in June, and Perennial Honesty *Lunaria rediviva* was naturalised on the edge of the High Peak Trail, a disused railway line near Cromford, Derbys seen at a meeting ten days earlier. A similar but slightly less meagre list comes from Graeme Kay. His local (Cheshire) 2018 additions include *Galium aparine* ssp. and var. *agreste* (see my first paragraph above) at Great Warford, many plants of Golden Alison *Aurinia saxatilis* on an old wall at Deanwater and White Currant *Ribes rubrum* var. *album* (name taken from Wikimedia) in a wood at Sound. Otherwise there are four from the BSBI Welsh AGM, also seen by Heather.

No-one has benefited more, in Parnassus terms, from the publication of vol.1 of *Flora of Great Britain and Ireland* than Alan Leslie. Over half of his 2018 additions are retrospective records, with dates ranging from 1977 to 2005, of segregates of *Ranunculus auricomus* which were described by him in his doctoral thesis and have not been in

any available publication before (nowadays theses can be widely distributed electronically). Other Parnassians need to know that it is unlikely that a Goldilocks Buttercup which they find outside the ranges of the species which he describes will be a good match for any one of them. Alan lists many other good plants. Most remarkable is a population of *Scrophularia grandiflora*, endemic in the Beira Littoral province of Portugal, the nearest match he can find in a group of geographically separated species of which the only at all widespread one is *S. sambucifolia*. This was well naturalised under metal steps giving access to Gildenburgh Water, a former claypit near Whittlesey, discovered on a Cambridgeshire Flora Group outing. None of this group is commercially available for British gardens and there was no obvious local source for it. A good site for plants was a caravan and camping site at Comberton near Cambridge where he found one plant of Jo-jo-weed *Soliva pterosperma*, locally abundant Small Cleavers *Galium murale* and a few plants of Woolly Clover *Trifolium tomentosum*. Alan saw Thorow-wax *Bupleurum rotundifolium* as a casual alien in Cambs. and comments that this has almost replaced False Thorow-wax *B. subovatum* in birdseed. The latter used to be imported from Morocco, but now a grower in Kent has a significant acreage under *B. rotundifolium*, which is supplied to Covent Garden Market as a flower-arrangers subject; maybe the birdseed market is being supplied from the same source. One *Malvastrum coromandelianum* appeared in his own nursery, source not evident, but he discovered that

the compost supplied has some coconut fibre imported from India. Well, maybe, Coromandel is an old name for the eastern coast of India, but the plant is a weed in many countries; I have chosen as an English-language name for it Chinese Mallow, from a list of invasive species in South Africa. On a steep embankment below the A259 near Seaford Alan was shown a plant of Brickell's Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster brickellii*; his species was originally described from material collected by Chris Brickell and Alan in China in the 1980s.

The late John Palmer reached his present total 11 years ago, when Julie was already a good second, but has been kept in the tables since as a target for the rest of you which is probably now unattainable. The reason why may be clear from his obituary on pages 47 - 48.

Ron's records are mostly from the Isles of Scilly in May and the Isle of Man in July; a hybrid Eyebright *Euphrasia arctica* x *E. nemorosa* from Man is not a plant I can recall having seen in a diary before. There are also some Surrey plants of note, Bristle Bent *Agrostis curtisii* at the extreme edge of its geographical range and the florists' Gladiolus *G. x hortulanus* of which there were many plants in a pavement at Worcester Park, from which the council removed it later.

Chris spent a lot of 2018 travelling, especially to Languedoc in France where he hopes to be living for about half of each year. His one new plant this year, in Guernsey where he went with the Bradford Botany Group, was *Salvia verbenaca* ssp. *verbenaca*, a

more southerly subspecies of Wild Clary. It was plentiful on Ancrese Common, although its continued existence on Guernsey needs checking according to both third and fourth editions of Stace's flora.

