

WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE



SUMMER 2024

WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE

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SUMMER 2024

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Since my last message to you we have moved from Lyme Regis to Plymouth. From one sea view to another. We are in a flat on Plymouth Hoe, with a magnificent view over the harbour. With all the details of the move I have not had much time to enjoy the spring flora, but one thing I have noticed as I have driven back and forth through Devon during April is the magnificence and quantity of Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. The climate this year seems to have suited them well. I am learning the local flora around Plymouth as I take a daily walk to different new places. It seems that even within the city boundaries there is rich flora for me to enjoy. I was happy to see a nice patch of Cowslips *Primula veris* on a grassy bank just below where we live. I have seen one of the Plymouth specialities emerging, the Bladder (Plymouth) Campion *Silene vulgaris* ssp. *macrocarpa*. This is believed to be a naturalised alien. According to Roger Smith's Flora of Devon, which I am now greatly enjoying, this

subspecies was first recorded here in 1940 and continues to survive on the cliffs just below my flat. It was probably brought here by the Navy from Malta, where it is common. I will now start to look for the famous Plymouth Thistle *Carduus pycnocephalus* that is also said to grow on the Hoe. I will spend the summer looking at the various calcareous outcrops that occur in Plymouth as I learn the flora of a new region and it will be reminiscent of botanising in my youth on the limestone of the Cotswolds. I am now searching for a copy of Briggs *Flora of Plymouth*, published in 1880.

The move to Plymouth involved a major downsize of many accumulated books and papers. Are there any collectors of vasculums in the Society? I have three old and rather battered and rusty ones that belonged to my aunts but were much used by me in my youth. If anyone would like them, please let me know.

GHILLEAN PRANCE



Bladder (Plymouth) Campion



Photos: Peter Llewellyn

Plymouth Thistle

EDITORIAL

This is my fourth edition of the magazine and undoubtedly, my most complicated! You will know that, traditionally, all the WFS Branch reports are contained within this Summer edition as well as Parnassus 1 and 2 reports. By their very nature, many of the species in these lists require further checking in more advanced botanical publications than 'New Flora of the British Isles' by Clive Stace. I am very grateful and thankful to our two proofreaders who came to my rescue with their expert knowledge and specialised reference books in order that checks could be made.

I consider myself very fortunate living in a self-converted row of three derelict cottages I purchased in 1977. The house is situated down a no through lane in open countryside with scattered woodlands and footpaths all around. During 2010, I was wandering around in my nearest wood where I was amazed at the beautiful sight of hundreds of Early-purple Orchids *Orchis mascula*. Being an enthusiastic photographer, I remember lying down on my stomach and taking lots of photographs and later printing them. This was the start of my love of photographing and printing wild flower pictures. Wondering where I could go to photograph different flowers, and, in particular, orchids, I discovered a reference to The Wild Flower Society in a *Reader's Digest* book on wild flowers. I joined straightaway and soon realised what remarkably good value being a member was, as remains the case now.

Our Meetings Secretary (Janet John) has, yet again, done an amazing job of organising a packed programme of WFS meetings all around the country. Sue and I have just had a wonderful time on one of those two-day meetings on The Lizard, Cornwall. Watch for reports of those two days in the next magazine. We extended those two days into a week and enjoyed seeing many beautiful spring flowers and gardens. There are couple of pictures on p.52.



A challenge from the Editor!

Growing and flowering in our garden at the end of March was this amazing multi-headed False Oxlip *Primula x polyantha* with forty-eight flower heads and emerging buds on it's single scape. It found its way here quite naturally. This form is often called 'five fingers' in Suffolk!

Can anyone beat this?

**Copy date for the Autumn
magazine:
1st August 2024**

NOTICES

2024 AGM and MEMBERS' WEEKEND

With this magazine you should also have received the programme for this year's AGM and Members' Weekend to be held in Hunstanton, Norfolk, from 6th - 9th September.

If you plan to attend, even if you have already booked a place, please can you contact Sheila Wynn wfs.gensec@gmail.com, to provide the following: payment for the buffet lunch on Saturday if you would like to have it; which group you would like to join for Monday's field meeting; whether you require transport to the meetings and if you do, where you are staying; if travelling by car, whether you are willing to offer transport, how many passengers you can accommodate and where you are staying. N.B. Car sharing will be necessary for most of the sites we will be visiting. This will be arranged when bookings have been received.

AUTUMN HUNT: DARWEN, LANCASHIRE, SATURDAY 26TH OCTOBER

Leaders: Dorothy Ross, Sheila Wynn. A walk to see what we can find that is still flowering at the end of October.

Meet for a 10:30 start in Sunnyhurst Woods Car Park, Sunnyhurst, Darwen, BB3 1JX, Grid Ref: SD67922240. The car park is on the right just beyond the Sunnyhurst Hotel (Pub). If the car park is full there should be roadside parking spaces on the approach to Sunnyhurst.

To book, contact Janet John wfs.meetings@gmail.com or phone 01753 884490.

ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The photographic competition has always been an integral part of the Members' Weekend although you do not have to attend the AGM to participate. Digital entries (jpegs at full resolution) must be received by Ken Southall; ken.southall@btinternet.com by Friday 16th August 2024.

Full details can be found on pages 31-32 of the 2024 Yearbook, (sent to members with the Winter 2024 magazine), and on the website.

Correction: On page 32 of the Winter 2024 magazine, the picture of Chalk Milkwort was credited to Ruth Dawes when it should have read Paul Harmes. Sincere apologies.

The 2024 password for the Members' page of the website is [speedwell4](#).

NOTICES (Continued)

Helen Jackson

We are sorry to hear of the death of Helen Jackson on April 4th. Helen, who lived in Musselburgh, was a long-standing member of the WFS, having joined in 1956. She was the Secretary of the Scottish Branch (Branch W) from 1986 until 2015. An obituary will follow in the next issue of the magazine.

Some comments from Ro FitzGerald:

I have so valued Helen's knowledge and kindness since inheriting the Branch W secretaryship when she retired, and as she chose to remain in the Branch, we have been in touch regularly. Her botanical experience and generosity with this, and our shared love of botanical and unusual postcards made her a wonderful correspondent. I'm sure anyone familiar with her beautiful handwriting will have treasured any communication with her.

I feel very sad – Helen was not just one of the WFS greats in the best old style of superb knowledge handed on with kindness as well as duty, but a real friend even if we rarely met.

I always felt that Helen was an example of what the founders of the WFS must have been like, devoted to knowledge gained in the field and always ready to share this pleasure with others.

We are also sorry to hear about the death of Barry Shaw. He joined The Wild Flower Society in 1983 and passed away in 2022. An obituary to Barry is on page 52.

Gareth Bursnall's Quiz is on page 51 with answers on page 48.

Uncredited pictures in this magazine have been taken by Ken Southall.



Enjoying the meeting at St. Cyrus, National Nature Reserve, Montrose, 5th July

BRANCH REPORTS FOR 2023

JUNIORS

I received one diary. **Carolina Dent** found 155 plants, earning a 150 Plant Badge. Grasses, including Canary-grass *Phalaris canariensis* and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, as well as Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* (actually in the sedge family) and new trees, including Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*, Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and Yew *Taxus baccata*, helped her to reach this total. I was also pleased to see entries for the ferns Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Hart's-tongue *Asplenium scolopendrium*, and the Hybrid Bluebell *Hyacinthoides x massartiana*, recent additions to the Beginner's Diary.

Carolina found new seaside plants, Sea Carrot *Daucus carota* ssp. *gummifer* and Sea Campion *Silene uniflora*, on a trip to Cornwall. She saw some lovely chalk grassland plants, including Chalk Milkwort *Polygala calcarea* and Chalk Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, at High Clear Down in Wiltshire. In Cumbria, she found new plants including Smooth Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla glabra* and Martagon Lily *Lilium martagon*. She also continued to identify new plants closer to home, finding Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* and Green Alkanet

Pentaglottis sempervirens in the garden, Shaggy-soldier *Galinsoga quadriradiata* in a local park and Scarlet Pimpernel *Lysimachia arvensis* outside the fire-station.

I was also happy to hear from other junior members, including **Alice and Rachel Coutts**, who told me about an exciting new plant that

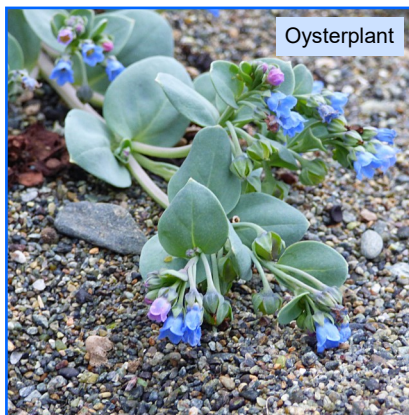


Photo: supplied by Alice and Rachel Coutts

they saw last year, Oysterplant *Mertensia maritima*, on a beach on Fetlar, Shetland. For any junior members who don't complete a full diary every year, I'm always happy to hear about any botanical news, ID queries or favourite finds.

NICHOLA HAWKINS

KENT (BRANCH A), 1KM SQUARE STUDY

José Gibbs's square TR3370 (Westbrooke, Margate, Kent), presents the challenge of being half-covered by sea at high tide, so this limits the area over which records can be sought. Recording in 2023

added only one new plant, Bugloss *Lycopsis arvensis*, on a road verge, which remarkably appears to be the first ever for the relevant 10km square.

GEOFFREY KITCHENER

KENT (BRANCH A)

Annual	New	Total
Devina Ellis		51
Cumulative		
José Gibbs	53	518
Pam Smith	40	476
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Doug Grant	0	1895
Claire Horder	374	729
Sue Poyser	0	1932

Devina's botanising began with the Spring Week Hunt, for which she recorded at Sittingbourne, Staplehurst and Tenterden, Kent, including plants with 'spring' in their Latin name, such as Common Whitlowgrass *Erophila verna* and Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna*. Another ostensibly vernal plant was Red Bartsia *Odontites vernus*, which she recorded at Staplehurst towards the end of July. I have sometimes wondered why this should be named a spring plant when peak flowering seems to be in July/August, running into autumn. Clive Stace's *New Flora*, however, points out that there are both aestival and autumnal subspecies and it seems that the Italian botanist Bellardi, in 1788, put *vernus* into the name (then as *Euphrasia verna*) as he found it flowering in Piedmont, Italy, from the end of May and sought to distinguish it from the later-flowering version, which with him came at the end of August and in September.

Claire produced both an annual record listing and a transition into a cumulative one. She did not have far

to go for Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* and Green-



winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio*, as both appeared in her lawn, the latter as one plant for the first time. As this is only a hundred metres or so from a colony of about 1,000 Green-winged Orchids, seeds must rain down when the wind is in the right direction! She holidayed in

Cornwall, where now-banned American Skunk-cabbage *Lysichiton americanus* was flourishing at Shortlanesend; and in the Yorkshire Dales, where she found Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa* growing in a Malham meadow. She joined several local Kent recording

meetings, including at Gibbin's Brook SSSI, where she saw hybrids of Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* with both Southern Marsh-orchid *D. praetermissa* = *D. x grandis* and Heath Spotted-orchid *D. maculata* = *D. x transiens*. The challenge at that meeting was to find something that was a species rather than a hybrid!

Another local Kent meeting, at Soakham Downs, near Wye, where participants were surrounded by a multitude of butterflies, gave **José** a small and rather pale subspecies of Common Milkwort, namely *Polygala vulgaris* ssp. *collina*. This is only one of 11 records in the UK since 2000. A holiday in the Outer Hebrides at the end of August provided a few new flowers such as Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea* on the uninhabited island of Pabay. Recording also on Eriskay and Barra, she ended her expedition with the island of Canna in the Inner Hebrides, where she ran to ground Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, one of her all-time favourites and a plant that she was familiar with before she started her cumulative diary.

The beginning of the year saw **Pam** expand her tree records with the benefit of identifications by dendrologist Owen Johnson at Marline Wood, Catsfield, East Sussex, in the course of a local natural history society walk. Many of the rest of her records came from various trips to the South Downs, including Round-headed Rampion *Phyteuma orbiculare* at Old Winchester Hill, Hampshire. At the



Lullington Heath reserve on the Sussex South Downs, she was fortunate enough to discover Bastard-toadflax *Thesium humifusum* in a locality new to the Ranger, to whom she showed it, and also, it appears, new to BSBI database records, although it fits well with the species' overall distribution. Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* was also present on the chalk escarpment. At Rye Harbour, she saw Twiggy Mullein *Verbascum virgatum*, which has been known here for over 40 years.

Doug and Sue have kept their lists going but, alas, without any additions for 2023. Better luck this year!

GEOFFREY KITCHENER

SOUTH COAST and CHANNEL ISLANDS, (BRANCH M)

Annual	Total	Total
Ruth Ridley (1 st year)	249	249
Sue and Andy Skarstein (2 nd year)	426	426
Cumulative - Valhalla	New	Total
Nick Aston	108	1779
Richard Coomber	19	1030
Helen Dignum ***	131	1275
Pippa Hyde	8	1692
Sarah MacLennan ***	163	855
Peter Whitcombe	5	1038
*** adjusted totals		

Ruth sent in a diary for the first time. Her favourite finds were Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* in the New Forest and Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* on a trip to Fishguard. Other interesting plants seen were Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, Thrift *Armeria maritima* (us oldies remember it from the old threepenny bits!), Quaking-grass *Briza media*, Chicory *Cichorium intybus*, with its wonderful sky-blue flowers, and Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare*. What a lovely selection of plants Ruth saw. Well done.

