

WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE



WINTER 2025

# WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE

Published four times a year by The Wild Flower Society

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	1956-1994	Mrs C.M.R. Schwerdt, M.B.E. (nee V.V.C. Dent)
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	2002-2003	Mr R.M. Burton
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**WINTER 2025**

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## CONTENTS

<b>President's Letter</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Notices</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>WFS Members' Weekend and AGM 2024</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>WFS Members' Weekend field meetings 2024</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Photographic Competition results 2024</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Llantrisant Common, Glamorgan, 11<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Little Solsbury Hill and Chilcombe NR, Bath, Somerset, 17<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Teesdale, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>New Forest, Hampshire, 28<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Hackfall Woods, North Yorkshire, 6<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Stratford-upon-Avon and Welcombe Hills, Warwickshire, 10<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Connemara, County Galway, Ireland, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>The Burren, County Clare, Ireland, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> July</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Comeragh Mountains, County Waterford, Ireland, 23<sup>rd</sup> July</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>County Wexford, Ireland, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Blackdown Hills, Somerset, 27<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Wharram Quarry, Malton, Yorkshire, 3<sup>rd</sup> August</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Minchinhampton Common, Gloucestershire, 7<sup>th</sup> August</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Profile of WFS member Jim Blackwood</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Obituary, Alan Gendle</b>	<b>48</b>

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As I write this on 29<sup>th</sup> October, I have just finished an autumn plant hunt around the Hoe in Plymouth with WFS member Mary Ashworth. Our four hours of hunting yielded 56 wild species still flowering, as well as many aliens that we did not count. I am sure that Mary will report to WFS on the results. Most of the species that we found were the common weedy ones that you would expect in an urban area like this, but it was most enjoyable to be out on a fine sunny day and to scour the area for open flowers. The real surprise and treat for me was to see that the Plymouth thistle *Carduus pycnocephalus*, which I saw much earlier in the year, was sprouting vigorously and the young shoots were still bearing plenty of flowers. Two Latin epithets kept recurring in the species that we found: *muralis*, meaning 'growing on walls' and *maritima*, meaning 'growing by the sea', which rather explains the habitats that we were visiting. Examples were Ivy-leaved Toadflax *Cymbalaria muralis* and Silver Ragwort *Jacobaea maritima*. I hope that many of our members have

enjoyed an autumn hunt this year and I expect that some of you will have found many more species in flower than we did.

Interestingly, 29<sup>th</sup> October was an important day for our wild flowers and indeed for all of nature. The 'Declaration of the World Coalition for Peace with Nature: a Call for Life' was issued on that day at the COP16 meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Cali, Colombia, in late October. The opening statement of the Declaration begins: 'The World Coalition for Peace with Nature, living well in balance and in harmony with Mother Earth, is a call for action to enhance national and international efforts and commitments towards achieving a balanced and harmonious relationship with nature to ensure greater sustainability, by protecting nature, and the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of our global biodiversity.' It is my hope that this will be more than just words and lead to action in the conservation of and harmonious living with nature.

GHILLEAN PRANCE

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Memories of the 2024 AGM at Hunstanton, Norfolk.



## EDITORIAL

It's been a very difficult few months during the production of this and the last issue of our magazine. Back in July we had a Broadband 'Major Service Outage' lasting for eighteen days just prior to the printing deadline for the Autumn issue, resulting in very tense times! It is amazing how we rely on our computers nowadays. Further, I had two accidents - both on different Lake District holidays, one of which resulted in a week in Carlisle hospital and me missing a WFS meeting at Kirkby Stephen! Both of these accidents hampered my work on the magazine because of rib fractures and general pain whilst sitting at the computer for too long. I am back to normal now and fingers crossed for this and future issues!

Sue and I have started taking part in the 10km Square Study and the Autumn Week Hunt. Both these activities have increased our enjoyment of looking for and recording flowers and learning more about our local area. We have been amazed how some of the most unexpected plants still manage to produce the odd flower. During the Autumn Week Hunt, perhaps our biggest surprise was seeing a single cowslip in flower and tiny flowers gripping on to an otherwise dead Small Teasel

plant! Our total for this Hunt was a very pleasing 187.

On a local walk along the banks of the River Orwell in Suffolk, we were encouraged by seeing several posters asking walkers to pull out young Himalayan Balsam plants. Do any other members see such posters?

KEN SOUTHALL

### HIMALAYAN BALSAM - PULL SNAP STOMP

It's that time of year when Himalayan balsam starts appearing along our canal and riverbanks. It is very prevalent along the River Gipping.



Himalayan balsam is a non-native, invasive plant species which grows so quickly that it crowds out native wildflowers. Growing up to three metres in height, it makes an impressive sight with its reddish stems and pink-purple flowers, but the plant has no root stock, so once it dies back, the ground is susceptible to erosion, especially during the wet winter months. This results in more silt in the canals and rivers requiring more dredging.

### Clearing Himalayan balsam benefits both native plants and animals

Himalayan balsam stems are easy to pull out and leave the ground with a very pleasing 'pop' which makes it a fun family activity. We are seeking volunteers both young and old to help remove the plants from towpaths before it has a chance to go to seed. Volunteers are being asked to take just five minutes out of their walk to PULL up the stems, SNAP off the root and STOMP down on it to speed up the rotting process.

Restoration  
Well-Being  
Biodiversity  
Heritage



RIVER GIPPING  
TRUST

Reproduced here with kind permission of the River Gipping Trust.



## NOTICES

### THE PRESIDENTS' AWARD, 2024

The Presidents' Award is awarded annually to acknowledge a publication which makes an outstanding contribution to the understanding of the flowering plants and ferns of Britain and Ireland. The 2024 Presidents' Award, nominated by WFS President, Sir Ghilleán Prance, and with the agreement of BSBI President, Micheline Sheehy Skeffington, was awarded to Paul Green, County Recorder for V.C. H12 Wexford for his *Flora of County Wexford*. Paul travelled from Wexford to receive his award in person at our AGM at Hunstanton. As Sir Ghilleán was unable to attend, it was presented by our Chairman, Peter Llewellyn, and Jo Parmenter representing the BSBI. See the BSBI website for more details of the history of the award: <https://bsbi.org/presidents-prize>

### Natural History Slide Collection including Wild flowers

Any takers for a natural history slide collection? The Society has received a request from the daughter of a gentleman who spent a lifetime taking natural history photographs including many of wild flowers. She has asked if we know of anyone (an individual or organisation) who might be interested in acquiring his slide collection.

I am happy to be the initial point of contact: [wfs.secwfsociety@gmail.com](mailto:wfs.secwfsociety@gmail.com)  
Carol Armstrong.

The 2025 password for the Members' page of the website is **beeorchid77**  
Uncredited photographs in this magazine are by the editor.  
**Copy deadline: 1<sup>st</sup> February for the Spring 2025 magazine.**



2024 AGM meetings. Left, Holkham NNR. Right, Dersingham Bog NNR.

# WFS MEMBERS' WEEKEND AND AGM

## 6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024

This year's Members' Weekend was based at the village hall, Old Hunstanton, Norfolk. The Branch and Competition Secretaries' meeting took place on the Friday afternoon, prior to which those arriving early enjoyed a visit to the nearby Dersingham Bog National Nature Reserve. Field meetings were also held on Saturday morning, before the AGM, and on Sunday and Monday. Reports of all these meetings can be found on pages 9 to 15.

### AGM:

Only the main points of the AGM will be reported here, with the full minutes appearing on the website. If you are unable to access these via the website and would like to see a full copy, please write to Carol Armstrong, our General Secretary, enclosing a stamped, addressed A5 envelope (contact details inside back cover).

The AGM was attended by 45 members, 11 of whom were attending for the first time.

**Robin Blades, our Treasurer,** apologised that the 2023 accounts had not been circulated as intended with the Summer 2024 magazine because of a misunderstanding with the printer. He hoped that, following a message sent out on the e-mail system, members would have had the chance to see them on the website.

Most categories of income were

similar to 2022, the main exception being the substantial legacy received from our late member David Albon. The intention is to spend this, mainly on grants, over a five-year period, starting in 2023. The value of our investments, adjusted for a sale during the year, is up by 1.65% so far in 2024. While magazine and printing costs are both up, recent one-off costs associated with the new website no longer apply and a figure of around £600 is the likely average annual running cost going forward.

The outlay for grants was the highest since 2018; in particular support for Wildlife Trust events for young people and bursaries for younger participants on Field Studies Council training courses increased.

The meeting approved the adoption of the accounts.

### Membership subscriptions:

2024 saw the first increase in subscription cost for many years. With quite a few people not updating their standing orders in time, a general e-mail message was sent out with the intention of reducing the number of individual messages that Membership Secretary Sue Poyser would have to send. Robin apologised to those people who had been upset by receiving this when they had paid the correct amount and to those that had ended up overpaying. Some 92 people had not renewed their membership, roughly the same number as in 2023, suggesting that the increased

membership cost was not the driving factor. Robin thanked Sue for the huge amount of work that she does for the Society.

Robin also thanked Bob Holder for carrying out the independent examination of the 2023 accounts and proposed his re-election. This was approved.

**Ken Southall, our Editor**, thanked contributors to the magazine and in particular Sheila Wynn and Steve Little for their invaluable help as proofreaders. Currently working on his fifth issue, Ken feels increasingly confident in its general production and will continue to include a good number of members' photographs of plants and general scenes. He is also planning a trial issue in which the text is fully justified, rather than left-aligned as at present. He will wait to see how this is received by the membership.