In the six years from the report on 2013 mentioned in my first paragraph above to this one on 2018, Ted has added 740 to his cumulative total, an average of 123. In her last report on the then undivided Parnassus, covering 1985, Jocelyn Russell said of John Palmer (124 additions that year) "How Mr Palmer keeps it up I cannot think!" Ted's methods, inferred from his list and covering letter, are to travel widely to areas where he already has local knowledge or there is a good recent local Flora, and also to gain a knowledge of Sell & Murrell's coverage of named variants of common plants, of which an unbranched variant var. *simplex* of Autumn Hawkbit *Scorzoneroide autumnalis* is a good example. He found it on the north shore of the Arne peninsula, but it could probably turn up anywhere. His methods don't include going in groups to be shown things where you may not have time to study the plants for yourself. 55 of Ted's plants of 2018 are from a twice postponed ten-day trip to the Isles of Scilly in May, where his greatest pleasure came from Small Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum azoricum* on Tresco, because it had eluded him so often in the past. At the other extreme, there was Alpine Bearberry *Arctostaphylos alpinus* east of Dunnet Head, the most northerly point in mainland Britain. 54 of his records come from his home county of Dorset, where he has a friend with

whom he exchanges news of new sightings. He remarks on the inappropriateness of Stace's English name of 'Saltmarsh Aster' for *Aster squamatus* which was easily found in very dry ground near the Brittany Ferries terminal at Plymouth, the day before the first arrivals turned up at Slapton before our 2018 AGM. The name is imported from America, but I have no idea how apt it is there.

Jesse's list is helpfully divided into three groups, from the Isle of Wight in June, from Guernsey in May (on the Bradford Botany Group trip already mentioned) and the rest. The IOW week was supposed to be a family holiday, but on three evenings Paul Stanley whisked him around the island; his list from there is supplemented by a 2005 record of Slender Centaury *Centaureum tenuiflorum*, since OK'd by Tim Rich. Their find of the hybrid of Silver and

Photo: Jesse Tregale



Plantago lanceolata var. *multiceps*

Hoary Ragworts *Senecio x thuretii* is the first from the island. One of the plants of which he was most pleased on Guernsey is the very inconspicuous Early Millet *Milium vernale*, the only Channel Islands endemic. The freak Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* var. *multiceps* is worth a photograph. Of the rest, I will mention three. Chinese Mustard *Brassica juncea* is quite a common casual, from stray seed of a salad-leaf crop, but a new cultivar 'Red Giant', identified from myfolia.com,

has appeared on a Bradford pavement. Jesse has counted Cambridge Crane's-bill *Geranium x cantabrigiense* a second time, quite correctly, because this was a normal pink-flowered plant and the first one was the white-flowered cultivar 'Biokovo'. A Small Nettle in a sand quarry at Pollington, S Yorks, with very short round leaves, was an excellent fit for *Urtica urens* var. *parvifolia*.

RODNEY BURTON

PARNASSUS 2

	New	Total
Jan Armishaw	92	2377
Dorothy Bullock	16	2029
Gareth Bursnall	59	2468
Everald Ellis	1	2186
Ro Fitzgerald	43	2050
Peter Jepson	21	2087
Geoffrey Kitchener	9	2241
John Martin	72	2074
Dawn Nelson	166	2137
Priscilla Nobbs	62	2406
Janice Reynolds	32	2339
Richard Robinson	43	2076
Sheila Wynn	97	2345

Jan was delighted to find the Smooth Sow-thistle purple-tinged variety *Sonchus oleraceus* var. *litoralis*, and also the Perennial Siberian Wallflower *Erysimum x marshallii* at St Margaret's Bay Kent. Later on in the year she identified Sharp-toothed Mint *Mentha longifolia x spicata* near Kingsdown, Kent. Another delight was spotting the white form of Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa* var. *alba*. Using Sell and Murrell she has been focusing on the

Field Bindweeds and their forms and she managed to find one *Convolvulus arvensis* forma *pallidiroseus* with the corolla tinted pink above the yellow throat.

Dorothy writes that her only surprise was Beetroot *Beta vulgaris* ssp. *vulgaris* var. *rapacea* found in the back street in Earby. There were several plants. She didn't say if she harvested them. Her favourite plant was Fortune's Holly Fern *Cyrtomium*

fortunei at Eaves Wood. It was a magnificent sight.

Gareth particularly enjoyed seeing the Wild Gladiolus *Gladiolus illyricus* in the New Forest and also, on Portsdown Hill, the unusual variant of Ivy Broomrape *Orobanche hederæ* var. *flava*, which is a deeper yellow than var. *monochroma*.

Everald just added one to her list – Salsify *Tragopogon porrifolius*.