Sue and Andy 'caught the bug' last year and travelled to Dorset, Upper Teesdale and Scotland. Their list is like a 'bucket list' of plants you are desperate to see. The most amazing plants were from the north of the country such as Bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, Purple Milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus* and



Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala*, such a delicate and beautiful plant.

They also saw the magnificent Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* and Scots Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum*. Other plants included Globeflower *Trollius europaeus*, Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa* and Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*. Their ultimate finds were One-flowered Wintergreen *Moneses uniflora* and Oysterplant *Mertensia maritima*. What an amazing list and total. Brilliant.

Nick is an accomplished botanist and travelled to several botanical hot spots such as Ben Lawers, Caenlochan and the River Tay in Scotland, plus Birkdale Dunes, Lancashire, and Kynance Cove, Cornwall. It sounded an exhausting but thrilling way to see new plants. In Cumbria he recorded the rare Bog-rosemary *Andromeda polifolia*, while in Scotland he found the extremely rare String Sedge *Carex chordorrhiza* near Aviemore. At Ben Lawers he spotted Alpine Forget-me-not *Myosotis alpestris*, Net-leaved Willow *Salix reticulata* and Drooping Saxifrage *Saxifraga cernua*. Along the River Tay he found Cabbage Thistle *Cirsium oleraceum* and Milky Bellflower *Campanula lactiflora*, while in Caenlochan he saw the wonderful Alpine Blue-sowthistle *Cicerbita alpina*. At Insh Marshes, Kingussie, he was shown the hybrid orchid Heath Fragrant-orchid x Heath Spotted-orchid *Gymnadenia borealis* x *Dactylorhiza maculata* = *X Dactylodenia evansii*. Moving south to Lancashire and Birkdale Dunes he saw Perennial Ragweed *Ambrosia psilostachya*, while on his native Isle of Wight he found Squirting Cucumber *Ecballium elaterium*. What an amazing list. Excellent.

Richard visited Somerset, where he found Intermediate Polypody *Polypodium interjectum*, while in Hampshire he noticed Stranvaesia *Photinia davidiana*, not a commonly naturalised shrub. At Durlston Head he saw Dwarf Mouse-ear *Cerastium pumilum*, a rare plant of chalk and limestone areas. He also recorded Pirri-pirri-bur *Acaena novae-zelandiae*, with its aggressive spiny fruits which cling to fur and trousers. Other records included Orange-ball-tree *Buddleja globosa* and Fringed Water-lily *Nymphoides peltata*. An interesting list of plants including several rarities. Very well done.

Helen made the most of many WFS meetings and local botanical groups to enhance her list. In Sussex, at Wolstonbury Hill, she saw Field Fleawort *Tephrosia integrifolia* ssp. *integrifolia*. Going up north to Upper Teesdale and Scotland is always exciting and invariably results in many new species. Who cannot love Mountain Melick *Melica nutans* and Globeflower *Trollius europaeus*? Other interesting plants included Scottish Asphodel *Tofieldia pusilla* and Bird Cherry *Prunus padus*. The hybrid Common Dog-violet x Teesdale Violet *Viola riviniana* x *V. rupestris* = *V. x burnatii* is a wonderful record, as is the hybrid thistle *Carduus crispus* x *C. nutans* = *C. x stangii*. The prize, however, must go to the extremely rare Italian Lords-and-Ladies *Arum italicum* ssp. *neglectum*. An amazing list - brilliant.

Pippa always sends in a short but very unusual list of plants. Gold-of-pleasure *Camelina sativa* is always nice to find. Garden Pea *Lathyrus*

oleraceus is rarely naturalised and an excellent record, as is Flowering Tobacco *Tobacco sylvestris*, a garden plant from Argentina. Well done.

Peter is an all-round naturalist but always keeps an eye out for any unusual plants he has not yet seen. New species seen in 2023 were Drooping Star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum nutans* and White Butterbur *Petasites albus*. Hirsute Garlic *Allium trifoliatum* was an exciting record but his best plant was Cowherb *Vaccaria hispanica*, found locally in Brighton. Although his list is short it contains some unusual species. Even I haven't seen Cowherb! Well done.

Sarah recorded most of her new species from a trip to Arran, Scotland, including Northern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, Wood Horsetail *Equisetum sylvaticum*, the most delicate and beautiful of the

horsetails, Great Wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* and Fir Clubmoss *Huperzia selago*. Arran Whitebeam *Sorbus arranensis* must be her best plant of the year. More local records in Hampshire included Thorn-apple *Datura stramonium*, Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*, Henbane *Hyoscyamus niger* and Early Spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes*. On Hayling Island she spotted Purple Clematis *Clematis viticella* along with the stunning Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus*, two brilliant finds. An excellent effort - very well done.

Thanks to all the members who sent in their records. It is always fascinating to hear about all the weird and wonderful or rare and amazing plants found in the British Isles.

GARETH BURNSNALL

YORKSHIRE (BRANCH N1)

Annual	New	Total
Michael Harford		397
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Anthony & Rita Grainger	44	1798
Kerry Morrison	31	675
Susan Simcock	130	1424
Thomas Simcock	88	1397
Mary Sorsby	26	954

This is **Michael's** first record book although he has been a member for several years. He is also a member of the Bradford Botany Group and Wharfedale Naturalists and has been on several of their field meetings as

well as WFS ones. He managed to see a wide variety of plants, such as Sea-kale *Crambe maritima* and Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima* on the Solway coast and all three wintergreens, Serrated *Orthilia*

secunda, Intermediate *Pyrola media* and One-flowered *Moneses uniflora*, as well as Small Cow-wheat *Melampyrum sylvaticum* while he was in Scotland. More locally he managed to see English Sandwort *Arenaria norvegica* ssp. *anglica* and Teesdale Violet *Viola rupestris*. A good year's botanising and I look forward to hearing about many more in the future.

Anthony and Rita have had a successful year with a good list of new finds. They started the year well in April with self-seeded trees on a Bradford Botany Group field meeting near Otley, where they saw Western Hemlock-spruce *Tsuga heterophylla* and lots of new young Western Red-cedar *Thuja plicata*. WFS meetings in Somerset and Cornwall in May led to many new finds. Bulbous x Marsh Foxtail *Alopecurus bulbosus* x *geniculatus* = *A. x plettkei* and Sea Clover *Trifolium squamosum* were

found in Somerset, while it was the year of the clovers on the Lizard, highlights of which included Long-headed *T. incarnatum* ssp. *molinerii*, Upright *T. strictum*, Twin-headed *T. bocconeii* and Western Clover *T. occidentale*, which had eluded them until now. Even more exciting was not only Dwarf Rush *Juncus capitatus* but also Pigmy Rush *J. pygmaeus*. Nearer home in Yorkshire they found Narrow-leaved Water-dropwort *Oenanthe silaifolia* and Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua* and at Askham Bog, Marsh Stitchwort *Stellaria palustris* was a new find for both them and the reserve itself.

Kerry continues as a member of the Harrogate and District Naturalists Society. On a couple of meetings around Ingleborough last year led by Kevin Walker, BSBI recorder for VC 65 (NW Yorkshire), she saw Small-white Orchid *Pseudorchis albida* and Common x Heath Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* x *D. maculata* = *D. x transiens* at Gearstones and Silky Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla glaucescens* at Selside. Kerry also helps to survey for Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). If a site has sufficient biodiversity to qualify, the local authority is expected to take account of the need to protect it when deciding their planning and development policies. Kerry mainly surveyed woodland sites and was fortunate enough to find Mistletoe *Viscum album* near Kirby Malzeard, not often found so far north. An interesting year for Kerry.

Susan and Tom have had a very good year, seeing lots of new plants. The WFS meeting on the Lizard



Long-headed Clover

meant that, like Anthony and Rita, they saw many of the rare clover species and of course Pigmy Rush. Naturally you need to be in Cornwall to see Cornish Juniper *Juniperus communis* ssp. *hemisphaerica*. They were also pleased to see Chamomile *Chamaemelum nobile* and Thyme Broomrape *Orobancha alba*. On local Bradford Botany Group field meetings they saw Golden Dock *Rumex maritimus* and Susan saw the seedlings of Giant Fir *Abies grandis* and Western Red-cedar *Thuja plicata* as well as urban weeds like Chicory *Cichorium intybus* and Garden Parsley *Petroselinum crispum*. Susan also went to the Bradford Botany Group meeting in Scotland visiting the Ben Lawers area and the Birks of Aberfeldy to see many alpine species, including many *Carex*, *Juncus* and *Luzula* species as well as Cyphel *Cherleria sedoides*. On the WFS Upper Teesdale meeting, where we met Margaret Bradshaw, Susan and Tom saw Clustered Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla glomerulans* and Velvet Lady's-mantle *A. monticola*. Another highlight of their year was seeing Isle of Man Cabbage *Coincya monensis* ssp. *monensis* and some of the glasswort species *Salicornia* spp.

on the Sefton coast meeting. An interesting year's flower-seeking.

Mary has again been travelling around the country on WFS meetings and Ramblers walking holidays. She attended WFS field meetings at Studland, Dorset, and Askham Bog, York, where she saw many sedges including the uncommon Fibrous Tussock-sedge *Carex appropinquata* and Elongated Sedge *C. elongata*. Other nice plants of boggy areas included Water-violet *Hottonia palustris* and Water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*. Her highlight of the year was a walking holiday on the North Norfolk coast where the dunes at Holkham and Holme-next-the-Sea were fabulous for their plants. She had seen most of them before, but Oval Sedge *C. leporina* and Hare's-tail *Lagurus ovatus* were new to her. Mary has found using a plant identification app. on her phone along with the usual books a help when she is alone in the field. She is now aiming to reach 1,000 plants this year and has already booked to go to Glencoe and Guernsey so hopefully will reach it.

JUDITH COX

YORKSHIRE, (BRANCH N1), 1KM SQUARE STUDY

	Branch	Monad	Location	New	Total
Anthony and Rita Grainger	N1	SE 2338	Horsforth, Leeds	11	318
Anthony and Rita Grainger	N1	SE 2339	Horsforth, Leeds	2	270
Anthony and Rita Grainger	N1	SE 2438	Horsforth, Leeds	0	247



Anthony and Rita's home monad SE 2338 has woodland and meadows on the edge of the urban area. They found Darwin's Barberry *Berberis darwinii* bird-sown in their garden hedge, Thorn-apple *Datura stramonium* in a friend's garden and a bird-sown Sunflower *Helianthus annuus* nearby. Silver Ragwort *Jacobaea maritima* was growing on waste land near the library and Canadian Fleabane, *Erigeron canadensis* and Common Toadflax *Linaria vulgaris* on another patch of wasteland. In the large pond in SE 2339 they found one flower on the White Water-lily *Nymphaea alba* which they had waited three years to find and there were no new finds in SE 2438.

JUDITH COX

NORTH EAST (BRANCH N2)

Annual	New	Total
Judith Line		363
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Kevin Story	27	387
Richard Friend	36	730

Kevin lives only a short drive from Teesdale and much of his botanising was done while walking in the dale. He therefore counts himself fortunate to be able to enjoy a good population of Spring Gentian *Gentiana verna* flowering each year. While doing so in June, he also chanced upon Hoary Whitlowgrass *Draba incana* in one of the enclosures on Cronkley Fell and, a couple of weeks later, joined the excellent WFS field meeting on

Widdybank Fell to become re-acquainted with other members of the assemblage. However, what really caught his eye and gave him great pleasure finding was the much less lauded but no less beautiful Hairy Tare *Ervilia hirsuta* twining around wheat stems on a sunny day and Scottish Eyebright *Euphrasia scottica* shuddering under a Lake District downpour.

Judith feels that her WFS record this year is much more comprehensive and complete due to her assiduous monthly recording. She has particularly focused on her local churchyard, where considerable work has been put into creating habitats to encourage wildlife. Records from here, and from visiting previous local haunts further south in Knocking Hoe, Bedfordshire, and Collyweston, Northamptonshire, have resulted in a considerable increase in her number of records for 2023. Visiting old friends such as Wild Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* and Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata* gave Judith as much pleasure as

wildlife hedge, also in the churchyard, is thriving and will hopefully attract many new species, including additions to the local flora. She goes on to say how thrilled they are that the original count of 63 plant species at the site has risen to 94 as a result of more assiduous recording, some planting and different management at local and county level, with magnificent Mullein Moth caterpillars being another highlight.

Richard noted that the eagerness of a college friend to try out a new fishing-rod had led to an unnecessarily fast walk to Red Tarn on Helvellyn, Cumbria. Richard found his first Alpine Saw-wort *Saussurea alpina* close by, but his friend didn't catch any fish! A few weeks later, having started some work in northern Scotland, he found his new work partner to be similarly speedy plus younger and fitter than his college friend. A bad combination for him in the Highlands, he thought initially, but it worked out fine and they found plenty more Alpine Saw-wort! He also found a suite of highland specialities new to him, including Alpine Lady-fern *Athyrium distentifolium*, Cyphel *Cherleria sedoides*, Spiked Wood-rush *Luzula spicata* and Trailing Azalea *Kalmia procumbens*. Other highlights of 2023 were Spring Cinquefoil *Potentilla verna*, near Great Orme, North Wales, and String Sedge *Carex chordorrhiza* at Insh Marshes, Highland, Scotland.



