

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

During this lockdown and the cold weather I am spending much of my time writing up scientific papers from accumulated data that needed to be worked up. I have just submitted a paper on one of the tropical plant families that I study, the Dichapetalaceae. This name is derived from the petals that are deeply divided almost in two. The most interesting feature of this family is that the inflorescence arises either from the petiole or from the central veins on the leaf. Many years ago I studied the anatomy of this and showed the gradual merger of the conductive tissue from the leaf axils to the central vein. Not too many plants have this feature of flowers and fruit emerging from the leaf.

On one of my walks around Christmas time along a Devon lane, the coastal woodland was full of fruiting Butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus* with the red fruit in the centre of the 'leaf'. In this case, it is a bit different from the Dichapetalaceae because the leaf-like structure of Butcher's-broom is a phylloclade formed from a specialized stem that resembles a leaf rather than being a true leaf. This species is a member of the monocotyledons in the Asparagaceae, a group that more generally has narrow leaves with parallel veins. Indeed, the first shoots of this plant are thick, whitish and short and resemble those of asparagus, but they soon sprout branches to form the familiar low shrub. The curious name of this plant is because the rigid branches were

harvested in Europe to make brooms for the clearing of butchers' blocks. Research has now shown that Butcher's-broom contains antibacterial oils so it was inadvertently an excellent choice for cleaning in a butchery because of this additional effect. Butcher's-broom has long been used in folk medicine and is mentioned in many herbals such as Culpeper's who recommend the use of the roots boiled in wine to treat urinary disorders. I see that the first time I noted Butcher's-broom in my Field Botanists's Record Book was in April 1953 in the grounds of Beeleigh Abbey in Essex when I was fifteen years old.

GHILLEAN PRANCE



Photo: Phillip Crosby

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the spring and, hopefully, a brighter future, with the opportunity to get out into the wider countryside and botanise again with friends. Do check through the Year Book and see if there are any events that take your fancy from June onwards.

Several of our members managed to make forays into Scotland last year so there is something of a Scottish feel to the magazine this time and I hope this will whet your appetite for the summer to come. There are also articles about Dawlish in Devon and Mawbray Bank in Cumbria, along with a couple of mystery plants still waiting identification and the discovery of a very rare plant (in fact thousands of them) in Suffolk.

By the time you read this the Winter and Spring hunts will be over for 2021. All our hunts seem to be growing in popularity with a good number of people submitting their records and, as can be seen on page 38, the Autumn Hunt is no exception with 33 lists submitted in 2020 and some interesting finds. Several members of the Society also took part in the BSBI New Year Hunt this year and there is a report on page 4 about one group's experiences. Maybe we can have a greater presence in this hunt next New Year.

So enjoy your summer of botanising and I wish you all well.

ANNE KELL

## NOTICES

### Photo Competition

The closing date for submission of entries is Monday 16th August, 2021. See pages 22 - 23 of Year Book for further details.

### Instagram

The Wild Flower Society now has an Instagram page at [wfs.wildflowersociety](https://www.instagram.com/wfs.wildflowersociety). This is an initiative to bring wild flower information and inspiration, plus knowledge of the Wild Flower Society, to a wider audience, creating beneficial publicity, following on from our successful Facebook page and Twitter account.

Do you have a photograph, or several, you would like to share on Instagram to benefit the Wild Flower Society? Please e-mail contributions to Helen Dignum at [wfs.instagrams@gmail.com](mailto:wfs.instagrams@gmail.com), preferably with any extra information such as species or location etc. and whether you want to be named as the contributor or remain private.

HELEN DIGNUM

## YouTube Channel

In January, many of us were fortunate to participate in the Wild Flower Society's first online field meeting with a superb presentation from Chris Metherell about the flora of Lindisfarne (see report on page 20). This was followed in February by another wonderful presentation by Lyn Jones on botanical walks in the Engadine and, by the time you read this, Peter Llewellyn will have enlightened us on his search for the Snowdon Lily *Gagea serotina*. If you missed any of these and would like to view the talks then they were videoed and are now available to view on our own YouTube Channel. Go to YouTube and put 'The Wild Flower Society' in the search bar and this should take you straight to the presentations. It is planned to video future online field meetings and these will be uploaded to the same address. Our next online meeting in the programme is on 20th April and is another presentation from Chris Metherell, this time on the orchids of the north-east. See page 3 of the Year Book for further details.

## Errata

Oops! In my haste I inserted the wrong picture onto page 24 of the winter issue of the Wild Flower Magazine. The illustration of Hazel should have been the one opposite. Instead an incorrectly labelled picture of Alder appeared.

EDITOR

Spring Week Hunt 2020. The total number of plants seen should read 305 not 148.

## Deaths

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of two long standing members of the Society. Sadly, Pat Verrall passed away in December and an obituary to her will appear in the Summer issue of the magazine. Derek Holland passed away in November. He assisted his wife, Lorna, with the compilation of the Spring Week Hunt for 16 years. On pages 42 to 44 there are also obituaries to Mike Shaw and Eileen Taylor.

## Change to Competition Branch Secretaries

Pat Verrall co-ordinated the results of the 10km Square Study (South) for many years and Jill Oakley has kindly agreed to take on this role from 2020. Her e-mail address is [jill.oakley20@gmail.com](mailto:jill.oakley20@gmail.com)

**Copy date for Summer magazine  
1st May, 2021**



Hazel catkins and  
female flowers

Photo: Dennis Kell

# BSBI NEW YEAR PLANT HUNT 2021

The BSBI have organised a New Year Plant Hunt for the last ten years and it has steadily gained in popularity, with over 1800 people participating this New Year. The hunt runs for four days over the New Year period and volunteers are asked to list the plants they find in flower over a three hour period on any one, or more, of the days. The results can either be submitted immediately using a smartphone or can be uploaded later in the comfort of their home. 1,195 lists were submitted and 710 different plant species were found in bloom across the country in 2021. The four species most frequently recorded in flower in 2021 were Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*, Dandelion *Taraxacum* agg., and Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua*. The full results can be found on the BSBI website, [bsbi.org](http://bsbi.org).

Several members of WFS participated, often in conjunction with their Winter Months Hunt and, at least four of the longest lists were submitted by members of WFS. Below, three members of the Society report on their experience.

Hopefully, in the future, members of the WFS can make an annual contribution to the BSBI hunt. Post-Covid we plan to advertise this in our annual meetings programme so that groups of members can meet up and collectively take part in a three hour hunt over the New Year in a range of locations around the country.

## New Year Plant Hunts by Sussex WFS Members

A group of Sussex botanists have participated in several previous BSBI New Year Plant Hunts, but this year we limited our plant hunting to pairs. On a very cold New Year's Day Jill Oakley and Helen Dignum went to Pagham Shore, West Sussex while Sue Denness and Dawn Nelson went to Hayling Island, Hampshire. Both are coastal locations with vegetated shingle, scrubland, garden escapes and a mild maritime climate conducive to flowering. There had been some frosts but no snow.

Jill and I had the advantage of knowing Pagham well, having done a BSBI New Year Plant Hunt last year and Jill had visited earlier in December as part of her Winter Plant Hunt.

We started with the Southern Co-operative shop flower bed and verge, opposite the Pagham shore car park. We were rewarded with Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis* and Rescue Brome *Ceratochloa cathartica*. The scrubland by the car park yielded Fennel *Foeniculum vulgare*, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* and the usual weedy suspects like Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum* and Petty Spurge *Euphorbia peplus*, etc. Finding Jersey Cudweed *Laphangium luteoalbum* in the pavement margin, we made our way to the shore, passing returning New Year swimmers.

Plants found flowering in the first four days of January - Photos - Helen Dignum and Dennis Kell





After exploring westwards along the shingle bank, finding Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber* and Sicilian Chamomile *Anthemis punctata*, we returned to the road between the beach houses, finding garden escapes like Red-hot-poker *Kniphofia uvaria*. After a coffee break in our cars, we went east through scrubland to the beach, finding the previously identified Lesser Mexican-stonecrop *Sedum kimmachii* in the Gorse, the known site of Corsican Hellebore *Helleborus argutifolius* and a garden escape, Spring Starflower *Tristagma uniflorum*. We were pleased with our total of 62, but I was really cold by the time we finished.

3<sup>rd</sup> January saw me out with Dawn Nelson, at West Dean and Singleton villages north of Chichester. We started at the Trundle, which is a hill with fine chalk grassland but unrewarding for winter flowers and too crowded with other walkers. Some field margins and waste land were more rewarding. Then we went down to the villages of West Dean and Singleton to explore their streets, churchyards and cemeteries. A pleasure of botanising with others is when they show you places you hadn't discovered – I had never noticed the pond in Singleton nor the graveyard in West Dean, where we found Hazel *Corylus avellana* catkins, and the second graveyard with Primrose *Primula vulgaris* and Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna*. Total 57

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day I had a walk from home around my local villages, finding Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* on the stream bank, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, two Fleabanes (having learnt to

identify them in Pagham), Butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus* and Holly *Ilex aquifolium*. Total 42.

HELEN DIGNUM

### **NYPH Hayling Island, Hampshire.**

On January 1st we started our first botanical foray of the year at Hayling Island.

We met up at the Oyster Beds car park, by the old Billy line railway track, which usually has something in flower at all times of year. We found Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Hawkweed Oxtongue *Picris hieracioides* and Annual Mercury *Mercurialis annua* almost immediately, followed by Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Hemlock *Conium maculatum* and Japanese Honeysuckle *Lonicera japonica*, plus another 30 species.

Moving down to the south of the island we stopped on the way to see Butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus* in a woodland. Then, on the sandy verges near the beach we found another 15 species including Round-leaved Crane's-bill *Geranium rotundifolium* and Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne*.