**Janet John, our Meetings Secretary**, commended the 'length and breadth' of 2024's field meetings programme, which ran from late February to late October and covered Ireland, Scotland, Wales and numerous places in England. In total we had 49 days of meetings, excluding the ones at the AGM, and Janet thanked the people who had made them happen for their support: members and, increasingly, Vice-county Recorders (VCRs) and other staff members from the BSBI. 12 VCRs led walks for the WFS in 2024.

A small number of meetings were oversubscribed: four longer meetings and two one-day ones. Janet does her best to re-run meetings for very

popular locations as was the case in 2024 for the Cornwall and Teesdale meetings of 2023. Reassuringly, feedback from people attending field meetings is overwhelmingly positive, with comments focusing on the overall enjoyment of a great selection of plants, convivial fellow members, expert leaders and opportunities to learn.

The online meetings go from strength to strength. About 60 people watch on the night of transmission, with many more watching afterwards on YouTube. There were over 7,000 views for The Knepp Rewilding Project by Tony Whitbread and a gratifying 540 for Flower Structure from the WFS' own Lizzie Maddison. Janet noted that work would start on next year's programme as soon as the AGM was over.

**Nichola Hawkins, our Publicity Secretary**, was unable to attend so **our Chairman, Peter Llewellyn**, spoke on her behalf.

Nichola had a stand at the 2023 BSBI British & Irish Botanical Conference in Newcastle and at the 2024 Cambridge Natural History Society 'Conversazione', an informal exhibition meeting with presentations by a range of wildlife groups and interested individuals. Also, after providing grant funding, the Wild Flower Society had been invited to attend a Student Botany Conference organised around the Botanical University Challenge competition. Nichola had a stand, along with the BSBI and potential employers, such as ecological consultancies. Around 90 students had attended.

### **Social media:**

The WFS Facebook page has 4,300 members, while our X (formerly Twitter) account has 3,149 followers and Instagram 1,025. Our YouTube channel, which hosts videos of previous online talks, has 451 subscribers. Nichola thanked group administrators and moderators Helen Dignum, Peter Llewellyn, Moira O'Donnell, Dawn Nelson and Peter Jepson. Peter noted that social media have given the WFS much greater reach than previously, with many of our followers engaging with us quite actively.

### **Publicity material and merchandise:**

Nichola has a new batch of membership leaflets. If members would like any, they should let her know and she will post them. She also offered to send suitable materials to members should they become aware of a local event at which they could set up a stand – be that an interactive stand with plants and quizzes or just a basic display with a poster and leaflets. Regarding merchandise, our Teemill shop has a range of T-shirts with different designs based on our logo as well as a cotton reusable bag bearing the traditional logo. These are available from <https://the-wild-flower-society.teemill.com>.

**Sheila Wynn, our outgoing General Secretary**, thanked everyone involved in the organisation of the Members' Weekend, in particular Anne and Dennis Kell and Carol Hawkins who, as well as engaging Simon Harrop as the event speaker, had chosen and checked out all the

field meeting sites and found people to lead the walks.

She also thanked those that had contributed to the afternoon's programme: Stephen Clarkson for the plant quiz; Gareth Bursnall for the plant photo quiz; Ken Southall for the splendid display of photo competition entries; and everyone else who had helped by contributing cakes, providing refreshments and helping in the kitchen.

Sheila noted that the last year had seen some changes to the role of General Secretary. In order to reduce the workload, the positions of Grants Officer and Minutes Secretary, taken on by Fay Banks and Steve Little respectively, had been created. She thanked Fay and Steve for their efforts. She also paid tribute to the contribution of the Branch and Competition Secretaries, who give so much time to maintaining contact with their members, answering queries, checking diaries and writing reports. She thanked Gareth Bursnall, stepping down as Secretary for the South Coast and Channel Islands Branch after 18 years, and Priscilla Nobbs for regularly organising and leading popular field meetings. She also thanked Sue Denness, who has agreed to take over from Gareth. Stepping down as General Secretary, Sheila said that it had been a real privilege to hold the position for the last 10 years; it had been a source of great satisfaction to be at the centre of the Society, to be involved in running it, working with other members of the Executive Committee and getting to know so many of the members. However, she was now looking forward to having some

leisure time and more time to enjoy botany. She sincerely thanked Carol Armstrong for agreeing to join the Committee and take over her role.

**Ken Southall, our Photographic Secretary**, thanked Sheila for taking on the important task of judging this year's competition, adding that he could see why she had had such difficulty in choosing the overall winner of the Violet Schwerdt Trophy. He then congratulated this year's winner, Moira Smith, with her photograph of Wild Basil, adding that for future competitions, he would continue to ask fellow members of the Committee or previous entrants to do the judging. Ken thanked the 13 contributors who had entered a total of 87 photographs, slightly higher than last year. The overall quality had been extremely good, with about half the images taken using mobile phones.

**Helen Dignum, our Website Manager**, was unable to attend so Peter Llewellyn spoke on her behalf.

The website is substantially unchanged this year. One addition is the Teesdale Special Flora page, which describes the project supported by two consecutive five-year grants from the WFS.

The website hosting and development company Red Paint has merged with another Glasgow company, Infinite-Eye, which will provide the greater resilience of a slightly larger company but with a very similar ethos. There was no change in the cost of website hosting and support in February 2024

compared to a year earlier.

### **Stripe online payment system:**

The Stripe online membership payment system received 168 payments in 2022, 220 in 2023, and 200 up to 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2024. There have been no further instances of failure of the payment system experienced in 2023. Following the increase in subscription, a membership top-up option was added to Stripe to allow members who had underpaid to top up online.

### **WFS email Mailing List:**

With the aim of creating a mailing list of all members with email addresses, so that we can contact them if required, Helen emailed 364 members for whom we had email addresses, but who were not already signed up to the newsletter mailing list. The email stated that they had been added to the WFS mailing list but could unsubscribe at any time. The Membership Secretary now adds all new members on joining. WFS has sent 21 email newsletters in the last year. About 70% of email recipients open each email. This compares to 20% as an industry average for commercial emails. Our all-member mailing list has already proved useful to inform members of the top-up subscription option, AGM accommodation options and the availability of the accounts on the website. As of 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2024, we have 1,028 subscribers, comprising 654 members, 35 ex-members, 330 non-members and 5 of unknown status. The totals do not quite match because some people use more than one email address and there are some institutional



mailings. This represents a significant increase over 2023, when we had 539 subscribers, of whom only 235 were members. Mailing list subscribers are regularly reviewed; non-members who do not open emails are removed and checks are made that new members have been subscribed.

Helen is always keen to receive members' suggestions as to what they would like to see on the website and how the website can be kept useful and relevant.

### **Proposed changes to the Aims and Rules:**

The following three changes were approved:

- i) The removal of the WFS President as a trustee of the charity to reflect the fact that we don't expect the President to be involved in the detailed decision-making and management processes by which the Executive Committee fulfil their obligations as trustees.
- ii) Making the Website Manager one of the office-holding posts which are always included on the Executive Committee. This recognises the importance of the website to the Society's activities nowadays.
- iii) To allow Executive Committee members to serve for more than four years without having to take a year off, as is stipulated by the current rules. Extensions will be on a one-year rolling

basis. Despite this change, we hope to continue to have a turnover of new people coming onto the Executive Committee.

### **Election of Officers:**

With the exception of the outgoing General Secretary, all officers were re-elected unopposed. With Helen Dignum taking up the post of Website Manager, no ordinary member retired from the Committee this year. Nick Aston was elected as a new ordinary member. **Carol Armstrong** was elected unopposed as our new **General Secretary**. Peter Llewellyn introduced her to the membership as a sound botanist with a particular interest in orchids, a BSBI member, WFS 2024 Cumbria meeting leader and presenter of a WFS online talk on the orchids of Britain last year.

### **Any other business:**

Peter paid tribute to Sheila as she steps down after a decade as General Secretary. On behalf of the Society, he thanked her for all her hard work during that time: producing all the Executive Committee meeting agendas and minutes, organising the AGMs and for being the first point of reference for all queries thanks to her deep knowledge of the Society. As a gift, he presented her with a box of rose plants.

### **Date and venue of next meeting:**

The 2025 AGM will be held on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September at the West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 8NE. There will be no Friday Branch Secretaries' meeting; this will be

done by Zoom at some point in the run-up to the AGM. Nor will there be any field meetings on either the Friday or Monday, although recommendations for interesting sites will be provided for those who wish to stay on.

### Post AGM:

The meeting was followed by the presentation of the joint WFS-BSBI Presidents' Award to Paul Green for his outstanding Flora of Wexford. It was noted that this was the second time that Paul had won the award, the first being for The Atlas Flora of Somerset, co-authored with twin brother Ian and Geraldine Crouch, in 1998. He is the only person to receive the award twice. We then enjoyed a fascinating talk on the Flora of Norfolk by Simon Harrap, who made us aware, if we weren't already, of what a rich county Norfolk is botanically. To round off the afternoon, we had the traditional plant quizzes from Stephen Clarkson and Gareth Bursnall and the winning entries from the Photographic Competition to admire.



Paul Green, being presented with his joint WFS-BSBI Presidents' Award. Jo Parmenter (see p12) and Chairman Peter Llewellyn.