Clustered Bellflower

finding previously undiscovered plants in the churchyard. She is pleased that the communally-planted

LIZZIE MADDISON

NORTH WEST (BRANCH N3)

Cumulative - Valhalla	New	Total
Barbara Allen	6	1385
Emma Graney	19	245
Pauline Grimshaw	4	1416
David Morgan	10	991
Sue Riley	8	1195
Dorothy Ross	3	977

During 2023, I welcomed 18 new members to the Society. One new member co-chairs the Rochdale Field Naturalists Society and I was able to help her obtain a speaker, a WFS member, to talk to them about WFS at one of their indoor meetings. The weather here in the North was either too hot, too wet or too windy in 2023! Let us hope for a change during 2024.

At the start of the season, **Barbara** found Whorled Coralroot *Cardamine quinquefolia*, a very showy plant, growing under trees at the top of Carr Mill Dam, St. Helens. She had spotted Garden Tulip *Tulipa gesneriana* for some years in a hedgerow locally, so decided to record it this year and also found Pick-a-back-plant *Tolmiea menziesii* carpeting an area of seepage in Sunnyhurst Wood, Darwen.

Emma tells me that she didn't travel too far last year, so most of her finds are from the North West. She was pleased to spot Common Meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum* in the car park at Delamere Forest, car parks always being good places to search. She

saw Corncockle *Agrostemma githago* and Weld *Reseda luteola* on Otterspool Promenade and Tall Fescue *Schedonorus arundinaceus* and White Campion *Silene latifolia* on Garston Shore Road, Liverpool.



White Campion

Pauline decided to tackle a 1km

square in 2023 near her home at Gee Cross, Greater Manchester, and found plants for her life list too: Red Bistort *Bistorta amplexicaulis* growing on a shaded wooded bank, Cut-leaved Dead-nettle *Lamium hybridum* on disturbed ground, and Purple-flowered Raspberry *Rubus odoratus* in Great Wood.

David tells me that he went on a campervan jolly in Europe in 2023, hopefully missing our summer! However, he spotted an unusual grass whilst waiting for his van to be serviced in Macclesfield, namely Annual Beard-grass *Polypogon monspeliensis*. He also found Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus* growing in a sandy area at Delamere. At Winsford he found a very good dock *Rumex* cross, namely Clustered x Wood Dock *Rumex conglomeratus* x *R. sanguineus* = *R. x ruhmeri* along with Tubular Water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*.

Sue went on the Society meeting at Knocking Hoe Reserve, Bedfordshire, and was pleased to see Few-flowered Fumitory *Fumaria vaillantii* along with Cornfield Knotgrass

Polygonum rurivagum. She joined us at Sankey Valley, St Helens, and saw House Holly-fern *Cyrtomium falcatum*. In addition, she found a plant with the unusual name of Chia *Salvia hispanica* in two places in the Silverdale area, also a new plant for the Arnside district plant records.

Dorothy spotted the unusual Smooth Finger-grass *Digitaria ischaemum* in an overgrown planter in Cromer, Norfolk. At the edge of a pavement in London she spotted Cat-mint *Nepeta cataria* and at the edge of another pavement, but back home in Darwen, she found Rose-of-Sharon *Hypericum calycinum*.

As I finish my report, we have over two inches of snow here in Beetham, not the weather to go out in except for young ones, but the view to the Cumbrian hills looks magnificent.

Take care all during 2024 and I wish you happy hunting.

Please note, the North West Branch 1km square report will be in the next magazine.

JULIE CLARKE

THAMES and CHILTERNs (BRANCH O)

Annual	New	Total
Mary Bentall		350
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Susan Grimshaw	4	1202
Roger Heath-Brown	5	1969
Barbara Spence	42	1118
Christina White	3	254

Mary has sent a very interesting list, including many unusual plants. She went to Devon, North Wales, Herefordshire and Suffolk amongst other places, but the bulk of her records are from near to home, in Oxfordshire. In Torquay she chanced upon German-ivy *Delairea odorata*, while a verge of the A1 in Lincolnshire produced both Grass-leaved Orache *Atriplex littoralis* and Lesser Sea-spurrey *Spergularia marina*, both benefitting doubtless from road-salting. Closer to home she found Cornelian-cherry *Cornus mas*



and Wild Liquorice *Astragalus glycyphyllos*. Sadly, her husband Angus has had a series of medical problems and was unable to send in a diary.

Susan has had a difficult year, spending much of her time as registered carer for her husband. She does, however, have four nice additions to her list: Ragweed *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*, Shaggy-soldier *Galinsoga quadriradiata*, Garden Parsley *Petroselinum crispum* and Argentine Vervain *Verbena bonariensis*. The first three of these were all found in cracks in paving - a very productive habitat!

I, Roger, come next in alphabetical order. Mine was a disappointingly unproductive year, but I was pleased to see Plymouth Pear *Pyrus cordata* near Truro, and the large-flowered introduced subspecies of Square-stalked Willowherb *Epilobium tetragonum* ssp. *tournefortii* in Cambridgeshire.

Barbara's list has lots of nice records, some from a trip up to Northumberland and Durham, some from a few days on the south coast at Hayling Island, and others closer to home from Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Oxfordshire. The WFS trip to Knocking Hoe gave her a spectacular haul of rarities. However, I suspect what pleased her most were the plants she found for herself, from which I would pick out Cut-leaved Dead-nettle *Lamium hybridum*, Bifid Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis bifida* (in her own allotment) and her first *Hieracium*, Dappled Hawkweed *H. scotostictum*.

Christina has devoted much of her time to her garden and allotment and has started looking at mosses. She does have three new additions to her plant list though, namely Hart's-tongue *Asplenium scolopendrium*, Springbeauty *Claytonia perfoliata* and Bird-in-a-bush *Corydalis solida*.

In addition to hearing from those with plant records to report it was good to hear from various other members during the course of the past year - many thanks for writing in! Do keep in touch everyone, and here's hoping for some fine flowers in the coming year.

ROGER HEATH-BROWN

1 KM SQUARE STUDY

There was only one 1km square study this year - my own! I continued work on SP5801 for a second year. The square includes my home in the village of Garsington, Oxfordshire. There are quiet roads and footpaths, a churchyard and old stone buildings, a pond and stream, and some rather dull arable and grazing land. I was only able to make 12 additions to the list, bringing the total up to 242. The most notable addition was Knotted Hedge-parsley *Torilis nodosa*, which reappeared in my garden after a year's absence. There are still some notable gaps in my list, so there's more work to be done!

ROGER HEATH-BROWN



SEVERN VALLEY, MID and SOUTH WALES, (BRANCH P)

I sometimes feel that I must be failing to reach enough Branch P members - hearing from around 10 people a year from a Branch totalling more than 80 feels rather sparse - but people join for many reasons and many have neither time nor inclination to prepare lists, keep diaries, or write long newsy emails. And those who do correspond send me such richly interesting and enjoyable material that I really have to feel lucky. Because of the huge range of interest and experience within the Branch I make no attempt to report individual records according to list length, but pick out highlights

which appeal to me. I hope all the members included will feel that I have done this fairly, and that equally good accounts will come from their botany in 2024. I do wish everyone well for this year; I am always both grateful for and fascinated by any news (and of course any queries which I might be able to help with).

Helena Crouch has been a friend and colleague for years and is the BSBI Recorder for North Somerset, VC6, which includes the Mendip limestones and much of the Levels. She comes late to the WFS, but has a lifelong love of botany. She says

that her family right back to her great-grandmothers loved wild flowers and she has never been without the passion. She is a dedicated gardener as well, applying her habitat knowledge to develop special areas for ornamental plants. Her qualifications and distinguished committee positions are countless; I'll just note that BSBI, Bath Natural History Society, Somerset Rare Plants Group and the Cam Valley Wildlife Group are among other societies which enjoy her active involvement. She is even compiling the Somerset Rare Plants Register, which is a massive task. I hope that she will have time to join WFS activities. Her identification skills are superb and I certainly feel delighted to have such a resource within Branch P!

Ruth Dawes is a supporter of WFS field meetings and writes excellent reports. I especially enjoyed her account of a meeting in the South Downs National Park (printed in the Winter 2024 magazine). The weather was grim at first, but Ruth paid close attention to leaders Priscilla Nobbs and Paul Harmes and noted that the group included descendants of Lady Anne Brewis (late Queen of Hampshire botany) and Elizabeth Norman, who supported me in the county of East Sussex for my first Rare Plant Survey in 1985! The group managed to see that magical species Early Spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes* and enjoyed the views and bird life of the downland. For some very different botany, Ruth was in Western Australia and Tasmania in September and was thrilled by the amazing variety among sundew *Drosera* flowers.

Wendy Hofmaier walks her dogs on the Quantocks and has delighted me by saying how much her WFS membership has added enjoyment to this already pleasing activity. After a first year (2022) with a Beginner's Diary she reports being much more aware of the local wild flowers and is beginning to know where to expect special ones, such as a spot which usually produces a marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza* sp. while her photograph of Colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara* in flower is included in the 2023 village calendar! She intends to repeat the Beginner's Diary to consolidate her growing knowledge - a wise and excellent intention.

Graham Lavender is always active around his home area near the Exmoor coast as well as in the wider county. He has tremendous courage when approaching difficult groups such as brambles *Rubus*, hawkweeds *Hieracium*, the *Dryopteris affinis* agg. and even dock *Rumex* hybrids, but lately he has set himself a new challenge. During the first half of the last century, a remarkable gardener, Norman Hadden, lived in West Porlock, Somerset, where he made a woodland garden on the steep scarp of Exmoor above Porlock Bay. This was planted with countless rarities and Graham has discovered that there are fascinating survivors, a number of which have become naturalised. This area has a special microclimate so some of these are real exotics very rarely established in the wild, and hopefully Graham will publish these very unusual records.

Steven Law is making great efforts to fill what feel like gaps in his recording

- he lists grasses, sedges, rushes and ferns - and many of us must have the same good resolutions! Some of these groups can be hard work, so when he feels like more glamorous plants he is also searching for and photographing as many orchids as possible. An enjoyable selection that he sent me shows details of the lips of both Common and Heath Spotted-orchids *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and *D. maculata*, Greater Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, in enough detail to see the diagnostic position of the pollinia, and of course a delightful Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera* flower, while in his diary there are rarities such as



Military Orchid *Orchis militaris*. His botanising has mostly been in the Cotswolds and he includes grid references, which is an excellent principle. Time spent with Mark and Clare Kitchen, who know all Gloucestershire so well, means that

Steven's sedge records include rarities such as Dwarf Sedge *Carex humilis* and Fingered Sedge *C. digitata*, while among grasses I was rather envious to see Wood Barley *Hordeylmus europaeus*, which seems to stick so closely to the Cotswolds. It was nice to see that Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina* was accompanied by a smiling emoji – it always makes me feel the same!

Barbara Lewis had a rather restricted year. Like me she has had problems with unhappy bones and joints, but hopes that she will be able to do more in 2024. I join her in this wish! She managed to attend the Rye AGM, but knee grumpiness held her back from some of the walks, which from other reports sounded marvellous. I hope we will both be feeling much more spry in East Anglia this autumn.

Georgina Milway lives near Tewkesbury, and like some other members makes very good use of the rich wild flower resources of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, as well as botanising much further afield when she has a chance. I always enjoy her diary because her garden is so well-recorded, with regular appearances of desirable botanical 'weeds' such as Cut-leaved Dead-nettle *Lamium hybridum*, which I seldom see. In 2023 she went as far as Cornwall, Derbyshire and the Pewsey Downs in Wiltshire, adding some nice species, such as the quaintly-named chalk specialist Squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica*. However, one of her richest outings was quite near home, when she joined a U3A group looking round the Malvern Hills. I find I'm easily

distracted when members' records chime with my own memories, and as I was at school in Malvern, I felt that I could follow every footstep up the British Camp and to other familiar places, though seeing the rare but inconspicuous Upright Chickweed *Moenchia erecta* would have been way beyond me in those days and must have been an exciting record last May. Other lovely plants seen during the year include Deadly Nightshade *Atropa belladonna*, Flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus*, Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* and Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*. These show what a wide variety of habitats Georgina visited and how well she had her botanical eye in. Her diary total was 368.