After a rather chilly sandwich lunch sitting on rocks, carefully social distancing (rather than in our usual stop which is a very nice beach-side restaurant) we spotted Sea Spurge *Euphorbia paralias* and Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima* on the beach. Spanish-dagger *Yucca gloriosa*, an escape from the yacht club, was in flower on a sandy ridge. We found the final few species around the lifeboat station. These included

Hare's-foot Clover *Trifolium arvense*, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* and Hoary Mustard *Hirschfeldia incana*. Total 70

DAWN NELSON AND  
SUE DENNESS

**NYPH Petworth, West Sussex.**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> January Jill Oakley and I set out on our hunt around Petworth, a town we often visit with Dawn Nelson for the Winter Months Hunt. The Sylvia Beaufoy Centre car park gave us our first finds including Mexican Fleabane *Erigeron karvinskianus* and Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis*. We then walked to the allotments passing Herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum* and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* on the verge. The allotment plots ranged from recently cultivated to overgrown. Our finds included many common annuals, among them Small Nettle *Urtica urens* and Grey Field-speedwell *Veronica polita*. There were vigorous perennials like False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* but we were particularly pleased to record Small-flowered Crane's-bill *Geranium pusillum* and Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor*.

Heading for the town centre car park we passed an unmown bank, recording several species there, including Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, Common Couch *Elymus repens* and Perforate St John's-wort *Hypericum perforatum*. In the car park, by a wall, in a sheltered corner, we found a Petworth speciality in flower - Thick-leaved Stonecrop *Sedum dasyphyllum*. We continued along twittens (alleyways) and rough tracks spotting Greater Celandine *Chelidonium majus* and Yellow Corydalis *Pseudofumaria lutea*; then to another allotment site giving us several more species including Shaggy-solider *Galinsoga quadriradiata* and self-sown Greater Quaking-grass *Briza maxima* before finding Rescue Brome *Ceratochloa cathartica* on a grass verge and nearby a bench for our lunch time stop. The final part of the hunt was in the Parish Churchyard where Lesser Hawkbit *Leontodon saxatilis* and Mouse-ear-hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum* were flowering. Total 78.

SUE DENNESS

Location	Spp. No.	Botanists	Date
Petworth, W. Sussex	78	Sue Denness, Jill Oakley	3 <sup>rd</sup> Jan
Petersfield, Hampshire	71	Dawn Nelson, Jill Oakley	4 <sup>th</sup> Jan
Hayling Island, Hampshire	70	Sue Denness, Dawn Nelson	1 <sup>st</sup> Jan
Storrington, W. Sussex	63	Sue Denness, Sonia Fox	4 <sup>th</sup> Jan
Pagham Shore, W. Sussex	60	Jill Oakley, Helen Dignum	1 <sup>st</sup> Jan
West Dean villages, W. Sussex	57	Dawn Nelson, Helen Dignum	3 <sup>rd</sup> Jan
South Harting, W. Sussex	57	Dawn Nelson, Tim Rich	2 <sup>nd</sup> Jan
Shoreham Beach, W. Sussex	49	Sue Denness, Jacky Woolcock	2 <sup>nd</sup> Jan
East Ashling & villages, W. Sussex	42	Helen Dignum	4 <sup>th</sup> Jan



## FROM A SIMPLE REQUEST

During the summer, Dorothy Ross, a WFS member, neighbour and friend of more decades than either of us would like to recall, asked me to look at a Club-rush she had spotted along the margin of a local reservoir. It did not look right for Sea Club-rush *Bolboschoenus maritimus* and was, after all, in the wrong habitat, being some thirty miles from the coast. I wondered if it might be the Inland Club-rush *B. laticarpus*, a species that was not identified in the UK until 2010, although herbarium specimens date back to 1891. It is one of the additional species in Stage 4.

A week or so later I took a look, I must say with some difficulty in having to try to socially distance myself from a rather perplexed

angler. Taking an inflorescence home I tried to make an identification. It looked right for Inland Club-rush in having spikelets on 3 - 6 long stalks. However, the other character, the number of 'perianth bristles', proved too small for me to find never mind count. My other source to provide a name was the BSBI *Sedges of the British Isles*; however, this makes no mention of Inland Club-rush, but does throw a spanner in the works with another species *B. yagara*.

I determined to return to collect some when in fruit, as the nutlets of the two species differ. But life is never simple; I discovered the plant to be totally sterile with wizened perianths and not a nutlet to be found anywhere.

Photo: Peter Jepson

Unknown Club-rush





Contacting the authors of the BSBI Sedge Book, arrangements were made to send off some material to hopefully get an identification. Not so simple, lockdowns and furloughs prevent access to Kew for detailed examination as Dave Simpson, who replied by e-mail explained:

“I’ve pressed the inflorescences of the *Bolboschoenus* and planted the basal part in a pot in my pond to see if it grows next year. I’ve examined the inflorescences as best as I can without a microscope but the result is inconclusive. I may have to wait until I can next get into Kew before I can look at it properly. Unfortunately, with the lockdown and furlough extended, that could be some time. I’ve also sent a photo of the inflorescence to Jane Browning, who wrote the 1996 paper on the occurrence of *B. yagara* in Europe. She’s a good friend and will be interested to see the plant.”

And further, a day or so later, “I just heard back from Jane and she says ‘The photo you send is very reminiscent of *Bolboschoenus yagara*. Confirmation does require

mature fruit’. Of course, the other possibility is *B. laticarpus* but again mature fruits would be needed for a positive ID.”

So back to square one, a project for next year! Perhaps 2021 will be more fruitful in more ways than one! However, our plant may remain sterile and so raise the spectre of hybridity.

This all said, the Club-rush is clearly planted along with a suite of other aquatic and marginals, including Flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus*, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Greater Spearwort *Ranunculus lingua* and a variegated form of Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*. Hence, whatever the Club-rush is, it is likely to be commercially available and so may get planted elsewhere, or indeed discarded from a garden pond and into the wild. We would be interested if anyone else spots this plant, or sees the same on sale at a garden centre or available in a plant catalogue.

PETER JEPSON

## AN UNUSUAL CARROT

Dennis and I managed to escape after the first lockdown by hiring a canal barge and spending a delightful two weeks in the slow lane travelling down and back up the Oxford canal. A pace of life to be recommended and an ideal holiday if you are required to socially distance. The second of the two weeks coincided with the Autumn Hunt so we took the opportunity to record all the plants we

saw in flower along the canal, amassing a grand total of 124 plants. Many of these were riparian in habit but the tow path and locks, notably the lock gates themselves, also yielded some nice plants. As we travelled south through the outskirts of Oxford we spotted a striking Umbellifer growing on the edge of the towpath and vowed to try and get a closer look on our return trip. This we



Photo: Anne Kell

did. It wasn't easy to stop so Den pulled in, I jumped off the boat and he carried slowly on. This gave me enough time to take a few photos and pinch a leaf but as there were few flower heads I was reluctant to pick any more, hoping the photos of such a grand plant would be sufficient to aid identification. Sadly there were no seed heads. The only flora we had with us was the *Collins Wild Flower*

## Unusual Wild Carrot

*Guide* and the nearest match was for Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*. However, I have never seen a Wild Carrot with such stunning bracts before. The leaves were more downy hairy than the usual hispid hairy and the developing flower was not shuttlecock shaped as often happens in a Wild Carrot. So we had to leave further identification until we returned home. Delving into Stace didn't yield any further answers and the BSBI referee felt he couldn't give a definitive answer without any fruits (and, as Peter Jepson found with his Club-rush, he couldn't access the herbarium in Edinburgh). I sent the photos to various members of the Society to see if anyone could shed any further light on the plant and Rodney Burton was able to compare the image with a pressed specimen that he had collected in Greece. This suggested that it might be ssp. *commutatus*. Sadly this can't be confirmed, so it will have to be 'the one that got away'. If you happen to be walking along the tow path north of Oxford and find a striking looking Wild Carrot in fruit please could you collect some seeds and we may yet be able to confirm its identity.

ANNE KELL

## ODE TO THE GENTIAN

There is a wild flower called the gentian  
That I thought worthy of mention  
Whether purple or blue  
That's up to you  
But it certainly warrants attention!

FREDA MILLAR

## A COMPARISON OF THE WILD FLOWERS IN DAWLISH BETWEEN 1903 AND 2020.

In 1903 and 1904 the Dawlish Gazette newspaper published a list of wild plants that had been found by a lady on her walks locally during the months of April 1904, May 1903 and June 1903 and 1904. When in March 2020 the government brought in a lockdown and only local walks could take place, it looked like a good opportunity to see if the plants from April 1904 were still to be found.

Dawlish is situated on the south coast of Devon, facing east across Lyme Bay. The town sits in a river valley with hills surrounding the town. There are four habitats found within its boundary: a small area of lowland

heath on Little Haldon, countryside that is mostly livestock farming, a coastal strip and an urban environment.

In 1903 the population of Dawlish was 4,003 and it was described as 'a popular watering place', with the town confined to the bottom of the valley of Dawlish Water, with the slopes covered by orchards, allotments and market gardens. The Dawlish Warren sand spit was covered with semi-permanent houses, the settlements at Dawlish Warren, Holcombe and Cockwood were small villages, with the farms and estates taking up the remainder of the area. The railway

Foxglove with Dawlish in the background



Photo: Suzanne Jones

that runs around the coast had been connecting London to Penzance since the 1850s and the road network was in place as we see it today. The population of Dawlish today is around 15,000. The valley slopes are covered by housing, with Dawlish and Dawlish Warren almost merging. The Warren sand spit is now a nature reserve and the beach and surrounding area are a popular holiday resort.