## WFS MEMBERS' WEEKEND FIELD MEETINGS

### FRIDAY 6<sup>th</sup> and MONDAY 9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, DERSINGHAM BOG NNR

This was the start of our AGM long weekend in north Norfolk, with the site being visited by thirteen members on Friday morning and a further nine on Monday morning. These proved to be two contrasting days, with Friday morning having

lovely sunny weather and Monday becoming autumnal in character, drizzly and overcast. On Friday a few of us who were less mobile than the others had our own personal Land Rover to take us down to the bog via the beautiful village of Wolferton. This is home to a stunning railway station that has been kept in perfect condition and which used to be a

stop for the royal family when staying at their country home at Sandringham House. There is a picture postcard available showing the arrival of Queen Mary in her chauffeur-driven Daimler in 1948.

Something very noticeable in the local houses and walls was the patterning of small, dark brown bricks in porches, pillars and doorways. It turns out that these came from a local quarry called Snettisham Frimstone Carrstone Quarry, where Norfolk sandstone, also known as gingerbread, due to its high iron oxide content, was used to make these interesting-looking bricks with a rich, dark, rusty, ginger colour.

Then on to the bog itself, which has a boardwalk zigzagging over it so that one can get closer to the sphagnum mosses and plants that help to make up this part of the largest lowland acid mire in England, with a pH of as low as 2.8.

The area is fringed with woodland containing Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*. Dotted around the bog are small specimens which look like young trees, but are in fact over sixty years old! This is a result of the impoverished conditions in which they are growing. Notable within the bog was Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos*, now in fruit, but those who tasted the berries were not impressed! There was a very large population of Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* but, try as we might, we couldn't find its two cousins, Great and Oblong-leaved Sundews *D. anglica* and *D. intermedia*, despite them appearing in the species list for the area. There

are three native grasses that do not possess a ligule and two of these were here in good numbers: Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, which has the widest distribution of any grass in the world, on every continent bar Antarctica, and also has the 'Devil's bite mark' on each leaf, and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*; the third is Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, which was not present here.



There was an absolute carpet of Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, unfortunately way past its best, when it shows off that gorgeous yellow colouring; we must come again next year in late June-July. In a few places we were shown the locally distributed Black Darter dragonfly *Sympetrum danae*, which is Britain's smallest species.

STEPHEN CLARKSON  
AND ANNE KELL

### **SATURDAY 7<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, HOLME DUNES NNR**

On a warm, overcast Saturday morning 51 Wild Flower Society members met in the car park at Holme Dunes NNR for the first main

field meeting of the 2024 AGM weekend. There was just enough time to investigate tiny, faded flowers peeping from the calyx tubes of a plant of Suffocated Clover *Trifolium suffocatum* growing in the car park before we met with our leaders for the morning, Adrian Winnington and Garry Hibberd, the site warden. Adrian informed us that his aim was to walk the mile or more to Gore Point, then back again, enjoying botanical specialities as we went. An ambitious plan with only two hours available, but he was undaunted and keen to get started without delay.

We set off through mature dunes, where British White cattle, wearing their electronic 'no fence' collars, were looking on with what could be described as bemusement. The cattle have proved a success since they were introduced to the site several years ago. Wood Small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos*, which can be invasive here but is also very susceptible to grazing, is a delicacy for the cattle, so this is an ideal partnership. Many favourites such as Carlina Thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acris*, Strawberry Clover *Trifolium fragiferum* and Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* were spotted, while Lesser Centaury *Centaureum pulchellum* attracted lots of interest as the forked branching and number of internodes were noted and mentally compared with those of other centauries. Eventually we came across a dried-up freshwater pool, where we had to tread very carefully to avoid stepping on Natterjack Toads. Holme is a nationally important site for them and sure enough, an eagle-eyed group

member spotted the yellow stripe on the back of an otherwise very well camouflaged individual which unwittingly became a photographic model for a short time. The lack of sunshine meant that the flowers of Smooth Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris glabra* and Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* were tightly closed but we had a good look at the purple-tipped involucral bracts of the Cat's-ear and heard that the Yellow-wort population has grown, from 6-7 plants five years ago, to a count of over 3,000 this year.

As we moved towards the saltmarshes, there was time to use a lens to examine the dull, papillose nuts of Slender Club-rush *Isolepis cernua* and to note that this helps



Carlina Thistle

separate it from Bristle Club-rush *I. setacea*, with its shiny, ribbed nuts. Two sea-spurreys were found growing side by side so we were able to compare the flying saucer-like winged seeds of Greater Sea-spurrey *Spergularia media* with those of Lesser Sea-spurrey *S. marina*, which lacked the winged border, though they do sometimes have one. There was a bit of discussion about a sea lavender: 'Is it Common Sea-lavender *Limonium vulgare*, with the stem branching above the middle, or does it branch below the middle, making it Lax-flowered Sea-lavender *L. humile*, or could it be the hybrid?' There was no difficulty in identifying the local speciality, Matted Sea-lavender *L. bellidifolium*, with its zigzagging network of flowerless lower branches and flowers clustered on the upper branches. By the time we reached the glassworts, I was wishing that I'd done a bit of revision or at least brought along the excellent ID sheet from Wild Flower Magazine 513. This time, the debate was about the number of flowers. Purple Glasswort *Salicornia ramosissima*, One-flowered Glasswort *S. disarticulata* and their hybrid *S. x marshallii* were discussed. Annual Sea-blite *Suaeda maritima* was at its best. The upper branches and succulent tepals had turned a deep burgundy which contrasted beautifully with the bright green, fleshy leaves.

Time to retrace our steps after nearly, but not quite, reaching the Point. Everyone would agree that it had been a wonderful morning filled with interesting plants. Thanks go to our leaders, who know this site so well, and to the many expert botanists in

our group, who were so willing to share their knowledge with others.

SHEENA PATERSON

## SUNDAY 8<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER,

**HOLKHAM NNR** We met in Lady Anne's Drive and were joined by Jo Parmenter from the Norfolk Flora Group and Andy Bloomfield, the Reserve Warden. Carol Hawkins and Steve Little were also leaders.

The weather was perfect as we set off in bright sunshine, with racing clouds above. The reserve comprises pinewoods, sand dunes and saltmarsh, with areas managed for birds and overwintering flocks of geese.

We walked along a grassy track along the edge of the pinewoods, passing Divided Sedge *Carex divisa* on the way. Then we found Stinking Hellebore *Helleborus foetidus*, Yellow Figwort *Scrophularia vernalis* and False Alkanet *Cynoglossis barrelieri* – though none in flower.

Someone dipped a walking stick into a pond to produce Perfoliate Pondweed *Potamogeton perfoliatus* and Beaked Tasselweed *Ruppia maritima*. Continuing down a sandy track, we passed a Sea Aster *Tripolium pannonicum* and a scrambling Broad-leaved Everlasting-pea *Lathyrus latifolius*.

A major find was Kidneyweed *Dichondra micrantha*, really difficult to spot, hidden deep in rough grass and scrub; even the leaders had to search hard to find it. This is normally found in Texas, Mexico and the Caribbean!



Nearby was an old building, possibly a cart barn, with interesting sandy holes in the floor. Andy assured us that they contained the rare ant-lion. The larvae create funnel-shaped holes in sandy ground and if a passing invertebrate slips in, the ant-lion will emerge from concealment in the sand at the bottom to grab its prey. Unfortunately, try as he might, Andy could not get one to leap up for his delving sticks that day!

At this point the group split into two, with those keen to see the Norfolk Everlasting-pea *Lathyrus heterophyllus* having to walk an extra 4.5 kilometres. They did find it with just a few flowers left!

The rest of us continued under Jo's leadership on a shorter route through lovely, dappled woods to look at Creeping Lady's-tresses *Goodyera repens* amongst the Corsican Pines *Pinus nigra* ssp. *laricio* planted years ago to protect the land from coastal winds.

After the woods, we walked onto the high dunes, behind which were developing areas of dune slacks. We found many plants such as Grey Hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens*, a tiny, slightly pink-tinged grass, on a sandy mound, Slender Rush *Juncus tenuis*, which likes damp sand, Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris* (not in flower), Sea Rush *J. maritimus*, Distant Sedge *Carex distans*, Sand Cat's-tail *Phleum arenarium*, Guernsey Fleabane *Erigeron sumatrensis*, Shrubby Sea-blite *Suaeda vera* - a speciality of the Norfolk coast - and Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*.



Shrubby Sea-blite

Our next find was a suitable dip in the dunes, where we could sit and relax over lunch!

Suitably refreshed, we ventured out onto the saltmarshes proper. Here we had a field day (literally) finding such beauties as Matted Sea-lavender *Limonium bellidifolium*, plus Common Sea-lavender *L. vulgare*. We spent ages debating the Rock Sea-lavenders *L. binervosum* agg., of which there are several subspecies. A few samples were taken for further study at home! A definite find was *L. binervosum* ssp. *saxonicum*.

We then found the beautiful Frosted Orache *Atriplex laciniata*, with its crystalline leaves, Spear-leaved Orache *A. prostrata*, Purple Glasswort *Salicornia ramosissima* and Prickly Saltwort *Salsola kali*. At about this time, the other group rejoined us. Andy, the warden, was very keen on bugs and beetles so they had been shown a number of insects. In a tube he had a Strandline Burrower *Broscus cephalotes*, which he was able to capture because it was injured, with only three legs. The Rock Sea-lavender debates

continued anew, with no real decisions made.

Gradually we wandered back onto the dunes, heading for the café. Along the way we had a good chance to compare Common Cord-grass *Spartina anglica* and Lyme-grass *Leymus arenarius*, with its inrolled leaves. We also saw Sea Couch *Elymus athericus*, Greater and Lesser Sea-spurrey *Spergularia media* and *S. marina* and finally, as we neared the car park, a lonely Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima* finished a productive day.