Andrew Phillips sent in a well-filled diary with 603 records and reports an 'interesting year', which certainly interested me too. He had a specially enjoyable visit to the Gower with the Glamorgan Botany Group, picking out Pale Dog-violet *Viola lactea* and Hoary Rock-rose *Helianthemum oelandicum* as memorable, while I enjoyed his record of Yellow Whitlowgrass *Draba aizoides* because it reminds me of how excited I was to see it on those same cliffs below Pennard Castle. As well as plenty of rarities, the diary has a splendid number of willowherbs *Epilobium* spp. (which so many of us shy away from) and a nice number of rushes *Juncus* spp. A site called Bagland

Burrows at Aberavon sounds full of thrills, including Sea-heath *Frankenia laevis*, the uncommon Yellow Bartsia *Parentucellia viscosa* and the beautiful Sea Stock *Matthiola sinuata*. As well as such adventures, he made regular visits to his local Parc Slip, Bridgend, nature reserve and the Wildlife and Wetlands Trust reserve at Llanelli, so species common near home get equal attention, which is an excellent way to become familiar with habitats and communities.

Jean Richardson moved from Lancashire to Somerset, which must have been hugely disrupting, but she has already moved into local botanising, recording for the National Plant Monitoring Scheme in the Levels. She says that this has enabled her to 'focus on the close relationship between plants and their habitat' as she began to find unfamiliar aquatics. The arrival of *Plant Atlas 2020* thrilled her (as it has many of us) but she is very aware of the messages of threat and decline revealed by its magnificent overview, and of the necessity for continued monitoring and conservation efforts. Somerset is lucky to have gained such an active member.

Janet Vernon sometimes tells me that she's sorry she has so little to



Photo: Janet Vernon

report, but she always keeps in touch and I really appreciate her highlights. In 2023, the family holiday was, as it often is, in Northumberland and I've been sent a lovely bluebell photograph from there - most cheering to receive on a dark January day. Janet says that there may have been rather too many garden hybrids, but the effect is still heartening. This summer they intend going to Scotland, so I look forward to hearing what they find in this new territory.

Andrew Williams also has plans for a Scottish adventure to celebrate his first year of retirement - he and his wife Alison will be heading from South Wales to the furthest possible parts of the north mainland coast. We have had enthusiastic correspondence about possible botanical hot-spots and I really look forward to hearing next winter how the trip went.

Pauline Wilson and her husband Richard are always enormously busy. Their home area covers Gloucestershire from Bristol to the Cotswolds (where Richard is a Warden involved in conservation activities) but she reports many good finds from as far away as Suffolk. Spreading Hedge-parsley *Torilis arvensis*, which she found in Wiltshire, appeals to me because it's one of the precious and threatened arable weeds which sometimes occur near where I live, and it's a special find anywhere. The detailed report which she always sends me tells of her work with a local U3A group (such groups make such a contribution to spreading awareness of wild flowers) and of projects such as the grant-aided establishment of a

perennial meadow which will include uncommon species such as Pepper-saxifrage *Silene silaus*. I also really enjoyed a funny story Pauline told against herself but which I'm sure many of us will sympathise with. On holiday in the autumn in Suffolk she found an umbel with striking absolutely black seeds which seemed unfamiliar. However, after asking the local recorder she was mortified to find that it was Alexanders *Smyrniololus atrum*! It's quite a West Country pest, but one can miss seeing the seeds.

Aaron Woods concentrates on detailed recording in his own locality, which touches the edges of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, but also makes forays to more distant botanical hot-spots. However, in 2023 he reports staying particularly close to home, barely straying outside those two counties. Nonetheless, his results are full of interest and his new finds, including some which he conscientiously admits were not in flower or not in Stace, bring his cumulative total to 1068. He made admirable efforts with a couple of the still little-known duckweeds, successfully recording Red Duckweed *Lemna turionifera*, whose characters he was finally sure of after looking at 'so many possible contenders'. I wish I could report the same! I felt much more at home with another of his special finds as this was Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine*. Although this charming arable weed is still reasonably widespread (and commoner than *K. spuria*, its Round-leaved relative), Aaron had not chanced to see it since 2006, when arable weeds were not quite so scarce and it occurred in his parents'

garden. He was delighted to see one plant in a neighbouring maize field. This is typical habitat as it seems to escape the sprays in gateways and odd corners. It's very dear to me as it's rare in Ireland and although fascinated by the name 'Fluellen', I never saw it until I was grown up in England. It was an intense pleasure to survey it, finding and refinding

populations, when Irish Rare Plant Surveys had me put it on my Red Data Book 'to do' list. It seems that Aaron's home locality will continue to have most detailed recording cover and so accumulate evidence of post *Atlas 2020* losses or additions.

RO FITZGERALD

SOUTH WEST (BRANCH T)

Annual	New	Total
Ed Dolphin	0	326
Joanna Milner	0	306
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Suzanne Jones	5	357
Sally Maller	81	738
Chrissy Marshall	46	241
Lesley Philpott	0	1026

Ed is continuing his work on recording the flora in and around Sidmouth and was able to see many interesting species, some of which,



such as Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, are not particularly common in Devon. The Tall Fleabane *Erigeron annuus* that he found is a species that I'd

not even heard of and will need to keep a look-out for myself. He saw a couple of eyebrights *Euphrasia* spp. but understandably was reluctant to

take them down to species, given how complex this group can be.

Suzanne had a busy year with lots of non-plant-related projects going on, but still managed to add five species to her cumulative list. Three came from a trip to Scotland and included Purple Milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus*, while the highlight from Devon was Slender Tare *Ervum gracile*.

Sally had another amazing year, adding 81 species to her diary, 49 of which she'd never seen before. A trip to the New Forest gave her one of her star plants - Wild Gladiolus *Gladiolus illyricus*, while she found Common Meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum* and Parsley Water-dropwort *Oenanthe lachenalii* in Christchurch, Dorset. Outings with the Botanical

Cornwall Group added a good number of species, including several grasses and rushes. Among these, Crested Hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha* was a particularly nice find for the South-West of England.

Despite her mobility continuing to be rather restricted, **Chrissy** found 46 additional species, taking her up to



241. She saw an amazing variety of orchids on a guided trip in Gloucestershire, including Chalk Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*. While there she also topped up her list with some other nice species. She was

particularly pleased to be able to identify Grass Vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia* at Slimbridge. A course on sedges and grasses at Slapton Ley, Devon, was a big help, and some further additions came from a trip to see some friends in Scotland, who were understanding of her need for a regular fix of plants.

Joanna sent in her first diary this year. Most of her records came from Cornwall and her diary took me on a wonderful tour of the botanical hotspots of the county. She already has some botanical experience, which showed in the species she was able to add to those pre-supplied in the electronic form of the diary. One of these was Intermediate Periwinkle *Vinca difformis*, which is, I suspect, often overlooked by the beginner. With so many wonderful plants to choose from, it's difficult to pick out any to highlight in this report. However, I was pleased to see that she was able to find both Spring Squill *Scilla verna* and Autumn Squill *Scilla autumnalis* at Pentire Head. I've given her some ideas for species to look for in 2024 and it will be very interesting to see what she is able to add to her diary in the coming months.

Lesley was unable to add any new species this year but was still able to enjoy some short walks, during one of which, near St Agnes, she was treated to a magnificent show of Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* on a headland.

TIM PURCHES

MIDLANDS (BRANCH U)

Annual	New	Total
Sue and David Rogerson		51
Cumulative - Valhalla		
Patricia Cox	1	530
Jackie Ellis	25	1035
David and Sue Emley	7	1069
Martin Godfrey	76	766
Alison Gregory	1	1458
Judith Lee	63	719
Nicki Mottram	98	844
Richard Pykett	5	870
Mary and Claire Smith	17	1564
John and Monika Walton	78	1339
Irene Wilkinson	86	438

A number of Branch members visited Scotland this year, with all finding some special plants. Scotland, combined with local finds, made Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* and Heath Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia borealis* two of the most recorded species in the Midlands Branch.

Unfortunately, we start on a rather dour note. **Sue and David Rogerson** may have had an absolutely splendid year, but we shall never know, as they lost a lot of their information! Well, we've all had notepads fall into puddles, scraps of paper trodden into

the mud or blown away in the wind, as well as the struggle to read our own writing after the event, so they will just have to get used to the hazards of botany! However, they did have some good finds on a trip to Northumberland in May, including Star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum umbellatum* and Kidney Saxifrage *Saxifraga hirsuta*. They also spotted Spring Squill *Scilla verna*, which is far less common on the eastern coasts of Britain than the western.

As **Patricia** herself notes, she has repeated last year's triumph of the addition of one plant only. But as



Upton Fields Nature Reserve, Southam, Warwickshire, a plant that, frustratingly, she had previously only spotted abroad. And finally we would like to mention the rather drab Good-King-Henry *Blitum bonus-henricus*, found this year by Jackie. This still appears around farms and in country villages so make a note of it when you see it. With all the scaremongering

age, health and travel problems mount up for the older members amongst us, even one can bring us joy. Patricia is particularly pleased because the plant in question was *Nemesia* *Nemesia strumosa*, which is one of her favourites. She is puzzled as to its origin as it was found at the base of a wall in a backstreet where the cottages have small or non-existent front gardens, and with no evidence of bedding-plants or hanging baskets. This serves as confirmation for us of its validity as unplanted and proof of the tenacity of plants. We hope that Patricia continues her run of luck in the current year!

Jackie Ellis has joined a local botany group and this has given her a useful source of experienced botanists to advise on difficult plants such as grasses and rushes. The highlight for us in these tricky categories was Southern Wood-rush *Luzula forsteri*. Jackie freely admits that this plant could have easily passed her by. The specimen of Rough Mallow *Malva setigera* that she recorded was so tiny that, without the experienced eye of the group leader, it would have been missed altogether. We are pleased that she has now seen Man Orchid *Orchis anthropophora* at

stories about food shortages, we may be glad to forage its nutritious leaves in the not too distant future!

The accompanying overview of their botanical year from **Dave and Sue Emley** is always enormously interesting, especially as they throw in a few other species as well. This year Wasp Spiders featured heavily, with a fly-past by Pink-footed Geese. Of their new plants, our favourite was Potato *Solanum tuberosum* in Wales. At first they recognised it only as a member of the nightshade family. Having had it identified for them, Dave points out that they don't usually see Potato plants on the grass verges of Staffordshire! We were pleased with their only find in their home county, which was Many-flowered Rose *Rosa multiflora*. It's always good to tick off a species when there are so many to learn. They also found and were able to name White Ramping-fumitory *Fumaria capreolata* and Tall Ramping-fumitory *F. bastardii*. On previous occasions, they had not been able to do this, so another success story.

We are happy to pass on **Martin's** recommendation of the Solway coast for botanising. Also, his warning to keep an eye out for the tides.

Certainly, the range of saltmarsh plants at Mersehead Nature Reserve, Dumfries & Galloway, means there is always something to see and identify no matter what your botanical level. Sea Rush *Juncus maritimus* and Saltmarsh Rush *J. gerardii* are useful finds for those of us in the central Midlands. Another Scottish site had Rock Samphire *Crithmum maritimum*. Overall, a fine selection of coastal plants from Martin this year. Inland, and earlier in the year, he noted an old Peak District favourite, Mossy Saxifrage *Saxifraga hypnoides*.

Alison tells us that after 63 years in the WFS and 60 diaries, she and her husband can no longer travel, so she fears that she will have few opportunities for botanising now. By diligently checking her old diaries, however, she discovered that she had never included Spotted Dead-nettle *Lamium maculatum* in her cumulative list. We have added it in with the greatest of pleasure and urged her to watch out for pavement and garden weeds, so she may still add to her records.

A very varied selection of water plants was a highlight of **Judith's** diary. These ranged from Flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus* to Curly Waterweed *Lagarosiphon major* and Fan-leaved Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus circinatus* amongst others. Judith is fortunate to have reclaimed colliery sites within a reasonable driving distance and they are very productive. Now turned into country parks, they have had four or five decades for plants to colonise and bed in. In contrast, on a visit to her daughter in Sussex, she found Common Fiddleneck *Amsinckia*

micrantha, a plant of much drier areas.

We were impressed by **Nicki's** find of Shepherd's Cress *Teesdalia nudicaulis* in Cumbria. She plans her trips carefully and ensures that she knows what to look for, which is one reason for her success when botanising alone. A meeting with a local flora group took her to an arable field with not only both Fluellens, Round-leaved and Sharp-leaved *Kickxia spuria* and *K. elatine*, but also Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua* and Upright Spurge *E. stricta*. The former she had never managed to find before and, for the latter, it was only the second record in the county. Incredibly, Blue Pimpernel *Lysimachia foemina* was also present. How few of these flower-rich fields exist today?

Ill health continues to make botanising problematic for **Richard**, so it was good news that he managed to get to Dovedale, Peak District, and record the two special plants that a small group of us had found a couple of days previously. As Richard has always expressed horror at all the 'small white flowers' that appear so abundantly in spring, it is to his credit that he identified Fine-leaved Sandwort *Sabulina tenuifolia*. The only clue with this one is that the leaves really are fine, with a long, tapering point. The second plant was Bulbous Meadow-grass *Poa bulbosa*, which also lives up to its name. It made a splendid show with very many flower spikes, which we understand is unusual. Richard also found Field Gromwell *Buglossoides arvensis* as a street weed in Nottingham, which was duly reported



Flixweed

to the Nottinghamshire vice-county recorders.