Ro enjoys recording escaped Daffodils *Narcissi* because of her involvement in horticulture in the past. They confirm her admiration for the historic varieties which are such good survivors – modern ones often do not last. She also loved seeing plenty of Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum* aka Bath Asparagus; it was a plant

she regretted not seeing for so long. Seeing the pondweed hybrid Fen x Small Pondweed *Potamogeton x lanceolatus* *P. berchtoldii x coloratus* in its *locus classicus* at Caher Bridge was a highlight of her couple of days with family on the Burren.

In 2017, despite his intentions, Peter was unable to attend the meeting at Langcliffe near Settle. So this year, at the peak of the heat wave, armed with the magazine account and a telephone conversation with Julie Clarke, he set off to visit the former lime works near Langcliffe. He wrote that he failed miserably in the heat to finding the reported species, including Tall Mouse-ear Hawkweed *Pilosella praealta* ssp. *thaumasia*. But a few weeks later he found it for himself much closer to home on a hillside near Haslingden as a new county record! However his most



Photo: Peter Jepson

Persicaria runcinata growing by the stream



Photo: Peter Jepson

notable record was *Persicaria runcinata* (a Knotweed with no English Name) in tall herb and shingle habitat by the river in Whitendale, Forest of Bowland, escaped from a garden and now spreading downstream - new to England - there is one previous record in Scotland. By the time you read this you may have seen his article in the January BSBI News about it. It has pretty flowers but it sounds quite seriously invasive!

Geoffrey's highlights were, firstly, Eastern Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* ssp. *urens* on the A20 near Folkestone. This is known to be arriving from the Continent, via East Anglian ports, and this is first evidence of the same happening in relation to Dover. Secondly, Twoscale Saltbush *Atriplex micrantha*, first seen in Kent in 2017, and now found to have significant presence on and near the M20 in both East and West Kent; presumably the beginning of an invasive trend from the Continent.

John really enjoyed the fine display of Greater Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus angustifolius* on Greater London's largest piece of species-rich

Persicaria runcinata

grassland on the way to Suffolk. He was again lucky enough to see some fine species while at work as a vascular plant specialist at Natural England such as the Tall Thrift *Armeria maritima* var. *elongata* at Ancaster; but he was equally delighted on that trip to see Madder *Rubia tinctoria* on a tumbledown wall at Boothby Graffo, where his colleague Alex Prendergast knew it. Locally, there were some fine aliens with Thorow-wax *Bupleurum rotundifolium* in Bristol, found by his friend Rupert Higgins and African Love-grass *Eragrostis curvula* in the centre of the city by the floating harbour, which he found himself, new to VC34. It took a joint effort with Clive Lovatt to name it and it was confirmed by Fred Rumsey.

In February, Dawn got a tip-off of a new find in Portsmouth and headed down to find Small Cleavers *Galium murale* in the paving of Gunwarf Quays residential areas. She assumes it was brought in on tyres from the ferries. Another tip-off for Hampshire was Early Medick *Medicago praecox* at Lee-on-Solent in March; it was a very cold and windy spot, but she felt worth it. April brought more recording for her for the Atlas 2020 in VC12 and three varieties and a form of Sweet Violet *Viola odorata*, all identifications aided by the new BSBI Viola Handbook. A new tulip for her, Cretan Tulip *Tulipa saxatilis* turned up twice in a week - first in a nearby village and then on the Hayle bypass embankment in Cornwall. May gave her the beautiful pale yellow Ivy Broomrape *Orobanche hederæ* forma *monochroma* whilst recceing with Jill

Oakley for a WFS meeting Jill was to lead. She then did another trip to The Burren and found the hybrid of Small and Fen Pondweed *Potamogeton x lanceolatus* = *P. berchtoldii x coloratus* in the Caher River and Narrow-leaved Bittercress *Cardamine impatiens* on the sea wall in Ballyvaughan. A BSBI meeting in Devon in June gave her Hay-scented Buckler Fern *Dryopteris aemula* and a subspecies of Intermediate Water-starwort *Callitriche brutia* ssp. *hamulata* as well as some stunning scenery. Back nearer home in Hampshire a variety of Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis* ssp. *wirtgenii* var. *minor* and *Legousia speculum-veneris* were lovely arable weeds to find in a well-managed estate.