### Findings

In April 1904 there were 54 species in flower named in the Gazette article. Four of these were not re-found, Ivy-leaved Bellflower *Wahlenbergia hederacea*, Tower Mustard *Turritis glabra*, Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris* and Bird Cherry *Prunus padus*. Additionally, in April 2020 we found 27 species from the May 1903 list and nine from the June lists in flower, along with 42 that were not listed on any of the 1903/4 lists. Several of these new species were garden escapes e.g. Rosy Garlic *Allium roseum*, which have colonised walls and hedges. In total 128 different species were found in flower in April 2020.

The May list of 1903 named 75 species in flower. Of these, several appear both in April and May 1903 lists e.g. Daisy *Bellis perennis* and Dandelions *Taraxacum* agg. Of the 75 species on the May list, eight could not be re-found in 2020, with two others possibly incorrectly named. There were 26 species from the June list in flower and 25 additional species on neither of the 1903/04 lists. In total 118 species were found in flower in May 2020.

There were two lists for June, which, when combined came to a total of 120 different species. Of these, six had no recognised name in 2020 and another 21 could not be re-found. There was a total of 101 re-found from the combined lists. In addition, 67 species were found that were not on either list, therefore 168 species were found in flower in June 2020.

To carry out a survey such as this requires a commitment to walk a different area daily throughout the period as some species are only found in one area and have a short flowering season. It is therefore likely that there could have been more species in flower that were just missed. Added to this both the surveyors were novices. Species that were just found in just one spot were Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor* and Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*. In contrast, others such as Hedge Bedstraw *Galium album*, Red Campion *Silene dioica* and Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber* were found widely. Alexanders *Smyrniolus satrum* flowered in abundance, like the Three-cornered-garlic *Allium triquetrum*, looked on by many gardeners in Dawlish as invasive weeds. Navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris* flowered across diverse habitats, from the sea front to hedgerows, in walls and on old roofs.

Despite all the urban development the hedgerows are still full of plants and carefully managed by the landowners. The railway line ballast has formed a rocky maritime habitat for many species and the town's pavements and walls have colonies of garden escapes and common





plants. Along with this are the cleared waterways, with just Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* in most of them, the small water plants having disappeared. The most diverse water side species were found along Shutterton Brook, a totally urban stream with a gravelled pathway and light industry and a holiday park running alongside it. The downside was the Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, an invasive species, that had started to establish itself.

The other thing of note between 1903 and 2020 was the number of escapes now living happily in the wild. The most common in town is the Mexican Fleabane *Erigeron karvinskianus* that can be found in every nook and cranny. Unusual plants such as Giant Viper's-bugloss *Echium pininana* have found their way out of gardens and Fig *Ficus carica* and Apple *Malus* sp. trees can be found in hedgerows.

As with the rest of the country the climate has changed with warmer and wetter winters bringing flowers into

bloom earlier and more tender plants being able to thrive. It was seen that in April 2020 there were 27 species from the May 1903 list in flower and another 8 from the June list.

In conclusion, the Dawlish area still has a healthy diversity of plants, while some species found in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century have now disappeared, others have stepped in and taken their place. Climate changes and farming practices have had an impact, alongside the changing use of land in the area. Plants have taken advantage of the current situation, colonising the ballast on the railway line and the urban streets, helped along by man in Dawlish Warren by the creation of a nature reserve and the development of a Countryside Park.

A full report with species lists can be supplied by contacting Suzanne at [suzanne.brewerybarn@btinternet.com](mailto:suzanne.brewerybarn@btinternet.com)

SUZANNE JONES

Photo: Suzanne Jones

# WHAT'S HAPPENING ON MAWBRAY BANK?

Common Spotted-orchids (left)  
Heather (below)



Oxeye Daisies  
(left)



Gorse (below)



Photos: Peter Cox

Mawbray Bank<sup>1</sup> is an area of dune grassland and dune heath on the southern shore of the Solway Firth in Cumbria between Maryport and Silloth.

Above is how it looked in 2005. We went on a guided walk here in May of that year as we were planning a summer visit by our flower group. At

that time our guide bemoaned the lack of resources to manage the area effectively. Previously the area had been mown each summer but funds were not available to continue the practice. Shortly afterwards a booklet *Exploring Wildflowers of the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*<sup>2</sup> was published.

We've returned regularly over the intervening years to botanise and enjoy Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Broom *Cytisus scoparius*, Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, Oxeye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* and many other plants in profusion, but there have been changes.

Within a few years a lot of the Heather was apparently smothered by a lichen species. Then we realised that the sea of Oxeye Daisies was no more and the contrast between large clumps of Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* and Rosebay Willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, bright yellow and pink, seemed to be far less striking.

The southern part of the area once had damper parts with abundant Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* but these now seem to be obscured in long grass. We have seen Northern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* and Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*.

We had long recognised that the southern part was somehow different with its own character and appearance. Someone suggested a past industrial use but we can find no map evidence<sup>3</sup> to support this. Our only clue comes from the iGeology app on the iPad. Most of the area is composed of blown sand but there are old beach deposits in the south. The Oxeye Daisies used to be a striking feature of the southern area, as did the orchids.

Along the way we did manage a visit when the offshore submerged forest<sup>4</sup> was exposed at low tide after

significant amounts of beach sand had been removed. We got an insight into palaeobotany that reminded us of ongoing change.

In 2014 *The Rare Plant Register of Cumbria*<sup>5</sup> was published and we started searching to re-find some of the recorded species for Judith's Wild Flower Society diary. An early attempt was to chase up 880+ plants of Field Gentian *Gentianella campestris* recorded in 2012. We did find several plants in 2015 but have failed to find any in subsequent years. Similarly, we think we found Seaside Centaury *Centaureum littorale* once, despite it being recorded as "frequent in sandy turf" in 2012.

In the Spring of 2018 we found several Narcissus varieties scattered over a wide area and speculated upon their origin. There are other 'alien' plants including well established Montbretia variety *Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora* and Peruvian Lily *Alstromeria aurea* which have survived the passing of time. The native Isle of Man Cabbage *Coinceya monensis* ssp. *monensis* occurs occasionally.

National events like the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 and the current coronavirus pandemic have caused changes in the area. The former removed human influence and probably benefitted the wildlife. This common land luckily(?) remained unfenced at that time. The current restrictions seem to have reduced the human footfall and paths once well-trodden are overgrown.

More changes are signalled by the



presently ongoing construction of the Allonby to Silloth section of the English Coast Path<sup>6</sup> and the proposed *Nature Recovery at Mawbray Banks Nature Reserve*<sup>7</sup>. The cycle path from Maryport to Allonby opened seven years ago and the ground disturbance produced a spectacular transient display of Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*.

The continuation of the cycle path from Allonby to Silloth is now under construction and we're puzzled. The Natural England online plans show the route along Mawbray Bank to be close to the sea shore but it appeared in the autumn of this year (2020) to be running on the landward side of Mawbray Bank, parallel to the west

side of the B5300 main road. This latter alignment should maximise access and significantly reduce disturbance to this vulnerable area while construction takes place. On past evidence from the Maryport to Allonby section, the path is more popular with walkers and dogs than with cyclists.

We found out very recently about the proposed *Nature Recovery at Mawbray Banks Nature Reserve* from the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website. The work should have already commenced and involves a return to the traditional practice of cattle-grazing. The southern portion of Mawbray Bank will be fenced and

Photo: Peter Cox

Transient display of Foxgloves  
at Mawbray Bank





amply access-gated and Belted Galloway cattle will be run on it. This is intended as conservation grazing and should:

- keep unwanted scrub at bay;
- disturb the ground to assist wild flowers;
- keep grass short for natterjack toads;
- create open patches for

natterjacks to hibernate; create habitat for ground-nesting birds.

We're looking forward and awaiting interesting developments!

JUDITH AND PETER COX

#### Footnotes.

1. We use the name Mawbray Bank, not Banks, because the Ordnance Survey has done so for ever. If you search map websites using the plural they tend to fail in their search.
2. *Exploring Wildflowers of the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* can be viewed and/or downloaded freely at: <https://www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk/2019/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/wildflower-book.pdf>
3. The best source we know to freely consult old Ordnance Survey maps is the National Library of Scotland website. All the old O.S. maps of Mawbray Bank starting with the oldest can be found at: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/121141478>  
There are aerial views of Mawbray Bank from the sea at: <https://www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk/2019/places-to-explore/nature-reserves/mawbray-banks/> and from the south showing the two different terrains at: <https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/11/Tidelines-Winter-2020.pdf>
4. Further information about the submerged forest can be found at: [https://throughthesandglass.typepad.com/through\\_the\\_sandglass/2009/12/reports-from-the-solway-firth-2-guest-writer-and-a-submerged-forest.html](https://throughthesandglass.typepad.com/through_the_sandglass/2009/12/reports-from-the-solway-firth-2-guest-writer-and-a-submerged-forest.html)
5. *The Rare Plant Register of Cumbria* by Mike Porter and Geoffrey Halliday was published in 2014. It is intended to make updated versions available for download in due course.
6. The Natural England plans for the Silloth to Allonby cycle path can be found at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/537610/gretna-allonby-report-chapter-5.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/537610/gretna-allonby-report-chapter-5.pdf)
7. *Nature Recovery at Mawbray Banks Nature Reserve* can be found at: <https://www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk/2019/our-work/nature-recovery/silloth-and-mawbray-dunes-and-dune-heath/>

## AN EXCEEDINGLY INTERESTING FIND .....

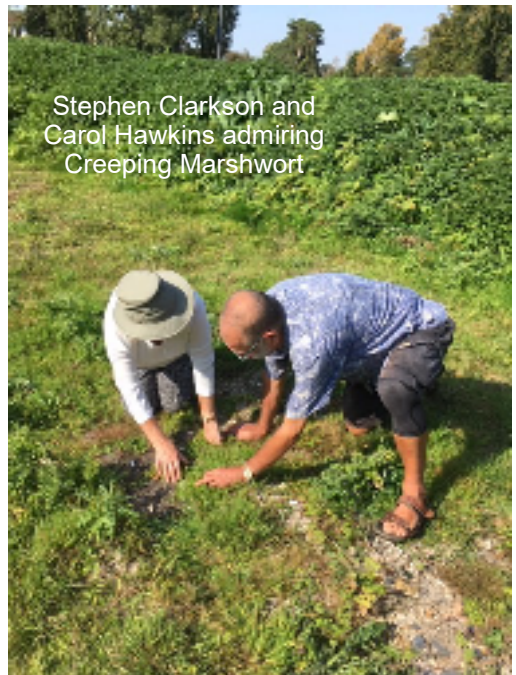
Thetford is a market town in the south of Norfolk with the River Little Ouse running through it. Historically it has been an important place for centuries with a monastery established around 1020. William of Bello Fargo was the Bishop of Thetford from 1071 until moving to Norwich in 1096. There was even a large priory here and it was moved to a larger area nearer the river in 1107. The Priory was closed down in 1540 after Thetford was struck hard by the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Interestingly, further on in the town's history it became the first town in Britain to have a black mayor, Dr Allan Mins, in 1904, who was from The Bahamas.