Mary and Claire: Our own efforts were greatly enlivened by visiting two rather odd habitats. A friend took us to a very scruffy-looking field that consisted mainly of dumped builders' rubble hidden beneath much vegetation. Among a number of unusual plants, we found just one plant of Hairy Vetchling *Lathyrus hirsutus*. Luckily it was in flower, otherwise we wouldn't have been able to see it amongst the taller plants. Leek *Allium porrum* was also new to us. Continuing the vegetable theme, we added Lentil *Vicia lens* at our second interesting site. This was a bend in the river Derwent in the

suburbs south of Derby, where a large gravel and sand beach has formed and a variety of plants have made it their home. To our joy, Flixweed *Descurainia sophia* was present, albeit only about 10cms high. Everyone in the Midlands Branch seems to have seen this except us, so success at last!

John and Monika had a good start to the year with Bristol Rock-cress *Arabis scabra*, seen while visiting friends. Although they admit it was not very showy, the choicest plants usually aren't. We were also very taken with one of their Scottish records, Baltic Rush *Juncus balticus*, which no-one could call glamorous. Downy Currant *Ribes spicatum* was another good find from Scotland. John and Monika were delighted with

the WFS meeting at Knocking Hoe as they saw Ground-pine *Ajuga chamaepitys*, which is now very elusive. Not all their good finds involved travelling, as they enjoyed finding Lesser Pondweed *Potamogeton pusillus* nearby at Rugby.

Lastly, yet another member who had a memorable visit to Scotland! Although the focus of **Irene's** visit was to see Pine Martens at Aigas, they were also shown many wonderful plants by experienced guides. Creeping Lady's-tresses *Goodyera repens* was one good find but Irene was disappointed that she had missed the flowering of Twinflower *Linnaea borealis* by two weeks. Meetings of her local BSBI

flora group provided further good records with Sand Spurrey *Spergularia rubra* and Small Melilot *Melilotus indicus*. These were on the same sandy beach near Derby which gave us our two good finds. Light, sandy soils are rare for us and so are a habitat that is much appreciated for its variety.

MARY AND CLAIRE SMITH

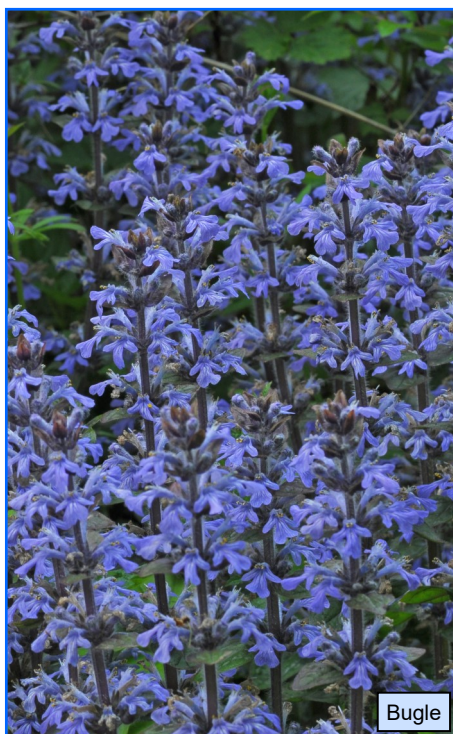
MIDLANDS (BRANCH U), 1KM SQUARE STUDY

Name	Monad	Location	Year	New	Total
Jackie Ellis	SO9783	Halesowen, West Midlands	5	4	314
	SO9784	Halesowen, West Midlands	4	0	224
Judith Lee	SK2965	Cromford, Derbyshire	5	0	208
	SK3264	NW of Kelstedge, Derbyshire	3	0	96
	SK2355	SE of Longcliffe, Derbyshire	2	10	80
	SK2952	Prathall Lane, Wirksworth, Derbyshire	1	0	111
Nicki Mottram	SP2872	Abbey Fields, Kenilworth, Warwickshire	2	18	164
	SP2873	Castle Green, Kenilworth, Warwickshire	2	9	79
	SP2972	Crackley, Kenilworth, Warwickshire	2	13	153
	SP2973	Ladyes Hills, Kenilworth, Warwickshire	2	9	121
Richard Pykett	SK5742	Sherwood, Nottingham	5	2	155
	SK4946	Bogend, Eastwood, Nottinghamshire	2	0	37

Incredibly **Jackie** has managed to add to one of her squares, and she tells us that it wasn't even an intentional recording session; she was simply taking a walk. We doubt that Jackie could have missed the stately Cotton Thistle *Onopordum acanthium* in previous years so that is a definite newcomer to SO9783. Her other additions were Clustered Dock *Rumex conglomeratus*, Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa* and Chenault's Coralberry *Symphoricarpos x chenaultii*. Even some quite common things can take a while to turn up. Other plants may only become apparent when you walk a site at a different time of year and catch a glimpse of an unexpected leaf shape. So Jackie may continue to add to her numbers for a while yet!

Last year we were convinced that **Judith's** sliver of a monad, 90m x 10m of SK 2355, and paved over by workmen, would be too hostile an environment for 'nice' things to flourish and would succumb to being scrubbed over by bully-boy plants. To our surprise, normal weeds fought back and she recorded Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus* and Red Campion *Silene dioica*. In addition, apparently from nowhere, Garden Grape-hyacinth *Muscari armeniacum* appeared, along with Keeled-fruited Cornsalad *Valerianella carinata*. Let's hope that year three will see the fightback continue. In SK2952, Judith was asked to collect seed for a project from a field known to be untainted by 'artificials', so she decided that it might be worth recording the whole monad. Prathall Lane is a very well-worn farm track, muddy with deep ruts. It has mature

trees at the western end which gradually become hedgerows enclosing pasture on an angled hillside with quite a bit of run-off. This supports Bugle *Ajuga reptans* and



Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*. The richer fields contain Betony *Betonica officinalis*, Crosswort *Cruciata laevipes* and Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*. There was a good representative flora of each habitat, including ferns, grasses and trees. A springtime visit will be useful this year in case any plants of the season were missed, and there is a small stream which it may be possible to follow for further new finds.

Nicki had only random opportunities to work at her monads, which she

feels contributed to the number of trees and grasses that are still unrecorded. However, she remains determined to get to grips with these in future years. Good for her! We remain enamoured of SP2872, which retains all of its lovely wet areas despite the scorching hot spells of the last few summers. The new finds are a curious mix of plants we associate with the garden, such as Caper Spurge *Euphorbia lathyris*, and 'proper' native plants such as Bog Stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*. Adjacent monad SP2873 saw a tree and six grasses successfully added. Housing with the appropriate gardens and their weeds proved their worth in SP2972, enabling Nicki to add both Broad-leaved Willowherb *Epilobium montanum* and American Willowherb *E. ciliatum*. Gardens are often the only source of willowherbs and spurges so it is always worth peering over and through fences and hedges. The fourth monad, SP2973, took Nicki down the Greenway, where she spotted Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*. Then, in woodland, she added Common Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit*. Finally, in a more open area, Nicki recorded a plant that had quite a population explosion in

our area last year, Bristly Oxtongue *Helminthotheca echinoides*.

Richard was somewhat surprised by the two additions to his 1km home square. Neither of them are garden-escapes and Richard normally sees these plants in country areas, not in a very built-up urban environment. The first was Wild Teasel *Dipsacus fullonum* and the second, Hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*. Admittedly the former was associated with some recent local authority landscaping which brought in topsoil, so that may be its origin. Most of us think that Hemp-agrimony grows only by water, which is not so. We have seen it as a weed of pavement and gutter and Stace tells us that it is found in dry grassland, which surprised us. A visit to SK4946 remains an impossible dream for Richard at the moment, but he optimistically maintains that his health will improve enough to make it one day and we wish him all the best in his endeavours.

MARY AND CLAIRE SMITH

GREATER LONDON (BRANCH V)

Cumulative - Valhalla	New	Total
Ann Allen	1	198
Clare Million	89	706
Jane Lowe	116	1282
Robin Blades	10	1301

I was pleased to hear from Ann for the first time since I took over from David Bevan. Ann's sole new plant for 2023 was Hoary Cress *Lepidium draba*, which she found on waste ground next to a petrol station in Harrow. Hoary Cress is a neophyte with an interesting story behind its arrival in Britain. Native to southern Europe and western Asia, it was accidentally introduced to ports such as Swansea in 1802 and later to Ramsgate, apparently as seed in the hay-filled mattresses of sick soldiers returning to Britain from the Walcheren expedition (Napoleonic wars). It is said that in Kent the hay was stored in a gravel pit and eventually given to a farmer in Thanet who used it to fertilise his fields. Thus the species found a foothold in Kent and elsewhere. Its spread, particularly in urban areas throughout Britain, is well documented.

Many of **Clare's** impressive list of new additions came from joining Surrey Botanical Society (SBS) meetings and also whilst birdwatching with her husband in various locations, including Pembrokeshire and the Outer Hebrides. Whilst looking for Little Terns at Pagham Harbour, Clare came across her top plant of the year, Childing Pink *Petrorhagia nanteuillii*, which was pointed out to her by botanists surveying for the Species Recovery Trust. I was interested in her discovery of Buttonweed *Cotula coronopifolia* at an RSPB reserve by Poole Harbour in Dorset. Its seeds are known to be eaten and transported by birds and Clare's find appears to be a new county record. A one-day Field Studies Council course on bogs and

mires in Shropshire gave her Bog-rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* and Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*. Clare didn't need to travel further than her local tube station for Marsh Yellow-cress *Rorippa palustris* and a walk which she led in her local area of Putney for SBS gave a remarkable total of 169 species, including Four-leaved Allseed



Polycarpon tetraphyllum and Nodding Bur-marigold *Bidens cernua*. This has spurred Clare on to do more botanising locally and she has been encouraged by her VC recorder to continue submitting records from a local nature reserve.

A very impressive list of thirteen new, less common sedges stands out from **Jane's** 2023 diary additions. From the May WFS meeting in Gloucestershire, she added Fingered Sedge *Carex digitata* and Thin-spiked Wood-sedge *C. strigosa*. At a WFS meeting at Askham Bog in North Yorkshire Fibrous Tussock-sedge *C. appropinquata*, Tufted-sedge *C. elata*

and Elongated Sedge *C. elongata* were new to her. But it was Chris and Hazel Metherell's very instructive WFS meeting concentrating on the genus in North Wales that Jane mentions especially as it has given her confidence to tackle the genus alone. A three-day WFS meeting around Perth gave Jane a sight of Nordic Moonwort *Botrychium nordicum*, which was only recently discovered in Britain. Some showy aliens growing alongside the River Tay included garden escapes Coneflower *Rudbeckia laciniata* and Milky Bellflower *Campanula lactiflora*. Jane's biggest surprise was finding an unusual fern on one of her favourite local walks in Surrey, keying it out to Western Sword-fern *Polystichum munitum* and then discovering that it had been recorded there since 1981. In late September Jane attended a joint meeting of Surrey and Kent botanists on the county border at Deptford, where she saw a number of neophytes, including Tall Nightshade *Solanum chenopodioides*, which appears to be carried around by pigeons, which were seen feeding on the berries.

Two of **Robin's** new additions were found on lunchtime riverside walks from work in London, during which he often spots a kingfisher. He had seen what he suspected to be leaves of the aquatic alien Large-flowered Waterweed *Egeria densa* in the River Lea but couldn't be sure until finding it in flower in a shallow margin. Robin's other lunchtime addition was Hop *Humulus lupulus*, which of course he had seen many times before but not added it to his list. On

a May trip to Derbyshire, Robin was hopeful of finding *Hutchinsia Hornungia petraea* on a walk to Dove Dale. As he stopped to admire some Rue-leaved Saxifrage *Saxifraga*



Rue-leaved Saxifrage

tridactylites, that was when he noticed a tiny plant at the edge of a small limestone outcrop which turned out to be just what he was looking for. In the same area was another small crucifer, Wall Whitlowgrass *Drabella muralis*. The remainder of Robin's 2023 additions came from the September members' weekend in the Rye area, where he added Stinking Hawk's-beard *Crepis foetida*, Rottingdean Sea-lavender *Limonium hyblaenum* and Twiggy Mullein *Verbascum virgatum*, all growing on the shingle in Rye Harbour nature reserve.

SUE BUCKINGHAM

SCOTLAND and IRELAND (BRANCH W)

The seemingly endless winter of 2023-24 has made me think of Scottish members in particular with great sympathy and I hope that by the time anyone reads this report the year will have become much more botany-friendly. Erratic weather patterns and extremes are making flowering times unpredictable everywhere and changing temperature averages are known to be affecting mountain plants. It will be fascinating to see if Scottish members in particular notice changes in plant behaviour. I look forward to hearing news next winter. As usual, members are given in alphabetical order and in the form of news highlights rather than list totals.

Brian Ballinger is involved with a fascinating project - the Botanical Society of Scotland is looking at the urban flora of the country, focusing on places with high populations. This must sound really surprising to botanists whose image of Scotland centres on Ben Lawers or the remote Hebrides, but living near Minehead in West Somerset, where a coastal microclimate supports fascinating pavement weeds, I nearly cheered aloud when I read Brian's email. In recent years I've also had most interesting letters from Helen Jackson about Edinburgh town ruderals, so I'm excited that this neglected (sometimes even scorned) aspect of wild plant recording is being taken so seriously. Information is available on YouTube, as the group published a checklist of urban flora last year and held a conference

at the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Around 100,000 records have been generated, a book is in preparation, and the message definitely seems to be 'Watch this space!' 'Otherwise', Brian writes casually, he has been continuing his long-term BSBI recording work in Easter Ross - I'm in awe of such energy expended for such good reasons.