Many thanks to all our leaders for making the day so enjoyable.

JACQUELINE CANDY

## MONDAY 9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, SNETTISHAM BEACH

A group of 23 of us braved the strong winds and heavy rain to set off with our leaders Steve Little and Carol Hawkins. As the conditions weren't conducive to close examination and keying out of plants, we decided to make straight for the furthest point of the walk, which is where we hoped to find the star attraction of the site, Saltmarsh Goosefoot *Oxybasis chenopodioides*. As we approached our goal, conditions improved and we set about examining the many goosefoot plants in an area of dried saltmarsh. For a long time, all the plants that we looked at, we thought were Red Goosefoot *O. rubra*. Eventually, with the help of grid references supplied to Carol by Jo Parmenter, we located some tiny plants which looked convincingly different enough to be considered as possible candidates for the

Saltmarsh Goosefoot. The plants weren't sufficiently developed for us to be sure of our identification, but Carol sent some photos to Jo and to Simon Harrop, who both subsequently confirmed the identification. (Steve later came across an article by Simon in BSBI News 134 (2017), together with photos, which led him to suspect that the majority of the goosefoot plants we had been looking at were actually Saltmarsh Goosefoot). Having



achieved our goal, we set off slowly back towards the car park, stopping to look at the plants we had passed earlier. We came across some Rock Sea-lavender and, with the help of the key used by Jo on Sunday, keyed it out to *Limonium binervosum* ssp. *anglicum*. We stopped to have a closer look at the well-branched candelabras of the mulleins we had

seen earlier. These were Hoary Mullein *Verbascum pulverulentum*, an East Anglian speciality which is particularly common around the Snettisham area. Also along the way, we noted some white-flowered plants of Common Stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium* var. *albidum*.

A chance deviation from the main path led us to a pond which kept us occupied for some time. In the pond itself, Steve fished out Ivy-leaved Duckweed *Lemna trisulca*, Mare's-tail *Hippuris vulgaris*, Spiked Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum* and Thread-leaved Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus trichophyllus*. Along the

banks, we found Bog Stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*, Tufted Forget-me-not *Myosotis laxa*, Pink Water-speedwell *Veronica catenata*, Grey Club-rush *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* and Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta*, with the distinctive white ring around its stem.

As it was starting to rain again, we beat a hasty retreat to the car park and, after saying our goodbyes, to the shelter of our cars for lunch.

Many thanks to Steve Little and Carol Hawkins for leading the walk.

SHEILA WYNN

## PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION ORGANISER'S REPORT

The judging this year was undertaken by Sheila Wynn, and I sincerely thank her for taking on this important task. Sheila told me she had great difficulty in choosing the overall winner of the Violet Schwerdt Trophy, and I can well understand her predicament. This year's winner is Moira Smith with her Wild Basil picture, (featured on the back cover of the Autumn magazine) and I send her my congratulations.

This year, thirteen contributors entered a total of 87 photographs, which is slightly higher than last year's totals. The overall quality of the images was extremely good and although I don't have details of the cameras used, I believe the majority were taken with mobile phones. Once again, I would like to receive lots more images in future years. Thank you to all those who entered.

KEN SOUTHALL



1<sup>st</sup> Placings in 2024 Photographic Competition, see next page.



**Class 1: Habitat**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Jane Lowe	Seaside pavement weeds, Rottingdean
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Anne Kell	Bear's-breech, <i>Acanthus mollis</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Moira Smith	Bird's-nest Orchid
H/C	Gillian Davidson	Bluebells in Newton Wood

**Class 2: Plant Portrait**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Moira Smith	Wild Basil
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Moira Smith	Goat's-beard
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Janet John	Small Scabious in fruit
H/C	Gillian Davidson	Mountain Pansy

**Class 3: Close-up**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Moira Smith	Common Centaury
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Moira Smith	Quaking-grass,
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Gwyndaf John	Marsh Helleborine
H/C	Anne Kell	Montbretia <i>Crocasmia x crocosmiflora</i>
H/C	Janet John	Sea Campion

**Class 4: Foreign Fields**

1 <sup>st</sup>	David Caals	Dwarf Evening-primrose, Arches NP, USA
2 <sup>nd</sup>	David Caals	Prairie Sunflower, Arches NP, USA
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Anne Kell	<i>Balsamorhiza sagittata</i> , Arrowleaf
		Balsamroot, Zion NP, USA.
H/C	Davis Caals	<i>Rogeria adenophylla</i> , Big Daddy Sand
		Dune, Namibia

**Class 5: Human Element**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Janet John	Star of the show
2 <sup>nd</sup>	David Caals	Dandelions prioritised over lunch, Meall Mor
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Anne Kell	Botany at arm's length
H/C	David Caals	Seeking the Crock of Gold, Meall Mor

All the above winning entries can be seen on the Members' page of our website.

## LLANTRISANT COMMON, GLAMORGAN, 11<sup>th</sup> JUNE

Llantrisant Common. If you have never visited, then you have missed a treat - 253 botanically interesting acres to explore. David Barden, our leader, knows the area well, having spent over ten years getting to grips with the flora of the Common and

publishing a book 'The Wild Plants of Llantrisant Common' in 2020. To quote David's book: 'The landscape consists of damp, undulating ground dominated by marshland but with areas of short grassy turf, patches of heather and pockets of peat bog all



interwoven with muddy trickles and streams. The survival of the Common in its present state is due to the Freeman of Llantrisant being granted the right to graze animals on it over 600 years ago - which continues to this day'. We certainly saw evidence of cows on the Common - we had to be careful where we trod! And a herd of about 15 beautiful white horses entertained us with their galloping at one point.

Given the variety of habitats, with damp and marshy ground in abundance, there were plenty of plants for us to enjoy. Sedges there were aplenty: Flea Sedge *Carex pulicaris*, Carnation Sedge *C. panicea*, Star Sedge *C. echinata*, False Fox-sedge *C. otrubae*, Common Sedge *C. nigra*, Green-ribbed Sedge *C. binervis*, Smooth-stalked Sedge *C. laevigata* (a new one for me), Common Yellow-sedge *C. demissa* and Oval Sedge *C. leporina* - good revision for those of us determined to consolidate and increase our sedge knowledge. Other plants of damp habitats that we saw included Cornish Moneywort *Sibthorpia europaea* and Ivy-leaved Bellflower *Wahlenbergia hederacea*.

The ground was very lumpy and bumpy, so walking was rather slow - not really unusual for a WFS meeting. On one little bump we saw Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, Mat-grass *Nardus stricta*, Quaking-grass *Briza media*, Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and Yorkshire-



fog *Holcus lanatus*.

As a highlight one would have to mention Glamorganshire Hawkweed *Hieraciumadelphicum*, as it is only found in five locations, but my own highlights would have to be Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustre*, Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*, all of which I particularly enjoy seeing. Those who ventured into a patch of waist-high vegetation were rewarded with three ferns in close proximity: Golden-scaled Male-fern *Dryopteris affinis*, Narrow Buckler-fern *D. carthusiana* and Broad Buckler-fern *D. dilatata*, which made for a good discussion of the individual identification features.

This is a site that is really worth visiting and we were lucky to have David to show us around.

JANET JOHN



# LITTLE SOLSBURY HILL AND CHILCOMBE BOTTOM NATURE RESERVE, BATH, SOMERSET, 17<sup>th</sup> JUNE

Little Solsbury Hill is an Iron Age hill fort with calcareous soil, rocky limestone outcrops and several springs. Chilcombe Bottom Nature Reserve, in the valley to the north, was created on the site of a former reservoir and now consists of ponds, streams, marshy areas and limestone grassland. We gathered on a fine day in a quiet lay-by at Upper Swainswick, where we were greeted by our leaders, Pauline and Richard Wilson and Helena Crouch. Here we were introduced to Rough Hawk's-beard *Crepis biennis*, a species which is uncommon in Somerset but apparently spreading. Plants are generally taller than those of the commoner Beaked Hawk's-beard *C. vesicaria* and the flower heads (capitula) are larger and paler yellow. The verge of the lay-by had a wonderful display of Common Spotted-orchids *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Pyramidal Orchids *Anacamptis pyramidalis* and Grass Vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia*. On the traffic island at its end Helena showed us Tall Fleabane *Erigeron annuus*, first seen here in 2022, growing with the native Blue Fleabane *E. acris*.

The walk up to Little Solsbury Hill took us through unimproved hay meadows where we saw Upright Brome *Bromopsis erecta*, the seed-heads of Cowslip *Primula veris* and Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. Along the hedgerow Helena pointed out mature Elms *Ulmus minor* agg. with smooth leaves. As we reached the limestone slopes of the hill, we met a local entomologist who

is surveying the insects of Little Solsbury Hill and who joined us for the day, showing us several different insect species. We looked more closely at how to identify yellow composites including Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, Smooth Hawk's-beard *C. capillaris* and Mouse-ear-hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*. We saw Short-styled Field-rose *Rosa stylosa*, which has arching stems, a strongly conical disc at the top of the hip, white or pale pink flowers, large curved prickles and red glands on the pedicels.