Anyway, I digress. Although Thetford is just in Norfolk, for botanical recording purposes it is in VC 26 West Suffolk. The area has a very interesting flora as it is situated in The Brecks, which covers an area of approximately 155 square miles and has many unusual and diverse plants found nowhere else, or very rarely, in Britain.

Mark Webster is on Thetford Town Council as part of their Conservation Group. As I understand it, he was keen to create a new flower meadow in the area, specifically a large triangular plot by the river at Nun's Bridge, which is also adjacent to the head offices of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). A digger took off all of the top soil to a depth of 30cm in late 2019 to create a bare area and this soil was left as a raised bank surrounding the plot. It was then left, to discover what might be in the seed bank. Over that winter the area

was covered by a lot of rainwater. In the past this would have formed part of the nearby river's floodplain but because the river has now been canalised this doesn't happen anymore. Over the ensuing months the place was monitored but not a lot seemed to happen. The banks though, showed how rich their soils were because they became a thick barrier of Stinging Nettles *Urtica dioica*. Plants slowly returned in the form of grasses and thistles with plenty of Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus* and Hemlock *Conium maculatum* but in mid-summer an unusual wild flower was found by Ian Woodward, who is a Research Officer at the nearby BTO and has an interest in plants, volunteering with the Breckland Flora Group (BFG) as

Photo: David Albon



## Creeping Marshwort

do I. It got to the stage where even the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) became involved and Pete Stroh and Fred Rumsey confirmed that it was indeed the extremely rare Creeping Marshwort *Helosciadium repens*. This is a RRR Schedule 8 plant which means that nobody is allowed to touch even a leaf without having a licence! It is known only at one other site in Oxfordshire where there are but a few plants. It has also been re-found at a site in Walthamstow Marshes in London in 2020.



Photo: Stephen Clarkson

What is so numbingly mind-blowing is the number of plants to be found there, which are in their thousands. So many that you can't help standing on some of them! But to appreciate this tiny plant does mean that you need to get down onto your hands and knees to see their minute white umbels and, on some of the areas where there is clear earth, to see its creeping propensity. Stunning. Apparently, seeds have been taken to put into the Millennium Seed Bank at Kew.

Members of the BFG were informed and asked to keep things quiet. I visited on my own in early September, parked my car by the river and asked myself where to go next. It took me a few minutes to work out that I was standing right by the site and then I saw another gentleman looking carefully on the ground within a wall of nettles. Literally fighting my way through I find that he is also a member of the BFG and even with Covid-19 restrictions in place we had a good chat and marvelled at what was happening. I chatted low-key with some other

botanic friends who said that they would love to see it and I met them there on 22<sup>nd</sup> September. Again, we had to fight a way through the nettles and they admired the Marshwort as well as finding a lovely Breckland specialist in the form of two tall spikes of Tower Mustard *Turritis glabra*. But what was so interesting was to discover that this spot had been some sort of waste ground in the past with a small area covered in discarded oyster shells, small sheets of broken slate and pieces and shards of thick coloured Victorian glass.

I returned again on the 1<sup>st</sup> October with another couple of interested friends only to discover that there was now a trail over a metre wide through the nettles! The world and his wife had been along to find this unusual plant. All that we can do now is to wait and see what happens this year and hope that we are fully released from the ravages of this pandemic in time for the summer.

STEPHEN CLARKSON.

# LINDISFARNE MEETING - 28<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2021

This is the dawning of the age of .....Zoom.

Before Covid I had never heard of Zoom, but now it's become an established way of life for many people in many ways. Of course, as the WFS has to be with the vanguard of new technology, the 2021 meetings programme now includes a very interesting series of virtual meetings.

So on the 28th January, on a bleak winter's evening, nearly 90 members, a goodly proportion of the WFS membership, settled on their sofas and met Chris Metherell on Lindisfarne for a spring walk, just to enjoy being in the bracing sea air and to admire some of the island's botanical abundance.

Chris started, as he went on, showing technical mastery with a split screen aerial photograph of the island and an accompanying map, explaining that we would mainly inspect a small area called the Snook. He did point out, with a dramatic photograph of a car submerged to its roof, that anyone inspired to visit Lindisfarne should carefully inspect the tide tables. It is to be hoped that the occupants of the car had vacated, as Chris delighted in saying that ultimately the tide would be several feet higher.

We were now shown the film which Chris and Hazel had made last June. The first plant up was Northern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*. An excellent start, as this orchid is

particularly photogenic and Chris maintained the theme of showing plants which looked good on film. We would have loved to be sitting there with him amongst the Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare*. Chris gave some explanation of each plant, but as time was limited, this was relatively brief, but he went on to point out Purple Milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus*, Seaside Centaury *Centaureum littorale*, Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, and Common Scurvygrass *Cochlearia officinalis*, finishing with another fine orchid, Early Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*. Also mentioned were two plants to be looked for on a visit, Curved Sedge *Carex maritima*, last seen in a slack near the houses, and Scots Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum*, formerly quite numerous on the North Shore but now perhaps there is just one plant to be found.

A somewhat different plant discussed is the rampant Antipodean intruder Pirri-pirri-bur *Acaena novae-zelandiae* which has spread throughout the island, but hopefully, is soon to be zapped with liquid nitrogen.

All round, a great meeting. Thanks are due to Janet for introducing this new initiative and to Chris and Hazel for getting us up so close to the plants and creating the WFS meeting atmosphere. It really raised our spirits in these altogether peculiar times.

DAVID ALBON













## COVID PIPEDREAMS

The change was dramatic. Lockdown meant no aircraft flying, so the skies were clear. Very little traffic about, so daily pollution levels dropped appreciably. In the countryside plants grew undisturbed and flourished accordingly. It stimulated latent fancies of being afoot in wild places once more. The distaff is a bit choosy about such descriptions though. "Not like that Whitbread Wilderness," quoth she, "that is just acid peat bog and rough hills masquerading as a deer forest." Those empty miles above Loch Maree are a hill walking favourite of mine but I saw her point. I requested she select a more flowery preference knowing full well it would be North Uist in the Outer Hebrides. Here the air is strong and pure, the seascapes wide and windswept. Many orchids (often the rarer island sub-species), including the huge population of Narrow-leaved Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza traunsteinerioides*, bloom. The *machair* is an absolute joy; a dream of a place to search for wild flowers on a warm summer's day and there is the rub! The old islesmen used to call their winds by a colour and more often than not, the grey wind blows in from the west bringing with it copious rain. The black wind from the north should carry a clear and sharp definition to things, but so often, more than a sniff of snow too. The warmth of the white wind from the south is best of course, but eventually this brings with it that dreaded highland midge. The Isles are beautiful without doubt, but not always enjoyed in comfort. Then again, there is a

driveable road from Berneray to Eriskay. With causeways across each ford, the wilderness aspect is somewhat compromised.

Mountains are my usual choice for a high-spirited stravaig, so I chipped in with the Inverlael Forest just south of Ullapool. Ben Lawers and Glen Clova draw most people with a botanical bent, but the hills from Beinn Dearg through to Seana Braigh do not feature unfavourably, even in this elite company. Outcrops of calcareous schists and ravines offer great opportunities to seek out the rarer arctic-alpines among wild, lovely, free open spaces well away from the madding crowd. Alpine Saxifrage *Micranthes nivalis*, Highland Saxifrage *Saxifraga rivularis*, Arctic Mouse-ear *Cerastium nigrescens*, Highland Cudweed *Omalotheca norvegica*, Chestnut Rush *Juncus castaneus* and Black Alpine-sedge *Carex atrata* can all be sought whilst Norwegian Mugwort *Artemisia norvegica* has colonies on the two main hills. "All true," agreed her ladyship, "but it is not a place for the faint-hearted is it?" Her contention was that only a competent mountaineer could be completely happy there. There are no emergency shelters anywhere and long distances, in a thrawn landscape, demanding first rate navigation could easily take the shine off things for the disoriented. Never mind about the sole Early Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata* ssp. *cruenta* site outside of Ireland; it is unlikely to be for everyone.

In a mood of compromise, she suggested the Parbh: that majestic, unpopulated peninsula which terminates at Cape Wrath. The sole road in the area affords access from Durness to the lighthouse at the Cape. A tourist bus that offers an occasional approach this way, could be used as a good starting point for a foray. Easy navigation can be assured by simply sticking to the coast and provide exploration of the geos and bays all the way south to stunning Sandwood Bay. Clean, clear, sea-scented airs attend an eye-catching landscape - the west seems alive. In the mind's-eye one can picture a return to an earlier age where Manannan (sea god of the

Gael) spreads his veil on the restless Atlantic protecting the sanctified Isles of the Blessed. (It is interesting that the Celtic spiritual insight should put its lands of perpetual life, love and youth in the sea.) There is a floral feast to enjoy all along this coastline and if one continues after Sheigra, the Polin Bay *machair* would form a fitting coda. Spend a week or a day - you will be unlucky if you see another soul before finishing. She had it spot on. This is just the sort of adventure we could certainly welcome, rather better than trying to dodge all those pesky 19 strains of Covid. Dream on!