Jim Blackwood is always busy in his home area of Renfrewshire. He sent me masses of news about his botanising in 2022 which unfortunately got lost in editing and never made it into the report, so I can mention some of his activities here! He shares a liking for under-recorded monads with me - there's something so satisfactory about recording where anything above zero is a plus, even if it's an extremely common plant. He also works for his local natural history group, leads walks, gives talks, and encourages the conservation of rarities. He also takes very good photographs and sent me four



Photo: Jim Blackwood

beauties from 2023, of the rare umbellifer Spiguel *Meum athamanticum*, which is a speciality of his area; of the always-beautiful Globeflower *Trollius europaeus*; and of Spring Snowflake *Leucojum vernum*, naturalised in a local woodland. In the south, the garden subspecies of its relative Summer Snowflake *L. aestivum* ssp. *pulchellum* is widespread on road verges but the more striking Spring species would be a real treat to find. My favourite photo is, however, of a much commoner plant, simply a patch of Meadowsweet *Filipendula*

to send me 112 records, in spite of the upheaval, and some delightful news - my favourite detail involved a first sighting of badgers. In low light she saw 'a V shape glinting' ahead making her wonder 'who has left a vase in the middle of the road?'. Then the vase 'grew legs and trundled off', having been the animal's white mask. Her records sometimes have humour too - Bog Pimpernel *Lysimachia tenella* might sound odd having a 'gravel drive' as its habitat, but Hilary wryly notes that theirs is 'sometimes a bog'. Her records included two of the quite unusual sub-shrubs which are sometimes naturalised in the 'policies' of large Scottish estates, Prickly Heath *Gaultheria mucronata* and Hidcote Tutsan *Hypericum x hidcoteense*, which must have strayed unusually far north from its Cotswold garden origin.

Roger Connard, by contrast, had an extremely upsetting year. I've reported before on him happily settling on the Isle of Bute after moving from Cumbria, and on his successful

establishment of a website describing good walks with special botanical interest to be found on the island. Assisted by Angus Hannah's *Isle of Bute Flora*, Roger's 35 recommended walks featured both unusual plants and notably beautiful displays of common species, all in lovely landscapes, so were an ideal resource for both serious botanists and more casual tourists. However, he tells me that last spring his website hosting company made a change in their editing system which



Meadowsweet

ulmaria framing a loch view and making it perfect!

Hilary Blyth had a hectic year when a house-move had to be undertaken at high speed. This will eventually give her more botany time because she will be settled in Argyllshire instead of commuting between there and Stirlingshire, where her main home was, and she is excited about being more within reach of the famous 'Atlantic Rainforest' areas bordering Loch Linnhe. She managed

made updates or alterations impossible and distorted any download of new material. Designing the walks had taken 6 years and uploading them anew would have involved starting from scratch in every single case - an obvious impossibility in a busy life, and most disheartening. They can still be used in their original form, but the frustration of being unable to update them must be hard to bear. Roger seems able to keep positive though and tells me he is delighted that he did the BSBI's Identiplant course. He recommends 'the course material, the tutoring and the whole approach', so I look forward to plenty of exciting new finds from his 2024 botanising.

News from **Hamlyn (Lyn) Jones** always makes me feel

breathless. I knew that he and Mandy had been speeding around in 2023 because Graham Lavender and I had the pleasure of their company on our West Somerset clover meeting in May, when they were on their way to the Lizard for the WFS meeting there the following weekend. Lyn was also planning a major three-day meeting in eastern Scotland for July. This covered differing habitats - the banks of the Tay, which have famously abundant introductions, the coastal dunes of St. Cyrus, and mountain areas round Glas Maol and Caenlochan. The very idea sounded challenging, and Lyn admits that some of his experiences doing recces to work out the timings caused him to opt for rather more modest aims.

Having had to wade through swirling water after a rapid tide change in the lower Tay, he then found that his proposed mountain route had taken him 10 hours even without walking particularly slowly, 'a bit much for a typical WFS walk', so several adjustments had to be made! However, the end results for that day sounded wonderful, with viewings of special plants such as Alpine Blue-sowthistle *Cicerbita alpina*, a species which must be at the top of many members' wish-lists.

Lunchtime in the Cairngorms



Photo: Hamlyn (Lyn) Jones

I'm sure that his three days planned round Glencoe and Rannoch Moor in June this year will be just as thrilling, with important plant interest in some superb landscapes.

Alison Wilson is always kind enough to keep in touch, though at the moment we are rather restricted to swapping notes about our various walking difficulties. I join her in hoping for a summer this year with *more botany!*

Robert Wilson Wright is a new member in a location which delights me because it is only a few miles from where one of my nieces lives in Ireland. He's a serious plantsman on both sides of the garden fence,

having a 20-acre garden and arboretum and travelling the world as a plant hunter, while also finding time to do detailed recording on the River Shannon, whose specialist wetland communities, the ‘callovs’, host as many rarities as the Somerset Levels. At the time of writing to me he was just off to walk the Mountains of the

Moon, Uganda, but in May he may well be leading one of his frequent trips to the Burren, so I will think of him among Harebells *Campanula rotundifolia* and Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala* as well as among giant lobelias!

RO FITZGERALD

PARNASSUS 1

	New	Cumulative
Julie Clarke	4	4221
Jessé Tregale	10	3752
Alan Leslie	110	3479
Carol Hawkins	14	3344
Stephen Clarkson	28	3228
Ted Pratt	5	3182
Marion Chappell	7	3041
John Hawksford	1	3011
Paul Harmes	162	3001
Ron Parker	0	2921
Judith Cox	26	2823
Jan Armishaw	52	2762
Gareth Burnsnall	11	2689
Heather Colls	2	2674
Rodney Burton	2	2608
Sheila Wynn	57	2600
Priscilla Nobbs	12	2589

With a few exceptions, 2023 was a rather quiet year for many Parnassus members. That is not to say that there were not some exciting plants in the lists and clearly the enthusiasm for the chase remains, even if, at this rarified level, finding anything new takes time, application and effort.

Julie Clarke still reigns supreme and

added four to her already monumental total of records. Chia *Salvia hispanica* came from a roadside verge in Silverdale, Lancashire, and is an alien that has been cropping up in such places all over the country of late. It is a culinary ingredient, used as the seed, which is tiny and very slippery. Often seen only as non-flowering plants, it has attractive blue and white flowers if you are lucky enough to find them. A WFS meeting at Clitheroe produced both Irregular-toothed Hawkweed *Hieracium lepiduloides*, which she describes as 'covering a vast area' in a quarry (the identification confirmed by the BSBI *Hieracium* referee Brian Burrow), and a cultivar, 'Vision Violet', of Bloody Crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum*.

Jessé Tregale had three cracking natives to add to his list. His favourite, the result of a long drive south from Yorkshire, was Hog's Fennel *Peucedanum officinale* near the coast at Faversham, Kent. On the way home he and his wife called in to visit his brother in Thetford, Norfolk, and were able to locate the recently discovered colony of Creeping Marshwort *Helosciadium repens* beside the River Thet, near Nuns' Bridge, which so far remains unsullied by hybrids with Fool's-water-cress *H. nodiflorum*. It is such a charming and distinct little plant. The third of his trio was the reward at the end of another long journey in the other direction up to the edge of Loch Tay, where Lesser Water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides* ssp. *repens* was the goal. It is only relatively recently that this distinctive stoloniferous variant has gained much attention.

Alan Leslie: I have to confess to being one of the exceptions this year as my own total of finds exceeded my wildest expectations, in large measure as a result of a long-awaited first visit to the Isles of Scilly. What a treasure trove of alien plants in particular. I shall never forget the walls and roofs covered in self-sown Aeonium *Aeonium cuneatum* on St. Mary's, a whole hillside covered in a scrub of Chilean Guava *Ugni molinae* and Lesser New Zealand Flax *Phormium cookianum* on St. Martin's and the thrill of tracking down the large umbellifer Tree Angelica *Melanoselinum decipiens*, self-sowing in woodland on Tresco. There was so much more! Mind you, my home city of Cambridge was also more than usually productive, in part



Annual Mugwort

because the Council has stopped spraying weedkiller on the streets. This resulted in records, for example, of Annual Mugwort *Artemisia annua* and the alien Yard-grass *Eleusine*

indica, whilst just out of the city, I was able to benefit from Jonathan Shanklin's finds of a form of Stinking Hawk's-beard *Crepis foetida* ssp. *rhoeadifolia* in the relatively new Hobson's Park, and of American Slough-grass *Beckmannia syzigachne* in a run-off pit near Giron. A real *annus mirabilis*!

Carol Hawkins was one of several to

attend the excursions associated with the WFS AGM, notching up another subspecies of Stinking Hawk's-beard, this time ssp. *foetida*, at Rye Harbour, Sussex, and a prostrate form of Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* var. *prostrata* from the shingle at Dungeness, Kent: two plants near the top of my wants list! Nearer home in Norfolk, she was particularly pleased to have distinguished the narrow-leaved variant of Southern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* ssp. *schoenophila* on Market Weston Fen and also found a large colony of Cape-pondweed *Aponogeton distachyos* flowering well in ponds at Middle Harling.

Stephen Clarkson had perhaps the most surprising record of the year in the shape of genuinely recordable Brussels-sprout *Brassica oleracea* var. *gemmifera* on cliff edges on the coast at Staithes in North Yorkshire, whilst he was there on a whale-watching trip. He got to see both the subspecies of Stinking Hawk's-beard noted above and whilst in Cambridge added a number of other new aliens to his list including White Gaura *Oenothera lindheimeri*, Horned Spurge *Euphorbia ceratocarpa*, Spotted Spurge *E. maculata* and Tree Spinach *Chenopodium giganteum*.

Ted Pratt has been particularly occupied in writing a book regarding the uses to which some plants in the Bible have been put, but did manage to get out into the field on a couple of days in August, recording the climbing, blue-flowered Chilean Potato-vine *Solanum crispum* in a lane near the old grammar school in Swanage, Dorset, plus the complex

hybrid Garden Gladiolus *Gladiolus x hortulanus* and Tiger-flower *Tigridia pavonia* on another Dorset verge along Arne Road, Ridge, Wareham.

Whilst on a visit to her son in Lewes, Sussex, **Marion Chappell** had a rewarding walk over Malling Down to find Round-headed Rampion *Phyteuma orbiculare*, a plant that had previously eluded her. The previous day she was in Eastbourne and found both African Lily *Agapanthus praecox* and Gold Coin Daisy *Asteriscus maritimus* in the sand between the beach and the promenade. Her Tree Spinach *Chenopodium giganteum*, however, was self-sown on gravel at Rufford Cricket Club, much closer to home in Lancashire.

John Hawksford managed just one addition in 2023, but it was an attractive one, in the shape of the white-flowered variant of Moth Mullein *Verbascum blattaria* forma *albiflorum* of which he found a dozen plants scattered over some waste ground on Queen Street, Leek, Staffordshire. Despite increasing mobility problems, he still managed to do BSBI recording in 23 monads during the year – like many of you he is clearly still a keen and determined recorder!

Paul Harmes has done better than any of us with a monumental 162 additions, so pulling himself up over the 3,000 mark to join an elite bunch of recorders. He organised our trip to the Isles of Scilly so also benefitted from the rich alien pickings on offer but also included amongst his new records the native, jewel-like Orange Bird's-foot *Ornithopus pinnatus* in short turf on St. Agnes, only a few

yards away from Least Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*, the latter being one of those that we had to search hard for, although the equally minute Dwarf Pansy *Viola kitaibeliana* on Bryher was perhaps more of a visual delight, even if one has to use a lens to appreciate this pansy in miniature! Back on the mainland some of the more unusual entries on Paul's list included a variant of Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* var. *tenuisectus* on the shore of Langmere Lakes in Breckland, Norfolk, the true *Vulpia membranacea* (not *V. fasciculata*) only recently discovered in an old sandpit at Maids Cross Hill at Lakenheath, Suffolk, and seven of the microspecies recently distinguished within the Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* agg. in Cambridgeshire.

Ron Parker sadly drew a blank last year but plans to get out and chase a few more target plants in 2024.

Judith Cox on the other hand had a real Parnassian's list, full of both aliens and natives, variants, hybrids and other critical taxa. The alien Mysore Raspberry *Rubus niveus* from woodland at Kellie Castle, Fife, caught my attention as we have a site for this in Cambridge, where it has escaped from the grounds of Darwin College. The WFS meeting in Teesdale yielded the hybrid Common Dog-violet x Teesdale Violet *Viola riviniana* x *V. rupestris* = *V. x burnatii*, as well as Dwarf Milkwort *Polygala amarella*, both from Cow Green. She scored another good alien in the shape of Tall Mouse-ear-hawkweed *Pilosella praealta* ssp. *thumasia*, which she ran to earth at the

Hoffmann Lime-kiln, Langcliffe, near Settle, North Yorkshire.