One of our target species, Knotted Hedge-parsley *Torilis nodosa*, was



Photo: Pat Steele

found on a rocky outcrop and Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium* was in flower. Nearby on another rock were large patches of Rough Clover *Trifolium scabrum*. We made our way around the steep west-facing side of the hill and continued our composite theme, observing several thistle species:

Dwarf Thistle *Cirsium acaule*, Woolly Thistle *C. eriophorum*, Marsh Thistle *C. palustre*, Spear Thistle *C. vulgare*, Creeping Thistle *C. arvense* and splendid Musk Thistle *Carduus nutans*. After a coffee stop on the south side of the hill, with far-reaching views across Bath, we continued around the edge of the summit, finding Common Restharrow *Ononis repens*. On the north-facing slopes, Helena showed us the seed-heads of Wall Whitlowgrass *Drabella muralis*.

After a picnic lunch overlooking the valley of Chilcombe Bottom, we headed down to the wetlands of the nature reserve, a haven for wildlife. Here we found Common Meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum* and Peppersaxifrage *Silene silaus*. Our entomologist friend showed us a weevil found only on Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*. In the pond we saw Common Club-rush *Schoenoplectus lacustris* and Mare's-tail *Hippuris vulgaris*. Galingale *Cyperus longus* was growing beside the pond,

together with swathes of Great Horsetail *Equisetum telmateia*. This species usually has fertile shoots in spring, followed by the separate tall vegetative shoots; however, one green vegetative shoot was, unusually, bearing cones, and in addition exhibiting a phenomenon known as 'polystachy', bearing an explosion of many tiny cones on individual shoots. Under trees by the lake, we found a large clump of Cyperus Sedge *Carex pseudocyperus*. The damp grassland was dotted with Ragged-Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, Common Spotted-orchid, Common Twayblade *Neottia ovata* and Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*. As we left the reserve, we admired a huge rambling Many-flowered Rose *Rosa multiflora*, long naturalised in the hedge.

Thank you to Helena for her expertise and to our leaders Pauline and Richard for a thoroughly enjoyable day.

PAT STEELE

## TEESDALE, 20<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> JUNE

### Day 1: Upper Teesdale

11 of us met up on this very warm day in stunning Teesdale. This was the first day of a three-day meeting, repeated from last year due to its popularity, and today we tackled Alchemillas!

We met at Hayberries Nature Reserve, where Margaret Bradshaw first of all introduced us to various identification guides highlighting key distinguishing features for Alchemillas. The flowers themselves are not usually very helpful for

identification; more helpful are the shape of the epicalyx, leaf shape, the arrangement of hairs (e.g. patent, adpressed, reflexed) and their distribution on the plant, and whether the base of the leaf near the stalk (the sinus) is open or closed.

Equipped with a handy identification sheet produced by Margaret and under the helpful guidance of our leaders, Margaret and Lizzie Maddison, we set forth to take up the challenge to find three common species.

It wasn't long before we came across Soft (Garden) Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla mollis*, a naturalised plant causing a problem on this nature reserve by outcompeting the native species. Soon after, we found Smooth Lady's-mantle *A. glabra* (as the name suggests, the plant lacks hairs) and Pale (Intermediate) Lady's-mantle *A. xanthochlora*, which has spreading hairs on the petiole, a glabrous upper surface of the leaf and hairs part of the way up the inflorescence.

Photo: Laura Gravestock



Challenge met, Margaret then showed us a further three species: Hairy Lady's-mantle *A. filicaulis* ssp. *vestita*, a species which tends to look bluey-green and has patent hairs on the leaf and petiole, while the leaf base has an open sinus and, in this subspecies, a reddish base; Velvet Lady's-mantle *A. monticola*, in which the sinus is usually closed, the leaf surface has dense erect hairs, and the leaf veins, a darkish green colour, seem to stand out more than in other species; and finally in this area Starry Lady's-mantle *A. acutiloba*, which has triangular leaf lobes, the apical tooth of which is smaller than the

ones on either side, and patent hairs on the petiole.

We then set off to look for further species along the River Tees, a really beautiful walk, where we were wonderfully distracted by species such as Alpine Bistort *Bistorta vivipara*, Shady Horsetail *Equisetum pratense*, Water Sedge *Carex aquatilis*, Marsh Hawk's-beard *Crepis paludosa*, Shrubby Cinquefoil *Dasiphora fruticosa* and various orchids!

But getting back to the Alchemillas - further species were found on our riparian walk, including Rock Lady's-Mantle *A. wichurae*, a small plant with leaves around 2-3 inches across, with a glabrous and rather shiny upper leaf surface, the whole leaf sometimes having a saucer-like shape to it; and Clustered Lady's-mantle *A. glomerulans*, which has adpressed hairs and the flowers clustered to give an impression of a ball shape (sometimes!).

It was an absolutely fantastic day and whetted our botanical appetite for delights in the coming days. Thanks so much to our leaders Margaret and Lizzie.

If you are interested in finding out further information, check out the Teesdale Special Flora Trust's Plants on the Edge Project: <https://www.teesdalespecialflora.uk>.

LAURA GRAVESTOCK

## Day 2: Cronkley Fell

A group of 15 gathered in beautiful weather at Hanging Shaw car park by a large patch of Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* for a walk up Cronkley Fell, led by Lizzie Maddison and John O'Reilly of the Teesdale Flora Group.

On the first steep climb there were ferns growing on the rocks: Mountain Male-fern *Dryopteris oreades*, Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis* and Parsley Fern *Cryptogramma crispa*. John showed us how to recognise Mountain Male-fern; it is a dull green and the sori are in the middle, less than halfway to the edge, of the pinnule.

In a wet area we saw Few-flowered Spike-rush *Eleocharis quinqueflora*, Flea Sedge *Carex pulicaris* and Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*.

Close to the top by a stream were Alpine Meadow-rue *Thalictrum alpinum* and Hair Sedge *C. capillaris*. We went to a gravelly area further up to look for Three-flowered Rush *Juncus triglumis*, which we found, along with Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris* and both sexes of Dioecious Sedge *C. dioica*.

There are exclosures fenced off to protect the most vulnerable plants. In the first one, in grassland on sugar limestone with Blue Moor-grass *Sesleria caerulea* and Limestone Bedstraw *Galium sternerii*, we saw Spring Sandwort *Sabulina verna*, also known as Leadwort because it is tolerant of lead-rich conditions and miners used it as an indicator of the presence of lead. The Hoary Rock-

rose subspecies unique to Cronkley Fell *Helianthemum oelandicum* ssp. *levigatum* was also there, along with Common Rock-rose *H. nummularium*. The Hoary Rock-rose had smaller flowers, no stipules and an S-shaped stigma. We saw the dried-up remains of Spring Gentian *Gentiana verna* and a few Dark-red Helleborine *Epipactis atrorubens*, not yet in flower, Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa*, with a few flowers still showing, and False Sedge *C. simpliciuscula*. At the top of a rocky area was a cage - what could be in there, we wondered? Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, it turned out, a rare species in Teesdale, with only two known individual plants.

From our lunch spot we could see Common Twayblade *Neottia ovata*. Outside the exclosure we saw Variegated Horsetail *Equisetum variegatum* and a dead Alpine Rush *Juncus alpinoarticulatus*, a plant best seen in August. There were small hummocks of the moss *Hymenostylium recurvirostrum* in a flush. In another exclosure, there were large patches of Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala*. One of our number, Pam, spotted a new Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* plant,



Photo: Jane Lowe

which delighted our leaders.

After we had looked at Hoary Whitlowgrass *Draba incana* and Pyrenean Scurvygrass *Cochlearia pyrenaica* the official meeting ended, but some of us continued with John to see some more plants. Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* and both sexes of Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica* were growing in an enclosure. We crossed a boggy area with Bottle Sedge *C. rostrata* and Slender Sedge *C. lasiocarpa*, some of which was flowering. Slender Sedge often does not flower and is difficult to see when vegetative among other sedges, so there have been several instances of it being found where it was thought to have died out. In another enclosure,

John showed us pink-flowered Dwarf Milkwort *Polygala amarella* growing near Common Milkwort *P. vulgaris*. Dwarf Milkwort is smaller and has a basal rosette of small spoon-shaped leaves. Further on was a Holly-fern *Polystichum lonchitis*, protected from grazing animals by a large stone - the protruding ends had been nibbled - and, in a pile of stones, Brittle Bladder-fern *Cystopteris fragilis*.

We returned along the same path, enjoying panoramic views. Many thanks to Lizzie and John for showing us so many interesting plants.

JANE LOWE

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### **Day 3: Whitesyke and Bentyfield Mines, Garrigill, and Bell's Grooves, Allenheads**

We were a smaller group today and all needing an extra layer at this, the highest altitude of our three days in Teesdale. Our guide was Lizzie Maddison, who introduced us to our first site on a sunny, windy morning at an altitude of almost 1,500 feet above sea level.

This was once a lead and then fluorospar mining area and therefore suffers from contamination. The infrastructure of the mine workings is still in place, with stone-built arches and channels for the watercourses. The area is home to a special grassland habitat known as calaminarian and is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. This grassland is composed of species which are able to grow on this post-industrial, contaminated land

because they are tolerant of high levels of lead, zinc and other trace elements. The presence of these species served as indicators to the miners of where to find lead veins waiting to be exploited.

Generally present here are Thrift *Armeria maritima*, Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea*, Pyrenean Scurvy-grass *Cochlearia pyrenaica* and Spring Sandwort *Sabulina verna* (also known as Leadwort).

We started along the flat banks of the sunken main water channel and by the north-facing water tunnel exit looked at Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, Lizzie pointing out the C-shaped indusium covering the spores. We also saw Brittle Bladder-fern *Cystopteris fragilis* and found Alpine Penny-cress *Nocca caerulea* showing both flowers and seed-heads.