A HAPPY WANDERER

Steve Little in Coire Garbhlach



Photo: Stephen Plummer

## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE GHOST HUNTER

Once Scotland had announced that from 15<sup>th</sup> July it would be opening its doors once more to Sassenachs, we were up there like a ferret up a drain-pipe! With all WFS events cancelled for the year, we decided to condense our botanical efforts into a single grand tour, using five different bases to seek out five particular plants, Peter Marren-style, though without the glamorous assistants. We set our sights high, knowing that all but one of them revelled in growing at altitude miles from anywhere, but kept our expectations low, not least because of the outside possibility of inclement weather (we did have one nice day) and the distinct possibility of being ordered, mid-trip, to go home, stay home and save lives.

First up, where else, Ben Lawers, and the plant in question, Scorched Alpine-sedge *Carex atrofusca*! "You must have been within about three feet of it" Dan Watson, one of the Ben Lawers rangers, told us after we had failed to find it a couple of years previously. "Past the enclosure and in the flush just on the other side of the wall at the top". So once again we made our way through the woods, admiring several clumps of Wood Fescue *Drymochloa sylvatica* en route, up the Lawers Burn and on up to the enclosure. There we found vast numbers of Bristle Sedge *Carex microglochin*, a classic case of an extremely rare plant being locally extremely common. Then onwards and upwards to the wall, the flush and...Scorched Alpine-sedge! We were left wondering why it hadn't occurred to us to look on the far side

of the wall first time round. It would have only taken thirty seconds and saved us a lot of bother, but today at least the weather gods had been kind...

Next, Cairngorms! Target species, another sedge, Hare's-foot Sedge *Carex lachenalii*. This was our one truly nice day and we were determined to make the most of it. We set off from the Ski Centre up the track towards the summit of Ben Macdhui (Britain's second-highest mountain at 1,309m, since you ask) in bright, warm sunshine and after a minor diversion from the path found quite a bit of Curved Woodrush *Luzula arcuata* in a gravelly flush. The illustration in the *Collins Flower Guide* makes this species look very neat and elegant. In reality, it was rather straggly and underwhelming, but you have to admire its fortitude and hardiness growing where it does; we found some more later on not far below the summit.

To find the Hare's-foot Sedge, we needed to go off piste and that is when we had our encounter with the Reindeer of Doom. From afar we'd spotted it shambling silently towards us. Ill and mangy-looking, it stopped in front of us, gave us a rather baleful once-over and then headed off into the distance, disappearing over the lip of the valley beyond. It was rather unnerving and we wondered if it had been trying to tell us something. Something like, "Don't bother going down there, mate. Your plant's still under three feet of snow." Which is what happened when we got to the



Hare's-foot  
Sedge

first of our possible Hare's-foot Sedge sites.

Undeterred, we made our way back up the valley keeping our eyes peeled for a plant that is neither large nor conspicuous. Suddenly there it was, flattened almost into a ring in the rocky grassland as though struck by a mini meteorite. We sat and communed with it for a while, contemplating its lonely existence high up on that windswept mountainside. As we were so near, we decided to carry on to the summit, where we were greeted by a lone Snow Bunting eager for cake, crisps or whatever else we could offer it. We then started the long trek down, briefly sticking our noses into the top of Coire an t-Sneachda to check up on the wellbeing of some Starwort Mouse-ear *Cerastium cerastoides* that we'd found on our previous visit. It looked as well as this species ever seems to; again, Collins does a good job of beautifying it far beyond the rather unprepossessing reality. We eventually got back to the car knackered but exhilarated.

Species number three and some respite from the mountains: Dwarf

Spike-rush *Eleocharis parvula*. This turned out to be by far the easiest of our plants to find, just a short walk up a creek from the edge of Dingwall. There was lots of it, forming a sort of sward on exposed tidal mud. Although it was a bit early in the season, we soon found ourselves absorbed in trying to find one in flower, so much so that, with our backs to it, we didn't notice the incoming tide until it was lapping round our feet. We sprang up and splashed across the narrow channel that we'd crossed to get to the plants and then watched as the whole lot were swiftly engulfed by swirling water. We couldn't believe our luck; minutes later and we would never have known that they were there (but probably always best to check tide-times before you set off!).

The north coast was a revelation: a rugged, rocky coastline interspersed with pristine sandy beaches and an abundance of wild flowers. A speculative foray onto clifftop grassland at Melvich yielded Scottish Primrose *Primula scotica* in flower and Purple Oxytropis *Oxytropis halleri* just gone over, as well as myriad eyebrights. Forewarned is

forearmed as they say and we whisked out our spanking new BSBI guide. We quickly put it away again, totally overwhelmed by the sheer number and variation of the plants that we were looking at. Coming at it cold doesn't work; you need to do a bit of advance swotting to have any hope of accurate or, we thought, any sort of identification. We will do better next time and hats off to Messrs. Metherell and Rumsey.

From there, we headed to Ullapool along the North Coast 500 tourist-route. Much of the journey consisted of dealing with a succession of oncoming Winnebagos on single-track roads, with boggy road-edges and sheer drops adding just the right note of unease. Our reversing skills improved considerably. However, nothing was going to keep us from our next plant: Norwegian Mugwort *Artemisia norvegica*.

Faced with weather-forecasts of unremitting gloom, we chose the morning that looked least bad. The other Assynt peaks all had their heads out of the clouds; Cul Mor didn't. The first bit is easy enough, along a well-established track with lots of Dwarf Juniper *Juniperus communis* ssp. *nana* and the dwarf form of Goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea* ssp. *minuta*, but eventually that runs out and the last bit is a slog up a steep, boggy hillside. As we approached the top, the cloud closed in and we both agreed that we had never felt so cold on a July day in the British Isles; whose idea had it been to take up botany? With our teeth chattering, we scoured the bare gravel near the top and after what seemed like an age, spotted a small

yellow disc standing out against its monochrome background. There it was, just in flower, and once we had got our eye in, there was more. We would have died of hypothermia if we'd stayed and communed with this one so we took its picture as a memento and quickly headed back down, feeling frozen on the outside, but warm, fuzzy and slightly sentimental on the inside. To be revisited, but on a better day.

Fort William is not known as the wettest town in Britain for nothing so we resigned ourselves to getting up practically in the middle of the night to avail ourselves of a morning weather-window to look for our last plant, Wavy Meadow-grass *Poa flexuosa*. This is a rare plant, with only a few hundred specimens known, and Coire Leis, on Ben Nevis, is its main stronghold. Again, we had luck on our side as, at the stone bothy that stands at the mouth of Coire Leis, we met a mountain-guide who had been involved in a recent survey of the species and who gave us some useful pointers as to its whereabouts. Then came the tricky bit: not for the first time, mobile scree – lots of it! There was also a fair bit of snow, but it somehow still didn't contrive to be quite as cold as Cul Mor had been. Finally, after much two steps forward, one back and vice versa, we got to the Wavy Meadow-grass slope and rounded off what had been an unexpectedly good trip with this unassuming and elusive species. We enjoyed it so much that we're planning something similar this year, but please, please could we have just a bit more sunshine?

STEVE LITTLE



## SCOTLAND 2020

I was really excited when on 17<sup>th</sup> July I finally drove into my pre-booked campsite at Aviemore just two days after the first Lockdown in Scotland had been lifted. The official WFS meeting had, understandably, been cancelled but, planning to spend some time in the mountains nonetheless, I had been invited to join an informal trip to Coire Garbhlach with Peter Hilton, Steve Little & David Albon. Having caught Covid 19 early-on and working in a care home that had been hit by the virus I was really looking forward to getting out into the mountains. I had spent hours reading through Michael Scott's brilliant *Mountain Flowers* in preparation, a book that I had inadvertently purchased from the author himself on Ebay.

On Sunday morning I was up bright and early, though not quite bright-eyed and bushy-tailed following a medical emergency in a tent close to mine in the early hours! I met up with my companions for the day in the beautiful Glen Feshie. There was a wonderful sense of freedom and anticipation as we hoisted our packs onto our backs and hiked down the valley parallel with the River Feshie before turning up the Allt Garbhlach river and heading for the imposing Coire Garbhlach. Following the course of the river up the valley was slow and challenging going, but this was well compensated for as we began to come across the flowers that I had been so looking forward to seeing: Starry Saxifrage *Micranthes stellaris*, Yellow Saxifrage *Saxifraga aizoides* and Mossy Saxifrage *S.*

*hypnoides*, Mountain Sorrel *Oxyria digyna* and Northern Rock-cress *Arabidopsis petraea*. I was quite excited when Steve held up a piece of Roseroot *Rhodiola rosea* that he had found in the river, having flowed down from the higher reaches. It was one of the plants that I most wanted to see!

As we continued to ascend the going got even harder and, adding to the challenge, the weather began to deteriorate with a number of rain showers. Peter and David decided to slowly head back whilst Steve and I made a final push for the scree slopes. New plant species kept appearing: Alpine Bistort *Bistorta vivipara*, Alpine Mouse-ear *Cerastium alpinum*, Stiff Sedge *Carex bigelowii* and, as we began to climb the imposing scree slopes, Lesser Twayblade *Neottia cordata* and yet more 'Alpines': Alpine Meadow-rue *Thalictrum alpinum*, Alpine Lady-fern *Athyrium distentifolium*, Alpine Saw-wort *Saussurea alpina* and Black Alpine-sedge *Carex atrata*. The latter species were found around the buttresses together with Glaucous Meadow-grass *Poa glauca*, Whortle-leaved Willow *Salix myrsinites* and Roseroot *Rhodiola rosea*. Being this high up certainly wasn't for the faint-hearted and, looking down, I could understand how people can end up frozen to the spot! Unfortunately, Steve didn't find the Mountain Bladder-fern *Cystopteris montana* that he was hoping for, but I found the day an awe-inspiring experience complemented by the new friendships that I had made.