Jan Armishaw's healthy total was another impressively varied set of records. She was especially pleased to have found her own site for the hybrid fern Common x Intermediate Polypody *Polypodium vulgare* x *P. interjectum* = *P. x mantoniae*, which she had near Jedburgh, Roxburghshire, and I was intrigued to learn of another site for Western Sword-fern *Polystichum munitum* in a shady area of rocky ground by the River Conwy at Betws-y-Coed, Caernarvonshire. Dog-rose x Glandular Dog-rose *R. canina* x *R. squarrosa* = *R. x insignis* is not a hybrid one sees recorded very often, but was one of the benefits of the AGM excursion to Rye Harbour, Sussex; the second parent is what was previously known as *R. canina*, group Dumales, but is now given specific rank.

Gareth Bursnall had a particularly fruitful day out on a joint meeting of Surrey and Kent botanists at Surrey Quays, which straddles the border of the two counties along the Thames, on the site of the old Surrey Commercial Docks. From waste ground on the Surrey side, he recorded Chinese Chives *Allium tuberosum*, which seems quite ready to sow itself in and out of gardens, where it is grown for its culinary value. He also had the alien fern Spider Brake *Pteris multifida*, self-sown on a dock wall, one of several lookalikes for the more frequently recorded Ribbon Fern *P. cretica*. On the Kent side of the border, he had the rather inelegantly named *Berberis x hybrido-gagnepainii*, not a plant I

have seen listed before.

Heather Colls managed two additions to her list: Rockery Bistort *Bistorta affinis* came from the bank of a lane in Abergavenny, in her home county of Monmouthshire, whilst Greater Honeywort *Cerinthe major* was sowing itself into a meadow at The Bryn, also in Abergavenny.

Rodney Burton similarly achieved a brace of additions, one of which was the same plant of Spider Brake *Pteris multifida* recorded by Gareth Bursnall. The other, a rather distinguished rare native, was Oxtongue Broomrape *Orobanche picridis*, which he was able to admire on chalk rubble below the cliff at Kingsdown, south of Walmer, Kent.

Sheila Wynn has travelled widely to add an impressive 57 to her previous total. After a spring foray into dandelions, during which, with expert confirmation, she recorded eight new species, she joined a later meeting led by Brian Burrow to look at the hawkweeds of the Craven Pennines and felt she came away with more confidence in using his multi-access key, as well as records including Anglian Hawkweed *Hieracium anglorum*, Stained-leaf Hawkweed *H. inquinatum* and Obovate-leaved Hawkweed *H. obovatifolium*, the last having only been described in 2020. Other striking records in her list were Nordic Moonwort *Botrychium nordicum* from the slopes below Glenshee Ski Centre, Aberdeenshire, and a willow scattered along the River Spey at Aviemore, Moray, which has been determined as Eastern Crack-willow *Salix euxina*, one of the parents of *S. x fragilis*. I

was also particularly pleased to see from her records that Spring Snowflake *Leucojum vernum* can still be found on a stream bank at Wootton Fitzpaine, Dorset, a site I used to visit regularly with my parents in the 1960s.

The final flourish is provided by **Priscilla Nobbs**, who was another to benefit from the Teesdale meeting, where False Sedge *Carex simpliciuscula* at Cow Green was new to her list. The English name no longer seems quite as appropriate now that it has moved from the genus *Kobresia* and really is now classified as a sedge! She was pleased with a chance find in a pavement crack in Sherborne, Dorset, of the colourful alien, Purple Amaranth *Amaranthus cruentus*, whilst I was intrigued to see she had a name for the claret-flowered variant of Bugle as *Ajuga reptans* subvar. *vinacea*, which she recorded on a trackside in Denge Wood, Kent.

Some of you will have noticed the absence of a couple of names from this list. **Graeme Kay** has indicated that as he can no longer get out in the field and he wishes to come off the annual listing, and so retires with a total of 3041, whilst **Chris Pogson** now lives out of the country but had amassed a total of 3360 records. Indeed, many of you indicate that getting about is now not as easy as it was, but it is clear that there is a determination to chase after plants for as long as you can. Long may this continue and as ever I really look forward to hearing about your triumphs in every corner of the British Isles.

ALAN LESLIE

PARNASSUS 2

	New	Cumulative
Janice Reynolds	13	2434
John Martin	38	2297
Geoffrey Kitchener	10	2287
Dawn Nelson	0	2246
Peter Jepson	4	2209
Everald Ellis	1	2190
Ro FitzGerald	0	2084
Dorothy Bullock	5	2055
Ted Phenna	3	2052

Here in the south of England, we have recently been battered by heavy rain from storm 'Henk', with fallen trees and localised flooding. However, the winter has, so far, been very mild, so the new year flower hunters should do quite well.

Following another warm and sunny year, it would appear that your diaries have been the beneficiaries! I'm pleased to say that they've helped revive memories of a second long, hot and memorable spring and summer.

This year **Dorothy Bullock** added 5 new plants to her list. It began with Coastal Gumplant *Grindelia stricta*, well established on the sandstone cliffs at Whitby, where it has been known since the early 1960s. She continues with Fern-leaved Beggarticks *Bidens ferulifolia* as an escape from community planting in pavement cracks in Barnoldswick, Lancashire, and, lastly, Siberian Squill *Scilla siberica*, naturalised on a lane-side verge near Bank Newton, Gargrave, Yorkshire.

Ted Phenna found himself restricted

this season and only botanised locally around Llandudno. He did, however, benefit from the help of Wendy McCarthy, the local BSBI recorder, who directed him to Tall Ramping-fumitory *Fumaria bastardi* var. *hibernica* as a roadside weed and Fodder Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* var. *sativus*, both on Great Orme's Head. His third record was for Willow-leaved Yellow-oxeye *Buphthalmum salicifolium* as an escape in the car park at Llandudno Junction.

Everald Ellis contacted me to report that she had found Cherry Plum *Prunus cerasifera* in 2022, self-sown beside an old railway line now used as a footpath/cycle track, between Hull and Hornsea, East Yorkshire.

Peter Jepson had a very busy year, completing his Blanket Bog-Upland Heath Project in March. However, additional contract-work kept him very busy locally. Nevertheless, in April a family holiday to Rockcliffe, Dumfries and Galloway, produced Yellow Anemone *Anemone ranunculoides* on a wide lane-side verge, 'cryptically' hidden amongst

Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna*. A



walk around Grasmere, in the Lake District, revealed several mature, established bushes of Forrest's Tutsan *Hypericum forrestii*. Nearer to home, he found the Dandelion *Taraxacum nordstedtii* in a field at Darwen and added Narrow-leaved Pepperwort *Lepidium ruderales* from a verge in Preston.

Geoffrey Kitchener submitted what he described as a 'slender list'. However, what it lacked in quantity, it made up for in quality and, for me, top of his list were two hybrids. Firstly, in Devon, he reported Curled Dock x Shore Dock *Rumex crispus* x *R. rupestris* = *R. x celticus* growing at the back of a sandy beach with both parents below a low cliff at Soar Mill Cove, a first VC3 record and confirmed by the BSBI *Rumex* referee, Geoffrey himself! His second was closer to home; at Gravesend, on the bank of a drainage lagoon, he recorded Blue Fleabane x Bilbao's

Fleabane, *Erigeron x stanleyi* (*Erigeron acris* x *E. floribundus*). In Orpington, numerous aliens have become established where residents dispose of their garden waste. Here, Geoffrey recorded Yellow-berried Ivy *Hedera helix* ssp. *poetarum* established on the bank of the A21. During a joint meeting between the Kent Botanical Recording Group and the Surrey Botanical Society at Surrey Docks, he added American Love-grass *Eragrostis virescens* (sometimes referred to as *Eragrostis mexicana* ssp. *virescens*), Argentine Fleabane *Erigeron bonariensis* and Foxglove-tree *Paulownia tomentosa*.

Shropshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Dorset and Wales all figure prominently in **John Martin's** list this year. Close to home, he found Greater Honeywort *Cerinthe major* var. *purpurascens* on a verge whilst out running. He also recorded Annual Clary *Salvia viridis* and New Zealand Bitter-cress *Cardamine corymbosa* as pavement weeds, found during the BSBI's Recorders' Conference. A visit to Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in September produced Dorset Heath *Erica ciliaris* from Arne, Dwarf Spike-rush *Eleocharis parvula* from exposed mud at Beaulieu Mill Pool, Wood Calamint *Clinopodium menthifolium* from Monkham Copse, Isle of Wight, and the very scarce Small Cord-grass *Spartina maritima* from its only known site on the Isle of Wight. Add to this five hawkweeds *Hieracium* spp. and a couple of dandelions *Taraxacum* spp. - all in all, a very rewarding list.

Janice Reynolds meanwhile travelled widely within Sussex,

adding to her diary total. To begin with she recorded the white-flowered variant of Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea* ssp. *erythraea* var. *alba* from Rowlands Wood, East Hoathly, together with white-flowered Greater Periwinkle *Vinca major* var. *alba* and Horned Pansy 'Admiration' *Viola cornuta* 'Admiration' as garden escapes at Bishopstone. At Rye Harbour, she added the casual Purple Potato *Solanum vernei*. Lastly, Janice found Lesser Calamint

Clinopodium nepeta at a known site at Glynde.

As always, I have thoroughly enjoyed perusing your diaries and sharing in your personal botanical years. I hope that you all have an excellent and fruitful 2024, with lots of interesting finds along the way.

PAUL HARMES

EXOTICS

In this report I want to focus on two records. The first might already be familiar to WFS members who also belong to the BSBI and read the Adventives & Aliens News column in that Society's January 2024 magazine (p.25): Sue Grayston's (now Sue Southall) report of Mediterranean Hartwort *Tordylium*



apulum. An umbelliferous species from the Mediterranean, it awaited

Sue on her return from holiday, having sprung up mysteriously in her Suffolk garden. Although quite striking, with fruits that almost have the 'worked' look of pieces of jewellery, it is not really a garden plant. Her identification was confirmed by Martin Sanford (Suffolk VCR for the BSBI) and Dr Sabrina Knees at RBG Edinburgh. Prior to Sue's discovery, not so much as a casual pre-1930 record could be traced to earn it a mention in Clement & Foster (1994). It is impossible to say for certain how it came to be in Sue's garden, only that it definitely wasn't planted, nor would I like to predict the likelihood of further sightings on the strength of it.

Suffolk is also the location of the second record, another plant from the Mediterranean, a labiate this time, Bifid Dead-nettle *Lamium bifidum*, found during a WFS spring plant hunt carried out in early March of this year and kindly passed on to me by Anne Kell, one of the attendees. As before,



the record was confirmed by Martin Sanford. It is certainly the first one for the British Isles in a very long time,

an exceptional plant growing in very unexceptional surroundings behind a restaurant at Ipswich Docks. The few plants had already been pulled up when Anne returned to the site a few days later but there is some hope that it might reappear. Eric Clement suggested that long buried seed might account for the appearance of this annual here. As to whether the arrival of the seed was facilitated by the nearby docks is a matter for further speculation but it does seem a distinct possibility. Although a challenge to name without foreknowledge, it is actually a quite distinctive deadnettle with its red-spotted white flowers and deeply bifid lower lip. The accompanying photo will therefore aid identification should it turn up anywhere else.

MATTHEW BERRY

THE RARE BRITISH PLANTS NURSERY

Over a period of thirty years, I have amassed a unique collection of rare native plants. With so many rare species under one roof, The Rare British Plants Nursery has become a valuable scientific resource.

Research scientists from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew are some of my regular visitors. The plants that I hold in cultivation are also enabling species recovery projects that are returning extremely rare species back into the wild.

Unfortunately, plants are not appreciated or valued in the same way that animals and birds are. Projects promoting the release of

beavers, sea eagles, ospreys, red squirrels, dormice, water voles and pine martens get massive publicity in the mainstream press, and they attract large amounts of cash from funding bodies. By way of a comparison, a lonely Beacons Hawkweed *Hieracium breconicola* plant growing on a windswept ledge in a remote part of the Brecon Beacons National Park receives no publicity and no funding, yet this is one of the rarest species on the planet. Prior to my conservation efforts, there was just one Beacons Hawkweed plant left in the whole world!

Some of our recovery projects are funded for a year or two but quite a few are not funded at all. Our project to help endangered pondweeds on the Montgomery Canal in Wales is funded by the Canal and River Trust; our work to bring back Marsh



Marsh Fleawort

Fleawort *Tephrosia palustris* to the wetlands of southern England after an absence of one hundred and twenty-five years is funded by Natural England; and our work to return Rock



Rock Cinquefoil

Cinquefoil *Potentilla rupestris* to Breidden Hill in Mid Wales is funded by Heidelberg Materials. Our work that will save five endemic hawkweeds from extinction in the Brecon Beacon National Park is being financed entirely out of my own pocket. Our work on the only Welsh

endemic species of dandelion *Taraxacum* is a personally financed project too.