Along the wide, raised banks of the main watercourse we found large specimens of Northern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, Crosswort *Cruciata laevipes*, Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and Navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris*. There were tiny specimens of Common Milkwort *Polygala vulgaris* amongst the grass and some Heath Milkwort *P. serpyllifolia* showing characteristic opposite lower leaves.

Lizzie directed us to a south-facing bank of ferns to compare the shapes of the fronds: Hard Shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum* and Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, with the dark stripe on the scales and tripinnate fronds. On a



Water Avens

south-facing lower slope the ferns were unusually pale, possibly due to the contamination.

We found Broad-leaved Willowherb *Epilobium montanum* and spotted a Water Avens *Geum rivale* with a gall distorting the flower head into a larger flatter growth.

For the afternoon we travelled across open country to Bell's Grooves, Allenheads, noting the circular dry-stone-wall-protected air shafts dotted on the fellsides. This site was a beautiful open valley with a small stream in the bottom. We set off along narrow grassy paths with Common Twayblades *Neottia ovata* growing even on the path. We found the leaves of Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and then a clump with spores.

We stopped for lunch on a sunny bank strewn with Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Mountain Pansies *Viola lutea*. On the lower slopes Kerry found a patch of Dog Lichen *Peltigera canina* and then we found some British Soldiers Lichen *Cladonia cristatella*.

Climbing the bank in search of Frog Orchids *Coeloglossum viride*, which we couldn't find, we reached the road and on the sloping verge bank found a 20-foot stretch of Flea Sedge *Carex pulicaris* not quite ready to spring its ripe seeds.

A large Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* was growing at the bottom of the valley, a tree in form, but with the branches growing from the very bottom of the trunk. Lichen hung from the branches looking like grey bits of

cotton cloth, possibly *Ramalina fraxinea*, which likes very clean air. We learnt a lot about the survivors and colonisers in a post-industrial landscape and had a lovely ending to our three varied days in

Teesdale. Many thanks are due to Laura Gravestock and Lizzie Maddison for such an interesting finale.

ELAINE COOPER

## NEW FOREST, HAMPSHIRE, 28<sup>th</sup> JUNE

Report for Day 2. (Day 1 report will be in the spring magazine).

Nick Aston, our super-organised leader, used to live nearby and showed us a remarkable number of New Forest specialities in and around the East End 'triangle' of heathland, short turf and boggy flushes. There are few bogs and heaths in Bedfordshire, where I do most of my botanising, so even the common plants were fascinating. The area that we visited admirably demonstrated the 'New Forest effect'; pony-grazing means that plants are diminutive and it takes a bit of adjusting to recognise species such as Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* when plants are only a few centimetres tall.

Species that were common locally are anything but in Bedfordshire, Ericas, for example Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* and Cross-leaved Heath *E. tetralix*, and sedges: Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea*, Common Yellow-sedge *C. demissa* and Star Sedge *C. echinata*. Other plants of interest included Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Bog Pimpernel *Lysimachia tenella*, Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, Marsh St. John's-wort *Hypericum elodes*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Bulbous and Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus bulbosus* and *J. subnodulosus*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Many-

stalked Spike-rush *Eleocharis multicaulis*, Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, White Beak-sedge *Rhynchospora alba* and Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*.

Stepping out of the cars onto a fragrant Chamomile *Chamaemelum nobile* lawn, we only had to walk a few metres to find a ditch with 'strings' of Coral-necklace *Illecebrum verticillatum*, Yellow Centaury *Cicendia filiformis* (unfortunately the sun didn't come out, so the petals remained closed), Trailing St. John's-wort *Hypericum humifusum*, Tufted



and Creeping Forget-me-nots *Myosotis laxa* and *M. secunda*, Marsh Ragwort *Jacobaea aquatica*, Pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium*, Lesser Marshwort *Helosciadium inundatum* and Allseed *Linum radiola*. Lyn Jones found an unusual sedge, identified subsequently by Mike Porter, BSBI sedge referee, as the hybrid between Common Sedge *Carex nigra* and Slender Tufted-sedge *C. acuta* = *C. x elytroides*.

Moving out of the triangle across the road to a pond - 'nothing beats a boggy flush' to quote the meeting's organiser - we were shown Hampshire-purslane *Ludwigia palustris*, with its distinctive reddish coloration, Round-leaved Crowfoot *Ranunculus omiophyllus* and Lesser Water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides*, all having to compete with the dreaded New Zealand Pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii*. Back across the road, another wonderful boggy flush revealed Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*, a small mat of Pillwort *Pilularia globulifera*, Floating Club-rush *Eleogiton fluitans* and Slender Club-rush *Isolepis cernua*. We then took a short walk to a pond, where introduced White Water-lilies *Nymphaea alba* were threatening the native Hampshire-purslane. Floating Club-rush and Marsh St. John's-wort occurred at the margins. We were also shown Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis*. I was then reminded how confusing and fascinating botany can be. I took a small sample of a sedge which I was unable to name. Mike Porter identified it as Dioecious Sedge *Carex dioica*, which, as the name implies, normally has male and female spikes on different plants, but can occasionally, as in this case,

have female flowers beneath the single male spike.

The afternoon was definitely a Wellington boot excursion as we explored in and around Hatchet Pond. A boggy area on the edge of the pond yielded more Pale Butterwort, together with Lesser Skulicap *Scutellaria minor* and Bog-myrtle *Myrica gale*. Shoreweed *Littorella uniflora* was growing in shallow water at the edge of the lake, with occasional plants in flower. Small-fruited Yellow-sedge *C. viridula* (with small utricles and a stalkless male spike) was growing on the stony shoreline. Bristle Club-rush *Isolepis setacea* (with brown flowers overtopped by a long bract) occurred in ditches at the site of an old car park, together with Slender Marsh-bedstraw *Galium constrictum*, yet another rare New Forest speciality.

At this point, the group fanned out to search for Chaffweed *Lysimachia minima*, described by Francis Rose as 'one of the smallest European plants'. With no success and having been on their feet most of the day, two of our members sat on the bank, stating with determination 'we're sitting on it and we're not moving'. Soon afterwards, the first of several minuscule plants was found and the old saying 'many a true word is spoken in jest' proved to be correct! Further around the lake, Pillwort was growing in the water, while the last few flowers in a raft of Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* were seen; we also observed first-hand how palatable Hampshire Purslane is to the ponies. We were then shown Jo-jo-weed *Cotula sessilis*, an unwelcome invasive alien.

Finally, we drove a short way up the road to Beaulieu Heath car park, where Nick showed us White Forget-me-not *Plagiobothrys scouleri* to round off a momentous day.

Many thanks to all those involved in arranging the meeting and particularly to Nick for his enthusiasm, patience and meticulous organisation.

JOHN WAKELY

## HACKFALL WOODS, NORTH YORKSHIRE, 6<sup>th</sup> JULY

This was a very friendly group, expertly led by Bruce Brown of Wharfedale Naturalists and the British Pteridological Society.

This ancient woodland SSSI lies on magnesian limestone and Brimham grits and has many wet flushes. Although parts of it were clear-felled in the 1930s some is thought to have been continuous woodland since the last Ice Age, so has a diverse flora in the dense understorey. The limestone also contributes to geological features such as tufa, where calcium carbonate-saturated water falls from bedding planes at the top of banks onto rock and vegetation below. This has the effect of petrifying the vegetation and building up carbonaceous deposits, which may be 1000 years old.

Hackfall is particularly noted for ferns, thanks to its humid microclimate. We were treated to quite a range including Hard and Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum* and *P. setiferum*, their hybrid *P x bicknellii* and Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*. We also saw Oak Fern *Gymnocarpium dryopteris* and Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis*. Unfortunately we couldn't physically get right up to these two ferns as it would have been too dangerous. The terrain is very steep and slippery

thereabouts.

The conditions suited sedges too. In addition to Wood-sedge *Carex sylvatica*, there was also the similar Thin-spiked Wood-sedge *C. strigosa*. The grasses included Giant Fescue *Schedonorus giganteus* and many others. Great Horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* lent a primaevial air to wet areas and everywhere the dense understorey demonstrated Hackfall's great variety of plant associations.



Giant Bellflower



This included many more common but 'treasured' species including Giant Bellflower *Campanula latifolia* and Common Twayblade *Neottia ovata*.

The romantic landscape artist Turner painted here and this reflects the sheer joy of the site. It's a place of inspiration, whether you are looking

at the amazing views or the great diversity of plants that grow there.

Our thanks to Bruce for a great day. It was so helpful having a pteridologist with us.

HAZEL MITFORD

## STRATFORD-UPON-AVON AND WELCOMBE HILLS NATURE RESERVE, WARWICKSHIRE, 10<sup>th</sup> JULY

This was a day of two parts: first of all, a walk around the town to look for urban weeds and then a short hop to a nature reserve for the afternoon. Weatherwise, our luck was in. At last, a day of botanising with no rain and a good dollop of sunshine.