I spent the next few days in the Speyside area searching for various specialities and I was particularly pleased to find Twinflower *Linnaea borealis* and, perhaps my favourite flower of the trip, the wonderful One-flowered Wintergreen *Moneses uniflora*. After a lot of patient searching I was also chuffed to find three stems of Coralroot Orchid *Corallorhiza trifida* in a Sphagnum bog.

Tuesday was my last full day in the Cairngorms and I had decided to walk up to the summit of Cairn Lochan from the Ski Centre car park. From the Cairngorm plateau there were some stunning views and Dwarf Willow *Salix herbacea* was very common. Lower down I came across patches of Sibbaldia *Sibbaldia procumbens*, Rock Sedge *Carex rupestris* and Dwarf Cudweed *Omalotheca supina*.

On Wednesday I struck camp in heavy rain and made my way south-west to a campsite in Aberfeldy. I had hoped to climb Ben Vrackie at Pitlochry but the weather put paid to that. I had two days of my break left and I was looking to spend them on and around Ben Lawers which I had read so much about.

Thursday's forecast was for low cloud and rain, but probably clearing later. I made my way to the Ben Lawers dam and spent the morning climbing the steep slopes opposite. I was excited when I came across my first Hollyfern *Polystichum lonchitis*, together with patches of Green Spleenwort *Asplenium viride*. Suddenly the sun was shining and, late though it was, I decided that I would take the

One-flowered  
Wintergreen



opportunity to try to reach the famous flushes, home of a number of rare rushes and sedges.

In retrospect it was probably a bit too ambitious after the rigours of the morning, but I parked my car at the Ben Lawers Hotel and headed up the Ben Lawers Burn. It was a slow and arduous slog to reach the area, especially after going some way out of my way but, thankfully, the weather was good. I eventually reached the small dam and could see the enclosure that I was looking for on the slopes ahead of me. A last effort and I found myself walking amongst the flushes and the special plants that are found there. I was pleased to find Bristle Sedge *Carex microglochin* quite easily – this being its only British location – together with Three-flowered Rush *Juncus triglumis*, Chestnut Rush *J. castaneus* and, a little higher still, the impressive Scorched Alpine-sedge *C. atrofusca*. The hard work had been worth it, but I didn't get back to the car until 8.30pm and I had another day's climb to follow!

Photo: Stephen Plummer

Friday dawned bright and clear, the perfect last day for the highlight of the trip, the main Ben Lawers climb. As I ascended I came across some new plants for the week: Alpine Willowherb *Epilobium anagallidifolium* and Rock Whitlowgrass *Draba norvegica*. I finally reached the famous mica-schist cliffs of the Corrie at about 1pm and began to explore its treasures, finding patches of *Sibbaldia* *Sibbaldia procumbens* straightaway in the grassland under the cliffs. The sun suddenly shone and I knew that now would probably be the only opportunity I had to find Alpine Gentian *Gentiana nivalis* in flower. Suddenly, there it was, beautiful deep blue jewels shining in the midst of the vegetation! I was really fortunate because a few minutes later the sun disappeared for the rest of the day and so did the flowers!

There was another person in the Corrie: Martin, a birder from Derby who has visited this spot annually to enjoy the plants for the last dozen or so years. We decided to team up and take our time exploring this special landscape. It was wonderful to come across a lot of the plants that I had been looking forward to seeing for so many months including more 'Alpines': showy Alpine Forget-me-not *Myosotis alpestris*, Alpine Pearlwort *Sagina saginoides*, Alpine Fleabane *Erigeron borealis*, Alpine Cinquefoil *Potentilla crantzii*, Alpine Thyme-leaved Speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia* ssp. *humifusa*, Alpine Meadow-grass *Poa alpina* and Alpine Cat's-tail *Phleum alpinum*. Hairy Stonecrop *Sedum villosum* was common on the rocks, many of them flowering, and the stands of flowering

Rock Speedwell *Veronica fruticans* really stood out.

Most botanists visiting Ben Lawers hope to see Drooping Saxifrage *Saxifraga cernua* and this species, fittingly, was the last new species that I recorded on the mountain, nestling on a small ledge in the shelter of a rock. At this point the clouds rolled in a little way below where we were standing which was an amazing sight. And we were in for one more special treat as, a little higher up and just below the peak, we found a number of Drooping Saxifrages in flower. Wow! Martin was almost dancing and promptly named me his lucky mascot! What a wonderful way to finish!!



Drooping  
Saxifrage

Photo: Martin Roome

Stephen Plummer on  
Ben Lawers



Photo: Stephen Plummer

Actually, it was not quite the end because we made our way onto the peak of the mountain just as the weather deteriorated. Suddenly the cloud that had been below us was around us and we were buffeted by cold wind and rain. It was about 6.30 pm and, oddly, my phone rang as we were stood beside the cairn in the midst of the storm. It was my wife, Carole, back in Bedfordshire, asking how I was getting on - a surreal moment!

So, another long but brilliant day at the end of one of the best weeks of my life. I've always loved being in the mountains and I'm now enjoying getting to know their special flora. I'm so thankful to Peter Llewellyn, Ian Green, Janet John and Michael Scott for all of their help and advice and I'm already booked in for this year's trip to the Cairngorms!

STEPHEN PLUMMER

## BOREAL DELIGHTS

### WILD FLOWERS IN SANDAY, ORKNEY

My wife and I got fed up with the traffic and general lack of space in the South of England in the early 2000s. We sold up, quit our academic and council jobs and bought a croft on the little island of Sanday, one of the outlying Orkney Islands. Sanday is built on sandstone and wind-blown shell sand, resulting in very fertile soil that is excellent for growing high quality cows and sheep. Practically every field has a mound or other association with the past. Four thousand year-old chambered cairns jostle with Viking settlements eroding out of the sand dunes. The traditional farming practices have, of course, been replaced by more intensive grassland management and

ploughing to grow the traditional oats, now largely superseded by barley. There are, however, significant areas that luck or enlightened management have preserved from modern agriculture, which give a glimpse into the glorious flora of the past. There are not hundreds of rare species here but the quantity and setting of the floral gems make up for any lack in the excitement of finding new species. I will attempt to describe a few of the ecological niches below. Of course, you should come and confirm these for yourselves....

Firstly, for scale, nowhere on Sanday is more than a 30 minute leisurely drive from anywhere else. The most





## Sea Sandwort and Sea Mayweed

striking areas of interest are the dunes and sandy grasslands that make up the largest area of machair type vegetation outside The Western Isles; these are known as “Links” locally. These areas are generally SSSIs because of the rich, characteristic vegetation but also draw in many birdwatchers to admire the massive flocks of Lapwings, Curlew, Golden Plover, godwits, etc. that visit or stay here, and the regular North American and European migrants that pass through. The flowers are glorious from early May to late September: Bird’s-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Lady’s Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Eyebrights *Euphrasia* spp. (but many hybrids and subspecies), Northern Marsh-orchids *Dactylorhiza purpurella* and Heath Spotted-orchids *D. maculata*, Wild Pansies *Viola tricolor* ssp. *tricolor* and other Violets e.g. Common Dog-violet *V. riviniana* dominate but lots of other interesting flowers can be found like Limestone Bedstraw *Galium sternerii* and various St John’s-worts e.g. Slender St John’s-wort *Hypericum pulchrum*. Later in the year Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Viper’s Bugloss *Echium vulgare* and Autumn Gentian *Gentianella amarella* make an appearance.

Sanday is famous for its beaches. Miles and miles of empty white sand fringed by dunes. If we see anyone in the distance, we usually go to a different beach! Sea Mayweed *Tripleurospermum maritimum* ssp. *maritimum*, Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima*, Oraches *Atriplex* spp. and the usual coastal grasses dominate but there are places where Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*,



Oysterplant *Mertensia maritima* and Wild Cabbage *Brassica oleracea* thrive. The south-west coast of the island has good cliffs with sea stacks and arches. The cliff tops have a different vegetation with lots of Thrift *Armeria maritima*, Sea and Buck’s-horn Plantain *Plantago maritima* and *P. coronopus*, Scots Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum*, Campions (White, Red and Sea *Silene latifolia*, *S. dioica*, *S. uniflora*), Spring Squill *Scilla verna* and the ubiquitous Bird’s-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*.

There are some wetter areas, both salt-marsh and freshwater mires, which are full of interest, most spectacularly the acres of Yellow



## Oysterplant

Irises *Iris pseudacorus* in summer. The grassland around these mires is usually not 'improved' and is full of Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, Ragged-Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, Marsh-orchids, mostly *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, with

Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustris* in the wetter patches and Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* is everywhere adding to the sensory experience. The saltmarsh areas abound with Sea Aster *Tripolium pannonicum*, Sea Arrowgrass *Triglochin maritima*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Thrift *Armeria maritima*.

I am not a great botanist, as the imprecise details above show. I have not touched on the huge range of sedges, mosses, lichens and grasses here. However, the time and space to wander in the unspoiled areas of Sanday are a delight. You are nearly always accompanied by the soundtrack of Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, Oyster Catchers, Curlews, Lapwings or seals. Occasionally the sound of a tractor will intrude but if you are searching for a little peace and quiet and a different botanical experience, you could do worse. There is a range of places to stay; we have a holiday cottage ([bayviewsanday.com](http://bayviewsanday.com)) but please get in touch if you find somewhere else to stay and want some company or local intelligence, I can show you hidden localities and you can tell me the plants. I would also be happy to advise on the myriad ways of getting here.