One of the first species recovery projects I set up was at Stanner Rocks National Nature Reserve in Radnorshire. Stanner Rocks is a famous site for rare plants. One of the most notable species occurring there is the Perennial Knawel



Perennial Knawel

Scleranthus perennis ssp. *perennis*. Stanner Rocks is the only place in the British Isles where this subspecies of the Perennial Knawel grows. Prior to our species recovery project, the entire population was restricted to a few square metres of ground at the top of a tiny spur of rock. It was almost certainly more widespread in the past and probably occurred on the parts of Stanner Rocks that were quarried away in the nineteenth century. With a population numbering just a few dozen individuals and being restricted to a tiny patch of ground, any chance event could eliminate it and it was officially classified as critically endangered. I set up a project to create a new population within the boundary of the nature reserve. I cultivated Perennial Knawel plants in my greenhouse and

these produced thousands of seeds. I dispersed the seeds at a carefully selected introduction site not far from the existing population. That was fourteen years ago. I was at the Stanner Rocks last week; the original native population lingers on and numbers around thirty individuals. By comparison, the introduced population is thriving and is even expanding into adjoining areas, and it now supports well over a thousand plants. All the Perennial Knawel needed was a little helping hand to get to a suitable location just one hundred metres away from its existing site.

We are currently propagating some really rare annual plants that were once common arable weeds. These will eventually be returned to arable fields in southern England where favourable management regimes have been created in consultation with farmers and landowners. Some of the arable weeds that we hope to return are incredibly rare in Britain;



Lamb's Succory *Arnoseris minima* became extinct in 1971; Corn Cleavers *Galium tricornutum* is now restricted to one site; Thorow-wax *Bupleurum rotundifolium* is only

occasionally seen; Darnel *Lolium temulentum*, a rare species of grass, is restricted entirely to the Aran Islands off the coast of Ireland; and Interrupted Brome *Bromus interruptus*, another annual species of grass, is endemic to England and was last recorded as a wild plant in 1972. All these species were once common weeds of arable crops but were lost when farming became intensive and the use of fertilisers and herbicide became widespread. The loss of arable weeds had a knock-on effect on birds like Cirl Bunting and Tree Sparrow that feed on the weeds and the invertebrates that were associated with them. It's not a coincidence that some of the most threatened birds in Britain are farmland birds that rely on arable weeds and the habitats that less intensive farming practices create.

One of my favourite plants that we are working on at the moment is York Groundsel *Senecio eboracensis*, which is endemic to the City of York. It grew on disturbed ground next to railway lines, car parks and pavements. Three years ago, there were no living plants left, none in the wild and none in botanical collections. The species only survived as seeds stored in Kew Garden's Millenium Seed Bank. We set up a project to resurrect York Groundsel from extinction and return it to the City of York. The Millenium Seed Bank supplied us with seeds and to our delight we didn't have any problems getting them to germinate. Before long, our plants had produced their own seeds and we had propagated many hundreds of plants. These plants produced thousands of seeds

which we released at various locations around York city centre. The project has been a success. In summer 2023, York Groundsel flowered in the City of York for the first time in over twenty years. I am grateful to the Wild Flower Society for contributing funds that will allow us to continue our work on the York Groundsel recovery project in 2024.

Another one of my favourite plants is Fen Ragwort *Jacobaea paludosa*. This is a tall stately plant with golden yellow flowers. It once occurred throughout the fens of eastern England but as its wetland habitat was drained to make way for agriculture it was almost completely lost. In fact, it was thought to have become extinct in 1857. That was until 1972 when a small patch was found growing somewhat surprisingly in a roadside ditch near Ely in Cambridgeshire. These plants appear to have grown from long dormant seed that became exposed when the ditch was dredged. Using material from this last remaining population we are propagating plants that are being introduced to newly created wetlands in eastern England as part of the Great Fen project.

The Great Fen project is the sort of restoration project that gives me hope for the future. It's a large-scale

habitat restoration project being pioneered by a number of statutory and non-statutory organisations. It's turning agricultural land back to wetland and will ultimately join two existing, but fragmented, wetland sites together. Alongside the Fen Ragwort we are also returning other very rare species to the Great Fen; these include Fen Violet *Viola stagnina*, Fen Woodrush *Luzula pallescens* and Water Germander *Teucrium scordium*.

With a long-term vision and financial commitment, species rich biodiverse habitats like the Great Fen can be resurrected. When a habitat is restored, many missing species will return without the help of people. Iconic rare species like Bitterns, Marsh Harriers and Water Voles have all returned to the Great Fen naturally. However, isolated and dwindling populations of rare plants are usually unable to regain lost ground and these are the species that need our help the most.

ANDREW SHAW BSc(Hons) MSc
Director
The Rare British Plants Nursery
www.rarebritishplants.com

All the pictures in this article were taken by Andrew Shaw.

Answers to Gareth Bursnall's quiz on page 51 (no cheating now!)

1. Antirrhinum	5. Pulicaria	9. Digitalis	13. Fragaria	17. Arenaria
2. Ranunculus	6. Ambrosia	10. Fumaria	14. Muscari	18. Myriophyllum
3. Saxifraga	7. Cruciata	11. Capsella	15. Plantago	19. Polypogon
4. Leucanthemum	8. Leontodon	12. Frangula	16. Pulsatilla	20. Lamium

PRECIOUS PERSISTENCE

What do you know about Shetland's wild plants?

"Precious Persistence" is a new postgraduate project at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). Based in the Institute for Northern Studies and Centre for Mountain Studies at UHI, our project seeks to understand how historical writings about Shetland's wild plants are shaping our modern understanding of rare plant ecology and how we experience rare plants today. We are working in collaboration with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and are funded by the Scottish Graduate School for the Arts and Humanities. We are collecting information on Shetland's wild plants from a variety of sources including books, archives, botanical databases, herbaria and the words of stakeholders and community members to explore the changing relationships between people and nature. We are interested in how this informs conservation activities and affects how we feel about rare and vulnerable plant species (especially in the face of climate change) and would like to better understand the problem of

"Shifting Baseline Syndrome", as a result of which knowledge is lost from one generation to the next.

We would like to hear any stories about your experience of Shetland's wild plants, especially rare ones, that you would be willing to share. We know that people have encountered these plants in many guises, including formal plant recording and monitoring, photography, art, nature writing or simply for pleasure, whether as a Shetland resident or a visitor. If you are sending information about records and locations, please could you share some context for your records, such as the purpose of your recording or any anecdote around that particular find. All contributions - long or short - would be very welcome.

REBECCA CORNWELL

<https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/media/news/precious-persistence-uhi-postgraduate-project-on-shetland-wild-plants.html>

BOOK REVIEWS

Frustrating Flowers & Puzzling Plants

John M. Warren

Pelagic Publishing (2024)

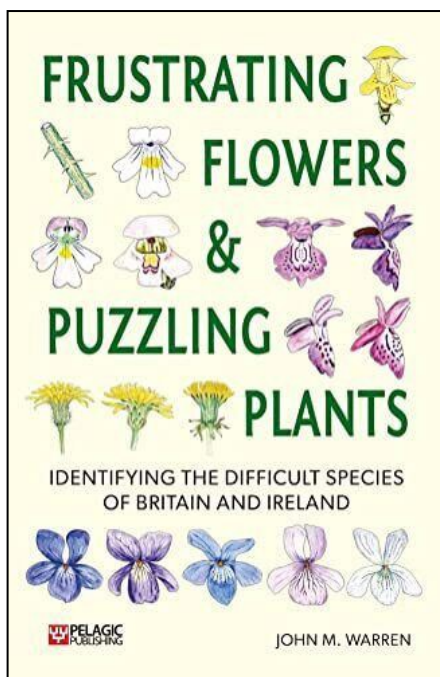
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However experienced we are, we all struggle to identify plants at times. As illustrated by old family photos I've been keen on them for 80 years. For many of those I've worked as a professional botanist but I still have times (for instance with *Euphrasia* and *Agrostis*) when I end up tearful,



with desk and microscope plate scattered with sad scraps of vegetation and no convincing name! So I was most excited to hear in 2023 that this book was expected - would it at last bring the Age of Enlightenment?

When it arrived I found an attractive cover with yellow *Asteraceae*, eyebright, marsh-orchid and violet flowers scattered among the title words, and these turned out to be 'quotes' from the text, which is illustrated by the author's excellent colour and line drawings. Deciding not to be intimidated by the fairly substantial price, I dived in enthusiastically but quickly came to a disconcerted halt because my own experience has made me closely dependent on the handbooks

produced by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) and this new book seemed just to be delivering steps on the way to the identifications provided by the BSBI series rather than opening up a new straight road to them. In other words, it seemed to be a tool rather than an answer, and my first reaction was that I'd rather just go straight to the relevant handbook.

However, I soon realised that this was a short-sighted view of what is actually a splendid tool and one which could be of enormous help to keen botanists still building up their experience. In his foreword, Alastair Fitter (from a most distinguished botanical clan) praises the way that the author explains *why* some groups are so difficult, and acknowledges the importance of 'jizz', when subtle differences can be as important in the appearance of a plant as measurable characteristics. In his preface, John Warren says that he wishes to offer 'bespoke sets of tips' with which to approach 'complex' groups. For instance, *Euphrasia*, which has a fine recent handbook (BSBI No.18, 2018), is a genus which still reduces me to helpless misery. It features in a section of the new book headed 'Inbreeders (species that have sex with themselves)'. I know I have 'hybrid blindness', so a look at the reasons for the complexity of this genus is definitely welcome. My initial reaction still holds - only five of the more distinctive species are described, compared with 11 pages of keys in the handbook, but the discussion of the reasons for variation and some very clear tips on what to look for are both interesting

and reassuring. This new book offers a helpful step on the way to gaining confidence with these tricky plants, especially as in every relevant chapter the reference to the BSBI publication is indeed given.

The sections cover 'Apomictic species' producing 'seeds without sex', which include dandelions and brambles; 'Hybrids', including roses, docks and willows; the 'Inbreeders' noted above, which include fumitories; and 'Polyploids and rapidly evolving species', which explains this abstruse term and includes forget-me-nots and speedwells. Finally there is a section on 'Successful families with lots of species', which looks at 'Dead-nettles, mints and woundworts', 'Blue and purple vetches and peas' and 'Umbellifers'. It's not a book to carry

in the field, but a book to pore over with the scraps of plant which come home in the day's poly bag and which are often so confusing. '*FF&PP*' looks like being kept on the shelf closest to my desk, not in first place for the final answers it may give, but really for panic control. At difficult moments we all need reassurance and it's most comforting to see difficulties comprehensively acknowledged, and calm rational methods of approach offered. I like the touch of humour too when John Warren calls his book a 'guide to splitting the lumpers' by offering some straightforward practical ways of getting closer to notoriously scary groups!

RO FITZGERALD

Generic Quiz compiled by Gareth Bursnall

1. Your father's sister with a large nose.	11. Little box (fruit).
2. Little frog.	12. Fragile (brittle twigs).
3. Stonebreaker.	13. Fragrant (smell of fruit).
4. White-flowered	14. Musk-like.
5. Wards off fleas.	15. Foot sole (leaves flat on ground).
6. Food of the gods.	16. Quiverer (movement of flowers).
7. Cross.	17. Sand dweller.
8. Lion's tooth.	18. Numerous leaves.
9. Fingerhut (German for thimble).	19. Many-bearded.
10. Smoke of the earth	20. Gullet (shape of corolla tube).

(Answers on page 48)

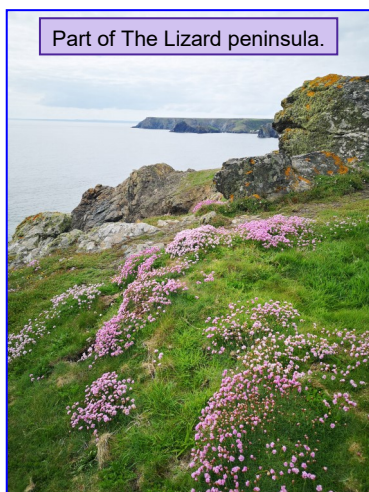
OBITUARY

BARRY SHAW 1938 - 2024

Barry was a lifelong friend of my husband Colin, so I have known him for many years. He was an avid birdwatcher and this led him on to all aspects of natural history. We were both members of the Cheshire Conservation Trust (CCT) as it was then and it was on a trip with the CCT, armed with our copy of Fitter, Fitter and Blamey's *Wild Flowers of Britain and Northern Europe*, that we saw in this publication a mention of the Wild Flower Society. In 1983 we both joined. Living within easy reach of the Peak District National Park there was plenty for him to see. His interest then progressed with trips to Scotland and indeed all over the UK, not only for plants but for birds and butterflies too. In fact, for many years Barry was the recorder for both birds and butterflies in Cheshire, resulting

in him publishing a book on the butterflies of the county. Having experienced the thrill of climbing the mountains of Scotland in search of plants, he then took it upon himself to climb all the Monros. However, his hobby was not limited to the UK, but took him all over the world. He visited all the continents several times pursuing his interest in natural history. At the age of 60, on a visit to Kenya, he climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. He recorded moths for 40 years at his home in Heald Green, near Manchester, and became an expert on these insects too. Barry was a kind, gentle man and his loss will be felt by many of his friends, particularly those who shared his interest in natural history.

JULIE CLARKE



Following on from the WFS meeting at The Lizard, Cornwall.