A great start to the day: John Walton, one of our leaders, explained that Bird's-foot Clover *Trifolium ornithopodioides* had recently been seen near the entrance to the car park. We looked - and lo! Inge Beck spotted it. Very satisfying. Then off we went across a bridge over the River Avon, past Bread Wheat *Triticum aestivum*, Pellitory-of-the-wall *Parietaria judaica* and Mexican Fleabane *Erigeron karvinskianus*, along a footpath, where we keyed out Hidcote Tutsan *Hypericum x hidcoteense* and found a nice plant of Wall Lettuce *Mycelis muralis*, past a rubbish-bin with American Willowherb *Epilobium ciliatum* lurking nearby and down some steps to the canal. Our walk along the canal, where we saw Gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, Dwarf Mallow *Malva neglecta* and Bittersweet *Solanum*

*dulcamara*, was summarily curtailed by reports of a large swan directly in our path. We beat a hasty retreat onto suburban streets and were immediately rewarded with several clumps of Pale Corydalis *Pseudofumaria alba* and Sticky Groundsel *Senecio viscosus* growing by a wall, followed by Wall Bedstraw *Galium parisiense*, Four-leaved Allseed *Polycarpon tetraphyllum* and Knotted Hedge-parsley *Torilis*





*nodosa*, among other plants. A satisfactory morning concluded with us eating lunch on the riverbank watching the world - the swans, geese and tourists - go by.

Then it was off to Welcombe Hills Nature Reserve, a 60-hectare site located a short drive from the town centre and a wonderful area of grassland and woodland. We soon found ourselves immersed in identifying docks. Co-leader Monika Walton gave clear instructions as to the differences between Wood Dock *Rumex sanguineus*, Broad-leaved Dock *R. obtusifolius* and their hybrid *R. x dufftii*. We were soon all busy with our lenses and confidently identifying the parents, although the hybrid eluded us. It is easy when you are shown how! We also found Fiddle Dock *R. pulcher*, uncommon in Warwickshire, and its hybrid with Wood Dock *R. x mixtus*, the latter

confirmed by the BSBI *Rumex* referee, Geoffrey Kitchener. There were many other nice plants too, such as Rough Chervil *Chaerophyllum temulum*, Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, Meadow Barley *Hordeum secalinum* and a wonderful Woolly Thistle *Cirsium eriophorum*. Tor-grass *Brachypodium rupestre* and False Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum* were easy to differentiate when you saw them close to each other, the strong upright nature of Tor-grass contrasting with the drooping head and droopy leaves of the False Brome.

Two contrasting and interesting locations, lots of good plants, clear explanations of ID features - a lovely day of botanising. Many thanks to John and Monika Walton.

JANET JOHN

## CONNEMARA, COUNTY GALWAY, IRELAND, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> JULY

**Day 1: Bogs and Beaches:** The view of Roundstone Bog from the road that bisects it is dramatic: a vista of lakes, rocky outcrops and, of course, the Atlantic lowland bog itself, over a metre deep and stretching as far as the eye can see! It's difficult now to imagine how Neolithic farmers 4,000 years ago would have probably looked out on woodlands, heathlands and grasslands from the same spot before the landscape gradually changed as the climate became wetter and the ground became waterlogged, a process accelerated by deforestation.

The tourist websites advise you to admire the bog from the road because of the obvious risks of losing a boot or worse, and a traditional Irish joke asks '*What is the best way to cross an Irish bog?*' Answer: '*With a very long stick and an even longer prayer!*' So, there was a sense of trepidation as we ventured out, but we were very ably led by our guide, Vice-county Recorder for West Galway, John Conaghan.

The bog is dominated by three plants: Purple Moor-grass *Molinia*



Tim Ó Ceallaigh in the bog

*caerulea*, comprising more than half of the vegetation, Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Black Bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*. Of course, we found a lot of plants with 'bog' in the name including Bog Pimpernel *Lysimachia tenella*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Bog-myrtle *Myrica gale*, Bog-sedge *Carex limosa*, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius* and Bog Hair-grass *Aristavena setacea*.

We also came across a number of plants of the hybrid between Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Mackay's Heath *Erica mackayana*. However, finding the very rare Mackay's Heath itself was a lot trickier. Close to a pool, Steve Little found a small patch that was later confirmed to be this species, first discovered in this area by the

botanist James Townsend Mackay in the 1800s. The plant is also present in northern Spain and various theories have been proposed as to how it arrived here, the most interesting one suggesting that it was as a result of the plant being used to pack bottles in the very popular wine trade between the two regions!

At the edge of a pool we were delighted to come across two special plants, Water Lobelia *Lobelia dortmanna* and Pipewort *Eriocaulon aquaticum*. I will always remember Peter Hilton sprawled out on the grass so that he could get a half-decent photograph...and then helping him to get back up afterwards!

Peat bog is a fascinating habitat. It was quite disconcerting to note how the whole ground would ripple for metres in every direction if you jumped up and down on it – great fun though! – and a couple of our party had falls or got stuck, although the special plants made the effort well worthwhile!

Our afternoon was quite a contrast; we drove from Roundstone Bog to Aillebrack Beach, from peat and pools to sand and sea! Here, of course, the flora was totally different.

There was a wonderful mix of flowers in the grassland, including the bright yellow and white petals of Dune Pansy *Viola tricolor* ssp. *curtisii* and the beautiful Irish Eyebright *Euphrasia salisbergensis*. Down on the beach itself we found Ray's Knotgrass *Polygonum oxyspermum*, Prickly Saltwort *Salsola kali*, Sea Mayweed *Tripleurospermum*

*maritimum*, Sea Sandwort  
*Honckenya peploides* and Rock  
Samphire *Crithmum maritimum*.  
Heads were scratched over the  
identity of a sedge: was it Long-  
bracted Sedge *Carex extensa* or  
Dotted Sedge *C. punctata*? A sample  
was collected and later confirmed to  
be the former.

A local lady called a few of us over to  
show us several red plastic  
ammunition cartridges that had made

their way right across the Atlantic  
after being used by fishermen in  
Newfoundland, who traditionally hunt  
Guillemots, or Common Murres as  
they call them.

One thing you can't deny about a  
Wildflower Society event: there is  
always plenty to talk about afterwards  
and to reminisce about on future  
meetings!

STEPHEN PLUMMER

**Day 2: Beach Road Clifden and an  
Errisbeg mountain expedition:** We  
met at the top of the High Street in  
Clifden, where the streets are  
colourful with bars and hotels, and  
music in the evenings. Our leader,  
Steve Little, briefly discussed some  
details and identifications from the  
previous day before we started our  
stroll along Beach Road, inspecting  
the stone walls and verges in the  
sunshine. An early find was  
Tasteless Stonecrop *Sedum*  
*sexangulare*, which suits its scientific  
name by having a particularly  
geometric leaf arrangement. Water  
Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* and  
Clustered Dock *Rumex*  
*conglomeratus* were common on the  
verges, an unusual sight for me.  
Steve pointed out the pink  
subspecies of Hedge Bindweed,  
*Calystegia sepium* ssp. *roseata*, with  
pink flowers striped with white. He  
then showed us that the Greater  
Plantain here was the coastal  
subspecies *Plantago major* ssp.  
*intermedia*, which has a cuneate leaf  
and a short inflorescence (compared  
to the cordate leaf-base of the  
commonly found subspecies *P. major*  
ssp. *major*).

Ferns were abundant on the stone  
walls, including Polypody *Polypodium*  
sp., Wall-rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria*  
and Black Spleenwort *A. adiantum-*  
*nigrum*. A key find was St. Dabeoc's  
Heath *Daboecia cantabrica*, with  
splendidly large bell-shaped flowers,  
quite different from the neighbouring  
Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*.  
Western Gorse *Ulex gallii* was in  
flower too, along with lots of Fuchsia  
*Fuchsia magellanica*. On damp  
rocks, Steve showed us a small  
patch of Corsican Mint *Mentha*  
*requienii*. The end point of the  
morning walk was an Irish  
Whitebeam *Sorbus hibernica*,  
carefully found with a grid reference,  
growing between the sea and the  
road wall. During our delightful sunny  
stroll back we also saw Himalayan  
(Indian) Balsam *Impatiens*  
*glandulifera* and other garden  
escapes such as Himalayan  
Honeysuckle *Leycesteria formosa*  
and Lesser Knotweed *Koenigia*  
*campanulata*.

From Clifden, we drove about 12  
miles down to Roundstone for lunch  
in the churchyard, meeting after  
some confusion between the two  
churches in the village. The more

intrepid members of the group set off up a track in search of Irish Heath *E. erigena* on Errisbeg Mountain (not a tall mountain, only 300 metres). We passed several vacant lots completely filled with a hybrid knotweed growing 2-3 metres tall and reaching the first floor of the empty houses. This was Bohemian Knotweed *Reynoutria x bohemica*. We could see it spreading along the ditch to the other side of the road. Himalayan Balsam added to the invasive feel, as well as much Montbretia *Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora*.

Further along the footpath we saw Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis* in the hedgerow. The end of the track marked the beginning of the ascent over the shoulder of Errisbeg mountain, up an uneven, boggy path, through gorse and heather. Up and

up we climbed, assured by Steve that we were progressing towards the known GPS location. And finally, in a high valley, by a stream, there was Irish Heath *E. erigena*; just a few bushes, with glaucous leaves, and much taller than the surrounding Heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Irish Heath flowers March to May, but there were still some faded flower remnants. On our return we were rewarded by views over the Connemara coast. We took time to inspect a boggy pond which held Marsh St. John's-wort *Hypericum elodes* and Broad-leaved Rush *Juncus planifolius*, an alien from the Antipodes. Bog Pimpernel *Lysimachia tenella* was abundant beside the path. Back in Roundstone, some enjoyed ice-creams by the picturesque harbour.