MARTIN KENNY  
([martin.kenny8@gmail.com](mailto:martin.kenny8@gmail.com))

## AN EXCITING RE-FIND

I am quite a new member of WFS and 2019 was the first year I used my diary. It was not very detailed as I had had a knee replacement.

2020 has been much more productive. So recently when I went on holiday to Wester Ross (I live near Matlock) I thought I might increase my numbers as I would be in a totally different landscape. I took with me Rose (both flowers and grasses), a

First Edition Stace, as well as a book about the coast and a Garmin. I have a reasonable botanical background as my mother had a Botany degree from during the war, so I grew up with Bentham and Hooker as well as Clapham, Tutin and Warburg. As a teenager we would compete to use the key correctly. This was many years ago. I have always been interested and joined the Derbyshire Flora Group. Latin does not frighten



me as I studied it at school and also was reminded of it constantly when studying for my RHS Dip exams. So I got back into recording properly but I still need a lot of help.

Whilst in Wester Ross I was doing a walk and what should I see but a Monkeyflower. When I went to my flora I looked it up to discover several species so I went to the BSBI interactive map to see what was recorded. There were no records of recent finds so I returned to the site with a big flora, phone and Garmin. I was very unsure which Monkeyflower *Erythranthe* species it was as I had not looked at one properly before. I could see glandular hairs near the

flower, the unequal calyx, fertile seed heads and the colouration in the almost closed throat. I took some good photos and part of a stem which had finished flowering, which I nurtured until my return home. I then consulted my most helpful Branch Secretaries who told me it was Monkeyflower *E. guttata*. On their advice I emailed the VC recorder for Wester Ross who kindly informed me that the last time this plant had been recorded in NG87 was in 1929!

I could so easily have walked past these flowers. It was a happy find and the local recorder has accepted some of my other records.

JUDITH LEE

## BOOK REVIEW

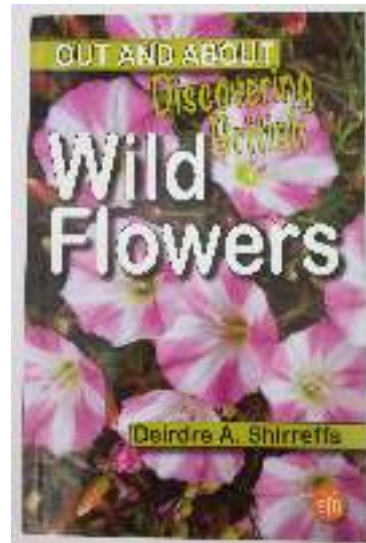
***Out and About - Discovering British Wild Flowers.* Deidre A Shirreffs. 2021. Brambleby Books, softback, £8.99. ISBN: 9781908241634**

This is a book about how to identify wild flowers for children.

It has nice clear photos which means it is easy to identify plants. There are also good examples of plants used. This is good as it is easier for beginners to identify flowers from photos than from drawings. The book is split into different types of habitat e.g. woodlands and fields. This is really good as it helps narrow down identification. There is a section on different parts of a flower with a clear diagram and different leaf shapes which is good for beginners. The book also shows how bees get involved and how seeds get around. There is a good introduction to flower families and scientific names if you are interested in those. I really like the flower colour index and useful websites aimed at children.

An excellent book for anyone interested in wild flowers, particularly beginners and children.

ALICE COUTTS (aged 10)



## AUTUMN WEEK HUNT 2020

		TOTAL :	WEEK	DAY
Anne Haden	Jersey			83
Anne & Dennis Kell	Oxfordshire		124	
Anthony & Rita Grainger	Yorkshire		101	
Barbara Allen	Lancashire		132	86
Barbara Matthews	Suffolk		112	
Caroline Bateman	Surrey & Kent		117	
Christina White	Northamptonshire		71	
Dawn Nelson	Sussex		121	89
Dorothy Ross	Lancashire		135	
Enid Barrie	Kent		132	67
Gareth Bursnall	Surrey & Sussex		112	
Helen Jackson	Midlothian		116	
Ian Green	Moray		141	
Jackie Hardy	Worcestershire		137	
Janice Reynolds	Sussex		140	
Jesse Tregale	Northumberland		141	
John Swindells	London		138	46
Julie Clarke	Cumbria		144	
Mary Ashworth	Cornwall		58	
Pauline Grimshaw	Manchester		63	
Pauline Wilson	Gloucestershire		122	
Peter Jepson	Lancashire		112	
Peter Llewellyn	Cheshire		115	
Priscilla Nobbs	Surrey			51
Ro FitzGerald	Somerset		180	
Ron Parker	London		148	
Sally Maller	Dorset & Devon		105	
Sheila Anderson	Kent			90
Sheila Wynn	Lancashire		99	
Stephen Clarkson	Norfolk			125
Sue Poyser/Doug Grant	Kent		148	
Susan Grimshaw	Surrey		108	
Susan Riley	Lancashire		88	

A good number of members sent me their records for the Autumn Hunts this year, although from reading their letters there can be little doubt that the last week in October was a very wet week in whatever corner of the British Isles you live. No plants were seen by everyone this year, but only two members failed to find Daisy *Bellis perennis* and two didn't come across Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*. In total 614 different plants were reported, including hybrids and subspecies. To ring the changes I thought I would group the findings by region.

I received eight lists from people recording in Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Susan Grimshaw didn't stray far from her home at Maidenhead, but her best find, in an arable field, was definitely Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine*. She was the only member to find Musk Thistle *Carduus nutans*. Caroline also did most of her hunting in urban areas and in Redhill, at the base of a church wall, found Pale Pink-sorrel *Oxalis incarnata* which was a new species for her! Priscilla has been awaiting a replacement hip operation and could only manage to walk short distances with a stick, but nevertheless she managed to complete a local walk on the same route she has walked at the end of October each year since 2017. She had two new finds, Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus* and Upright Hedge-parsley *Torilis japonica*. Gareth accompanied her on her walk, checking out odd corners to save her unnecessary walking! He also sent me his own list and recorded finding Eastern Cat-mint *Nepeta racemosa*, a plant I have yet to find!

Dawn managed five days of fieldwork, quite an accomplishment in such a wet week, and her list included several ferns and some grasses including Cockspar *Echinochloa crus-galli* and Yellow Bristle-grass *Setaria pumila*. She was the only member to see a flower on Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*. Janice was the only member to find Great Forget-me-not *Brunnera macrophylla*. Her personal favourite find was Bastard-toadflax *Thesium humifusum*.

Sue and Doug report finding Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum* and I was glad to hear from them that Malling Toadflax *Chaenorhinum origanifolium* is still alive and well in Kent as we have lost it here in Monmouthshire. Sheila Anderson managed an eight mile walk to clock up ninety species on her one day hunt. She was the only member to see Grass Vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia*. Enid managed six days and was the only member to find Thorn-apple *Datura stramonium*. She sent me information on the rapid spread of Jersey Cudweed *Laphangium luteoalbum* in her area, where it is now a very common pavement weed; a surprise to me and no doubt to several members who have reported it as one of their best finds.

There were three lists from Norfolk and Suffolk. Stephen joined up with Bill and Carol Hawkins and friends for a one day hunt in Wymondham and amongst their total of 125 species they saw Pale Corydalis *Pseudofumaria alba* and Striped Goosefoot *Chenopodium strictum*, this being one of the two reports of the species that I received. Stephen

comments that Striped Goosefoot seems to be rapidly invading everywhere northwards! Barbara Matthews recording around Felixstowe found Spanish-dagger *Yucca gloriosa*, which was a sole record for this year's hunts. She also found Four-leaved Pink-sorrel *Oxalis tetraphylla*, which was a new record for her.

John records mainly in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. He listed Chinese Mugwort *Artemisia verlotiorum* as one of his favourite finds and it was also the only record of this plant for the hunt this year. Also from London, Ron's list contains some interesting *Buddleja* sub-species and also the only record I received this year for Great Lettuce *Lactuca virosa*.

There were three lists from the West Country. Ro produced a long and exciting list from which I will pick out Yellow Vetchling *Lathyrus aphaca* (a plant I am still hoping to find myself one day) and also Sulphur Cinquefoil *Potentilla recta*. Sally found Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana* as well as a good list of ferns and grasses. Mary found Primrose *Primula vulgaris* on her hunt. She was the only member to record Common Broomrape *Orobanche minor* this year.

Anne Haden went on a last day hunt with the Botany Section of the Société Jersiaise. They found Nepal Persicaria *Persicaria nepalensis*, a new plant for Jersey.

Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Worcestershire yielded three lists. Pauline Wilson tells she was delighted to find a lovely bank of

Harebells *Campanula rotundifolia* in flower in a churchyard, a species she has not seen before on Autumn Hunts. Anne and Dennis did their hunt whilst on holiday on a narrowboat on the Oxford Canal. They were the only members to spot Nodding Bur-marigold *Bidens cernua*, Marsh Willowherb *Epilobium palustris* and Purple-loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*. Jackie was the only member to find Sainfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia* and Night-flowering Catchfly *Silene noctiflora*.

Heading further north, I was pleased to see that Christina had sent in a list for a second year. She was the only member to record Small-flowered Buttercup *Ranunculus parviflorus* this hunt. Peter Llewellyn sent his list from walks around the Helsby area. For me his best plant was undoubtedly Large-flowered Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis speciosa*, a plant I have been trying unsuccessfully to find for years! He was the only member to record finding Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor*. A new participant on the hunt was Pauline Grimshaw who did all her hunting within walking distance of her home. She tells me that her biggest surprise was finding Corncockle *Agrostemma githago* in flower. She was the only member to find Marsh Ragwort *Jacobaea aquatica*. Do join in again next year Pauline!