Priscilla's outstanding and unexpected find was made on a Sussex Botanical Recording Society walk on the South Downs at Fulking. She sat down with Gareth Bursnall and some others to examine an Umbellifer which looked a bit like Burnet Saxifrage, but lacked basal leaves. The walk leader admits to being rather dismissive of it at the time, but he later returned to look at it. In due course samples collected were identified by the referee as Great Pignut *Bunium bulbocastanum* – the first record for Sussex! Its British native range is a mere 13 hectads, all far from Sussex, in the Chilterns. She was also pleased to see Mountain Melick *Melica nutans* at Gait Barrows - such a delicate and attractive grass. Her other particular pleasure was seeing Monkey Orchid *Orchis simia* in "a remote part of Kent".

Most of Janice's new species were found on soil dumped either side of a new road at Newhaven and with help in identification from Matthew Berry. Among them were a very healthy plant of Longspine Thorn-apple *Datura inoxia* together with Johnson-grass *Sorghum halepense*, Great Millet *S. bicolor*, Velvetleaf *Abutilon theophrasti*, Niger *Guizotia abyssinica* and Meadow-foam *Limnanthes douglasii*.

Richard saw most of his new plants on meetings. His other highlight was coming to grips with a few of the Glasswort *Salicornia* species with the expert help of David Streeter. He emerged feeling that perhaps after all they were "do-able" in the right season: September.

Sheila finally achieved a long-held botanical ambition - on a wonderful sunny day in late May she went with Peter Llewellyn and Peter Jepson to see the Snowdon Lily *Gagea serotina*, growing on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu on Snowdon. It was flowering beautifully, gently swaying in the breeze and almost impossible to take a sharp photograph of its delicate white flowers. Another memorable day for her was early in May when, at Weeting Heath, thanks to an introduction to the warden from Stephen Clarkson, she was taken onto the restricted part of the reserve where she was delighted to see all three of the Breckland Speedwell *Veronica* species, their flowers fully open in the sunshine. A plant that she had been hoping to see for some time was the Mousetail *Myosurus minimus* that Carol and Bill Hawkins showed her. It was also exciting for

her to see the Tree Medick *Medicago arborea*, growing on the cliff at Clevedon, for which I had sent her the grid ref. and directions. She spent some more time last summer trying to improve her *Hieracium* ID skills

and was very pleased to have managed to identify correctly a higher proportion of the specimens she collected.

EDWARD PRATT

JUNIORS

Alice Coutts 170

Rachel Coutts 151

Anais Harvey 34

This year I received five diaries from junior members, using the Beginner's Diary, e-mailed spreadsheets and Herbology Hunt spotter sheets.

Alice's favourites this year included three orchids: the Bog Orchid *Hammarbya paludosa*, and Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, both new finds, and the Marsh x Heath-spotted Orchid hybrid *Dactylorhiza x formosa*, all found around Shetland. She also enjoyed seeing Dame's Violet, *Hesperis matronalis*. Rachel's favourite flowers this year were Violets - she saw both Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana* and Marsh Violet *V. palustris*, as well as Marsh Marigolds *Caltha palustris* and (probably a universal favourite!) Daisies *Bellis perennis*.

They both found three different rushes: Compact Rush *Juncus conglomeratus*, Heath Rush *Juncus squarrosus* and, a new species for this year, Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus*. On their list were several different Forget-me-nots: Changing *Myosotis discolor*, Water *M. scorpiodes*, Creeping *M. secunda* and Field *M. arvensis* (a new find for

Rachel this year) and Alice also found Tufted Forget-me-not, *Myosotis laxa*, for the first time. Other new plants for Alice and Rachel included Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris* and Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*.

Anais completed her first diary this year, finding plants near home in Hampshire and on trips to Devon and Ceredigion. Anais also enjoyed finding violets, noting that Sweet Violet *V. odorata* smells like parma violet sweets! She included some helpful habitat notes, finding plants in grass verges and footpaths as well as water meadows and river banks. Close to home, she found a selection of woodland plants, including Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca* and Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. She also visited some local nature reserves, finding Corn Mint *Mentha arvensis* and Water Mint *M. aquatica*.

I also received two diaries from members who had been using the Herbology Hunt spotter sheets alongside the WFS Beginner's Diaries. The full set of twelve monthly Herbology Hunt spotter sheets can

now be downloaded from the Wild Flower Society website and are a great resource for beginners: you can start with the current month's sheet with five plant species and maybe it could be the start of an ongoing interest.