There were six lists from the north-west. Peter Jepson was able to boost his list with several Hawkweeds *Hieracium* spp. and Lady's-mantles *Alchemilla* spp. and he was the only member to find Italian Toadflax *Cymbalaria pallida*. Susan Riley found two different thistles, Slender

Thistle *Carduus tenuiflorus*, and Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris*. Both were sole records for the hunt. Barbara Allen mentions the arrival of Narrow-leaved Ragwort *Senecio inaequidens* in her area and also Chicory *Cichorium intybus*, a plant which several recorders mentioned. Julie celebrated her retirement from collating the Autumn Hunt by going out on the hunt herself and sent a list of her finds which included Knotted Crane's-bill *Geranium nodosum*, which was a first record for Cumbria. Sheila Wynn went to the Lancashire Wildlife Trust Reserve, Salthill Quarry, her most pleasing find being Round-leaved Wintergreen *Pyrola rotundifolia* ssp. *maritima*. Dorothy also recorded in Salthill Quarry and also noted seeing the Wintergreen. She was the only member to record Sea-holly *Eryngium maritimum* in flower.

In the north-east Anthony and Rita found Common Gromwell *Lithospermum officinale*, which was a new plant for their 10Km Square and also Giant Herb-Robert *Geranium maderense*, which was the only

record I received of this plant for the hunt. Jesse was on holiday in Northumberland during the hunt and found Northern Dead-nettle *Lamium confertum* at Beadnell Harbour, another only record for the hunt.

And finally two lists from Scotland. Helen recorded locally to her home in Musselburgh, visiting old friends as she put it! She was surprised to find spring flowers out including Common Whitlowgrass *Erophila verna* with pods as well as flowers, the only record I received of this species. Ian found an early flowering Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, the only report this autumn of this species.

I do thank you all for sending me your lists and my special thanks to Julie for her advice and experience from many years of collating the Autumn Hunt records. I look forward to receiving your Autumn Hunt lists again this autumn. Always remember that ferns must be recorded in spore, plants in flower and horsetails in cone.

HEATHER COLLS

## AUTUMN ONE DAY HUNT - WYMONDHAM

A combination of factors delayed me getting to Bill and Carol Hawkins' place in Wymondham on time. I was over half an hour late but the wonderful Ali had stayed behind to greet me and we soon caught the others up. Because of the pandemic restrictions we were limited to just six people but we made a good attempt to find as many plants as we could between us. The list rattled up and

amongst them was a late flowering Tomato *Solanum lycopersicum*, the under recorded Equal-leaved Knotgrass *Polygonum depressum* and, of all things, some Thrift *Armeria maritima*. Carol had worked out a route as she had already done a recce and we came across another escape, Snapdragon *Antirrhinum majus*. One species that is spreading everywhere, but I think is a pretty

one, especially when it covers a wall, is Mexican Fleabane *Erigeron karvinskianus*. There's a plant that I have seen in so many places this year in Essex and Suffolk and now here in Norfolk; it looks like a form of Fat-hen *Chenopodium album* but is robust and can be much taller with distinctive red stripes down its stem, which makes it Striped Goosefoot *C. strictum*.

The weather forecast for the day was not very good at all and it did get very cold, which proved too much for a couple of our group and they left us to it. But soon things took a turn for the worse and it started to rain. It was nearing lunch-time so we decided to hasten back to Bill and Carol's and warm up over our soup and sandwiches. The rain eased and we ventured out again but now there were only three of us. Pellitory-of-the-wall *Parietaria judaica* was soon added followed by a lone orange-red Atlas Poppy *Papaver atlanticum* and a tiny Keeled-fruited Cornsalad *Valerianella carinata*. More escaped garden plants such as Elephant-ears *Bergenia crassifolia* still with its purplish-pink flowers and more pink in the form of Autumn Stonecrop *Hylotelephium* 'Herbstfreude'. Hanging on with just a few tiny yellow flowers in some waste ground we

found Common Fiddleneck *Amsinckia micrantha*, together with the colourful Garden Pansy *Viola x wittrockiana*. The common Yellow Corydalis *Pseudofumaria lutea* has a paler cousin called, guess what, Pale Corydalis *P. alba* which has creamy flowers tipped with yellow, which was a first for me.

But now the weather did really take a turn for the worse and the rain came pouring down. Umbrellas up post-haste, we trudged back along the main road and the gutters just quickly became rivers which then extended into puddles in the road. A car came hurtling by and the driver caught this deluge and of course a wave of water was thrown at me. I can't write here what I shouted after this selfish act but it provided some needed light relief and laughter from Carol and David. Yes, well! But, nonetheless, we soldiered on and added a very late-flowering Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, some Californian Poppies *Eschscholzia californica* and, finally, probably the most unusual find of the day to still be in flower, some Butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus*. Then back to the warmth to dry off and enjoy some tea and cake. A good tally though of 125 species.

STEPHEN CLARKSON

## OBITUARIES

### MIKE SHAW - 1949 - 2020

Dr Mike Shaw's joining of WFS in 1988 marked the stage in his career as a GP when he felt that he had sufficient leisure time to return to field botany. His children, Roger and

Elizabeth, were growing up and Mike had established himself in both the practice and in the community as a conscientious, trusted and popular doctor.



## Mike Shaw on a West Sussex heath

His younger brother Peter recalls their 'idyllic' upbringing outside Rugby where their father was bursar of the Associated Electrical Industries training centre Coton House. Here they had the run of the extensive grounds as well as the building and, roaming free, they developed their interest in the natural world. At an early age Mike adapted his tennis racket press for pressing plant specimens: sixty or so years later his *Hieracium* herbarium – mounted impeccably – is now destined for the Natural History Museum (BM).

Both Mike and Peter won AEI scholarships to Rugby School as day boys and both took full advantage of this educational opportunity. Opting for the Sciences at A level, Mike decided on Medicine, training at Guys. It was during this time that he met an attractive nurse, Jean, and they married in his final year. When after a year or two in different medical posts Mike gravitated towards General Practice, they settled in Aldwick, outside Bognor and a stone's throw from the sea. Aldwick Bay's shingle beach was well scoured by Mike over the years and there is always something of interest to find, be it a native maritime species or a fugitive from cultivation. A patch of Motherwort *Leonurus cardiaca* which he showed me on the stabilised upper beach will remind me of Mike.

On several field meetings Mike met Paul Harmes, BSBI Vice-county Recorder for East Sussex. I gather that it was during a particularly exciting WFS event on Amberley Wild Brooks led by the late George Forster



Photo: Nick Sturt

that Paul convinced Mike he should join the Sussex Botanical Recording Society. Here he quickly came to the attention of the President Mary Briggs and Paul's counterpart in West Sussex, Alan Knapp. It was not long before he found himself serving on the SBRS Committee and then, with Alan's untimely death in 2010, he was the obvious choice to succeed him as BSBI Recorder, West Sussex.

Mike was also co-opted onto the working group preparing a new county Flora. Alan's demise and then, two years later, Mary's were setbacks but the team was very fortunate in securing Mike and also David Streeter to steady the ship: thus the last couple of years of survey were completed and all the data and introductory material gradually coaxed into the first full treatment of the vascular plants, past and present, of Sussex since Lt-Col Wolley-Dod's Flora of 1937. Mike's capacity for hard work was a boon and he also contributed a large number of plant photographs which pepper the 2,750 species accounts. Over and above this Mike realised that further work needed to be done on two critical groups: *Rubus* subgenus *Rubus* and *Hieracium*. In order to tackle these he

stepped down from his post as BSBI Recorder and collaborated with David Allen and Rob Randall on *Rubus* and with David McCosh on *Hieracium*. The result was two comprehensive and up-to-date treatments which enhance the SBRS *Flora of Sussex* (2018). Mike followed up his interest in *Hieracium* and in February 2020 published BSBI Handbook No.20 *Hawkweeds of South-east England*. Mike lived long enough to be pleased with the reception of this book which contains beautiful examples of his skill with the digital camera. His last summer of field botany was

constrained by the Covid emergency but, like so many of us, he was able to rediscover his home patch and he turned up a number of notable new records in and around Bognor Regis, for example Guernsey Pigweed *Amaranthus blitum*, Greater Musk-mallow *Malva alcea* and Foxglove-tree *Paulownia tomentosa*. Mike was diagnosed with cancer in late Summer and decided to decline the treatment offered. He died peacefully on 12 December.

NICOLAS STURT

## EILEEN JEAN TAYLOR - 1934-2020

Eileen was born in Leicestershire but moved to Surrey with her family at a young age. When her family moved house she stayed in Surrey which was to become home for the rest of her life. She worked for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for many years and took early retirement in 1987. Eileen's interest in natural history was then given free rein and she became a member of several Societies including the Surrey Wildlife Trust. Howell Hill, a SWT nature reserve was close to Eileen's home and she became a volunteer warden for the reserve. This important work was recognised by the SWT and she was awarded life membership of the Trust.

Eileen joined the WFS in August 1991 and as a Surrey member was placed in Branch R. By 1992 she had topped the branch and moved to Branch H2 which she topped for two years running before moving into Valhalla in 1995. From there she made steady progress before

reaching the hallowed level of Parnassus in 2004. Eileen achieved this by travelling widely and attending many WFS and other societies' Field Meetings. In 1995 her Valhalla Branch Secretary commented, "It would be easier to say where Eileen had not been than where she had. She sent me a hilarious picture of herself taken under a nameboard of an old ship on Tresco – none other than 'Valhalla' – very appropriate."

I remember leading and attending walks and my pleasure when I realised Eileen would be with us that day. Her lovely smile and enthusiasm would light up the group and I knew the day would be a good one with her there.

Eileen became unwell in 2019 and in September of that year she moved to Banstead and a residential care home where she sadly passed away on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

PIPPA HYDE