As always, I am very happy to receive diaries, lists or Herbology Hunt sheets, but if you don't have time, a letter or picture is also

welcome, to share favourite finds or to ask for help. Appearing in the magazine is of course optional and a decision for members and their parents/guardians. I can be reached by post or e-mail or you can share your finds or ID queries on the WFS social media pages (Facebook group "The Wild Flower Society" or Twitter @WildFlowerSoc).

NICHOLA HAWKINS

THE JOY OF MAPS

Why not plan your plant hunting from the comfort of the settee using an Ordnance Survey (OS) map? It can tell you not only the best places to start looking but also the best time of year to visit. Sounds unlikely? Well, keep reading.

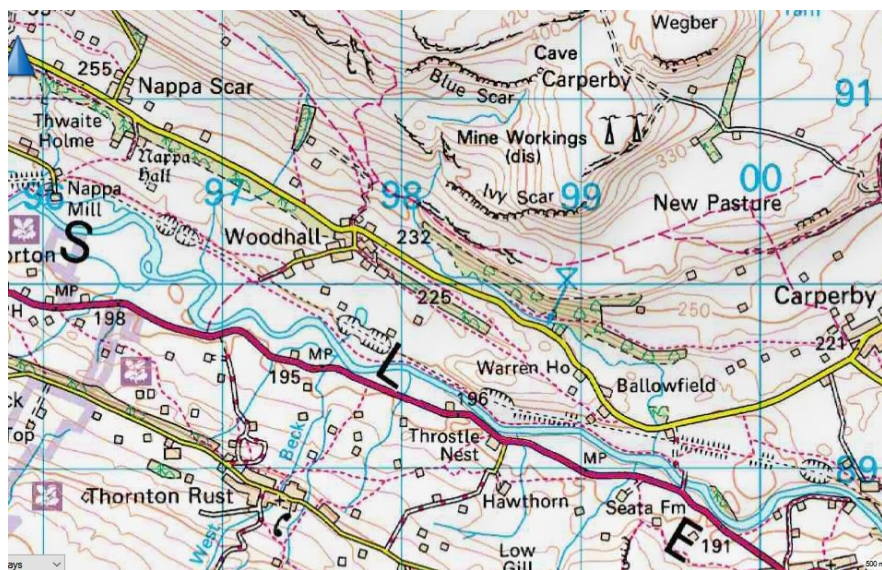
Most modern devices will give you a numerical grid reference to show your position but that doesn't show you the terrain which indicates the different habitats. For this the OS maps, whether a paper version or on a device, are invaluable.

If you want to find a wide range of species you will need a mixture of habitats to achieve this. The OS maps clearly show woodland, water, urban areas etc. But there is a lot more detail than this. It's not just woodland, it's separated into coniferous, non-coniferous and mixed woodland; the water is distinguished as a canal, river or stream; the coast is shown with numerous features. That's useful, it's no good tramping along miles of sand dunes looking for

plants that only grow on cliffs.

Knowing the terrain to expect gives you an idea of the best time to botanise in those areas. In spring the woodland plants, eg. Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*, are racing up to flower and set seed before the tree canopy shades them out so visit that habitat early. Conversely the water and waterside plants e.g. Curled Pondweed *Potamogeton crispus* and Hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum* require more warmth so leave those habitats until high summer.

Another tip is to read the names in the areas you plan to visit. A bit of research on Google, while you are still sitting on the settee remember, will tell you that some names also indicate a special type of habitat. The word 'carr' means a Fen-like wet woodland, usually with various Willows *Salix* spp. and is used in many parts of the country. Other words can be local dialect. In our area we have 'dumble' which is a



Near Aysgarth, Wensleydale - How many good botanical sites can you spot?

wooded valley. Some names may be connected with local practices such as 'rakes' and 'coverts'. The former indicates a feature left by lead-mining activities and supports Spring Sandwort *Minuartia verna*, while the latter is a thicket where game can hide so Snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus* is usually present. This information can pinpoint interesting areas. Lead rakes have a very specialised flora, some very rare, and will be well worth a visit. A little more research will tell you that plants of this habitat are mainly spring-flowering so, again, you will know when to visit.

Once you have practised out in the field and feel confident about finding the obvious features like woods and water you can refine your searches still further. Your flower guide may say that a plant, such as Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, favours south-facing slopes. On the map find a set of light brown contour lines, some of which

will be showing a height measurement. Where they are fairly close together you have a slope. If they are very close together you have a cliff, so be careful! North is always at the top of the map so where the lines face the bottom of the map that is south-facing and you've found your habitat.

You are now ready to sort out scrub and marsh from moors or search for walls and buildings facing north so you can find ferns such as Black Spleenwort *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*. Don't neglect the urban areas, those roads that appear to end in the middle of nowhere may indicate wasteland or derelict buildings, a haven for drought-tolerant annuals and casuals for the interested botanist; think Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acris* and Canary-grass *Phalaris canariensis*.

Now get off the settee and go for it!

MARY AND CLAIRE SMITH

OBITUARY

JOHN PALMER 29th MAY 1931 — 6th FEBRUARY 2019

John was a legend of the Wild Flower Society: surely no-one will ever record more than his total of 5,820 plants seen, which well exceeds the number covered by Stace's *New Flora*. He was born in Derby, where he met and married Pauline, and they subsequently moved to London. John, with an economics degree, worked at the Prudential's Chief Office in Holborn and it was on weekend trips to the countryside that his interest in plants began to develop.

He joined the Wild Flower Society in his mid-twenties and the London Natural History Society soon after. He started his cumulative WFS records in 1961, in the national branch Lotus Eaters. In his seven years there, he recorded from the far north of Scotland, Scilly and Jersey, these and many later long journeys being carefully researched. John corresponded widely with WFS members who could give him detailed directions for the localities of rare native plants. In 1965 he joined the Botanical Society of the British Isles, which added to his list of contacts and provided referees for his Hawkweeds and Brambles. Traffic with the societies was two-way; from 1963 he supplied long lists of records, nearly all aliens, to the LNHS botanical recorder, J.E. Lousley. He also routinely referred problem specimens to the BSBI's referees and sent records to its county recorders.

At the end of those seven years

John's total had passed 2,000, enabling him to transfer to the Parnassus branch, which has the advantage that its members may count any named plant seen wild, whether in the standard list or not. Plants seen earlier could be counted retrospectively, so John was able to add 418 previous records, almost all of which would have been aliens, there being much fewer in the standard list then than now. Also, it was a very good time for alien hunting. Access to rubbish tips was not difficult if one could find a way in, and there were half a dozen tips within a few miles of John's home at South Darenth, mostly in worked-out chalk pits. Woollen mills imported wool from three southern hemisphere continents and the use of their waste as a soil improver brought in many unfamiliar plants, which could be found with careful searching in treated fields. Then, in 1974, he tracked down the occasional plants of Soya *Glycine max* which he had been finding on local tips' to a Thameside factory at Erith where the beans were unloaded from ships by a conveyor across the riverbank and processed for the food industry. Alien plants introduced in this way could be found around the factory, on the riverbank and on tips; one knew that one had come to the right tip when finding plants of Cocklebur *Xanthium* spp., a pestilential weed in U.S. soya crops. None of these sources of records is available to Parnassians now.

He continued vigorously to track down the rarest native plants. In 1968 he found rare Scottish alpine; in 1975 he spent several days scouring the fells before finding Marsh Saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus*. Numbers were low in that period because of the time spent recording for Eric Philp's Atlas of the Kent Flora, but 1978 was a sudden bumper year, when he went camping with his eleven-year-old son Mark, and got to Norwegian Mugwort *Artemisia norvegica* high on a remote Scottish mountain. Back trouble in 1981 put an end to his long drives, but in 1985 he still managed to get to North Wales for a couple of exceedingly rare native species. After that, aliens and a few hybrids accounted for almost all his still numerous additions, but he managed to keep up his growth rate, latterly with an increased proportion of garden escape cultivars. He had passed 3,000 in 1971 and 4,000 in 1983, went on past 5,000 in 1995 to finish on 5,820 in 2007.

He produced a stream of articles for BSBI News between 1980 and 2005, with eclectic and researched observations, such as his discovery of Grey Mouse-ear *Cerastium brachypetalum* in West Kent and the increased naturalisation of *Cotoneaster* spp. Botanising with John was quite an experience: he would see what others would pass by, being alert to variation and the unexpected in plants. Latterly, however, failing memory robbed him of these abilities, although his affection for the WFS long stayed with him. His botanical collection now resides at the Natural History

Museum. To Pauline and their children, Mark and Angela, and grandchildren, the WFS sends condolences.

RODNEY BURTON AND
GEOFFREY KITCHENER



John Palmer