HELEN DIGNUM



Leader Steve Little and Irish Heath *Erica erigena*. Photos: Helen Dignum



# THE BURREN, COUNTY CLARE, IRELAND, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> JULY

**Day 1:** Our group assembled at Pousallagh, where there is a popular roadside parking area by the R477, the road which loops around the wild Atlantic coast of the Burren. The landscape was spectacular, with flat slabs of limestone pavement very prominent, low stone walls and a backdrop of the Atlantic with the Aran Islands distantly offshore. We were given an introduction to the area, its ecology and history by our expert local leader Sinéad Keane. Heavy overnight rain had just about stopped and the weather gradually improved through the day, ending in sunshine. We set off, crossed the road...and stopped, for quite a long time, as there were so many good plants to see in this small area. Here coastal plants such as Common Scurvygrass *Cochlearia officinalis* were growing close to limestone specialists such as Bloody Crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum* and acid-loving Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, while the deep fissures (grikes) had Hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum* and shiny green Sea Spleenwort *Asplenium marinum*. Such unexpected juxtapositions were the order of the day.

The Herb-Robert looked a little odd and at least some of it was indeed *Geranium robertianum* ssp. *celticum*, as suspected by eagle-eyed Steve Little. Closer to the sea, we were shown Irish Sea-lavender *Limonium recurvum* ssp. *pseudotranswallianum*, flowering in small pockets of soil on big limestone blocks. We thought that Spring



Photo: John Martin

Gentian *Gentiana verna* would have gone over, but a few stunningly blue flowers were hanging on, with more plants in fruit. Close by, Hoary Rockrose *Helianthemum oelandicum* ssp. *piloselloides* was in fruit, this subspecies confined to the west of Ireland. For those of us used to seeing it at altitude in Scotland, it was strange to see Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala* growing close to sea level, still with some flowers as well as its beautiful feathery seedheads. Another Gentian just coming into flower nearby proved to be Field Gentian *Gentianella campestris*, actually keying out quite readily once we had consulted Stace. Orchids included especially robust Frog Orchids *Coeloglossum viride* and some fine *Gymnadenia* specimens, which seemed to be mainly, if not all, Marsh Fragrant-orchid *G. densiflora*.

The plan had been to visit Slieve Carron in the afternoon but it was already lunchtime and we still had more plants to see here, so it was time for a rethink. We returned the short distance to the cars and revised our plans for the afternoon and for the next day while we ate lunch. We



still needed to look for Irish Saxifrage *Saxifraga rosacea* ssp. *rosacea* and set off in the opposite direction to the morning's short excursion. Soon we were in the area where Sinéad knew it to be and the group spread out to comb the limestone pavement. Some delicate Maidenhair-fern *Adiantum capillus-veneris* was spotted in one of the grikes. It took a while, but eventually some Irish Saxifrage was found hiding in a sheltered crevice, where some stunted Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* afforded protection from trampling. Once we had broken our duck the group found larger patches nearer the sea. It was all in

fruit (a May visit is required to see the white flowers) but the leaves were going a beautiful red colour - a most handsome plant. We looked in vain in the same area for another speciality, Pyramidal Bugle *Ajuga pyramidalis*, which would have gone over but we couldn't find any sign of it. A good reason (one of many) to return another day.

Many thanks to Sinéad for leading a great day's botany in a stunning location.

JOHN MARTIN

**Day 2:** The Burren is described as a rocky paradise dotted with an incredible array of flowers, from the usual native species to Arctic, Alpine and Mediterranean plants, ([www.ireland.com](http://www.ireland.com)). Our second day of botanising started in the car park below Eagle's Rock. From here we went onto the limestone pavement, which at first glance looked quite barren compared with the seaside location of the previous day. On closer inspection, the whole area was



Squinancywort

a wonderful mosaic of tiny, exquisite blooms made up of Squinancywort *Asperula cynanchia*, Irish Eyebright *Euphrasia salisburgensis*, Limestone Bedstraw *Galium sternerii* and many others. There were several types of orchids including Chalk Fragrant-

orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, the Irish Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsia* ssp. *okellyi* and Frog Orchid *Coeloglossum viride*. Dark-red Helleborine *Epipactis atrorubens* and Bloody Crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum* added to the display.

After lunch, we made our way to the Burren National Park at Mullaghmore (driving past Father Ted's house en route) and onto yet more limestone pavement, where we found Shrubby Cinquefoil *Dasiphora fruticosa* and Narrow-leaved Marsh-orchid *D. traunsteineroideus*. In the lough (loch) Lesser Water-plaintain *Baldellia ranunculoides* was growing and nearby, the hybrid sedge *Carex elata* x *C. nigra* = *C. x turfosa*.

An enjoyable day skilfully led by Steve Little, assisted by many other members of the group including two local Irish lads who had joined us for the meeting.

JUDITH COX

## COMERAGH MOUNTAINS, COUNTY, WATERFORD, IRELAND, 23<sup>rd</sup> JULY



We were privileged to be led by Paul Green, BSBI Vice-county Recorder for Wexford. The WFS group met up with some young members of the BSBI in a conifer plantation at the base of the Comeragh range, though with no view of the hills, we couldn't see what lay before us. We were told that the walk up would be 'challenging', and it was! The car park was at an elevation of 160m and we apparently climbed to just over 300m. Luckily it was dry and overcast, which made for an easier

ascent. On our way up and down, we spotted St. Patrick's-cabbage *Saxifraga spathularis*, Wavy Hair-grass *Avenella flexuosa*, the robust montane form of Sheep's-bit *Jasione montana* var. *latifolia* and Wilson's Filmy-fern *Hymenophyllum wilsonii* amongst others. There were Meadow Pipits on the way up and we were reprimanded by a Peregrine Falcon from the top of the cliff for approaching its territory.

We enjoyed a much-anticipated lunch just below a steep rock face, with fabulous views over Counties Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Carlow and the sea, during which time we watched the Peregrine overhead and a Hen Harrier as a dot flying over the forestry below. Afterwards, we proceeded south along the bottom of the rock face and, much to everyone's delight, found our prize, Recurved Sandwort *Minuartia recurva*, in several tufty cushions on indentations in the siliceous rock. There are only two sites for this plant in Ireland, the other being in Kerry. I imagine that we all slept well that night!

JULES MACAULEY

## COUNTY WEXFORD, IRELAND, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> JULY

**Day 1:** Despite a damp start to the day, an enthusiastic group of members met Paul Green at Killealy for an exciting day of botanising. Sharing cars, we drove in convoy to

Cloroge More. On the way, we made a brief stop to see Autumn Hawkweed *Hieracium sabaudum* growing on a road verge. Next, we parked along a forest track, where

we spent some time looking at a variety of plants. Sharp-toothed Eyebright *Euphrasia stricta* drew considerable attention, not least because the small number of plants Paul showed us represented the entire Irish population. Nearby, in the hedgerow, Irish Whitebeam *Sorbus hibernica* was located and several ferns were identified, including Borrer's Scaly Male-fern *Dryopteris affinis* ssp. *borreri*. With no sign of the rain letting up, we returned to our cars and pressed onward to Rathnure and then to Bantry Commons. Botanising along another forestry track proved to be incredibly fruitful. Paul pointed out the distinct leaf shape of Highclere Holly *Ilex x altaclerensis* and New Zealand Broadleaf *Griselinia littoralis*, the latter being an increasing alien in Ireland and, indeed, in parts of the UK. Some small specimens of Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis* were seen on the side of a ditch, while on the track, the attractive white variety of Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea* var. *alba* and some very branched plants of Arctic Eyebright *E. arctica* were growing. The track was also rich in ferns, which had previously been identified by several experts. Paul carefully showed us the diagnostic characteristics of two ferns in the Scaly Male-fern *D. affinis* group: Greater Scaly Male-fern *D. affinis* ssp. *paleaceolobata* and Irish Scaly Male-fern *D. affinis* ssp. *kerryensis*. It is important to acknowledge that Stace takes a contrasting approach to Sell and Murrell when dealing with *D. affinis*, opting to lump both of these subspecies under *D. affinis* ssp. *affinis*, while Sell and Murrell treat

them as distinct species. Whatever approach one adopts, the differences between them can be subtle, requiring very careful analysis. Further up the track, and less confusing, were Hay-scented Buckler-fern *D. aemula*, Lemon-scented Fern *Oreopteris limbosperma* and Leafy Rush *Juncus foliosus*, the latter displaying its distinctive stripes on the sepals.

After lunch, we drove to Rathnure Lower and made a brief stop to see a trio of unusual plants: Devon Whitebeam *Sorbus devoniensis*, Lanate-stemmed Bramble *Rubus lanaticaulis* and Glandular Dog-rose *Rosa squarrosa*. Another pit stop followed, this time to see an arable field with Lesser Canary-grass *Phalaris minor*, a plant that was new to many members. By this time, the rain had stopped and the sun had appeared, much to our relief. Indeed, as we drove into County Carlow to assemble at Tinnahinch, we were bathed in warm sunshine, which accompanied us on our last walk of the day. We followed the River Barrow for some way before pausing at a small pond, where Paul showed us the butterfly-shaped Valdivia Duckweed *Lemna valdiviana*. It is worth looking out for this inconspicuous but distinctive duckweed, which may presently be overlooked. Soon after, Paul directed us to scramble up a steep muddy bank toward a shadowy, rocky crevice. With members helping each other to make the short and slippery ascent, we finally got to see Killarney Fern *Trichomanes speciosum* in its sporophyte form. Its dark-green, translucent, pinnately-divided fronds

were much admired and photographed. Returning toward the cars, Paul showed us some interesting aquatic plants in the river including Flat-stalked Pondweed *Potamogeton friesii* and, on a nearby wall, a healthy colony of Southern Polypody *Polypodium cambricum*. With the sun still shining as we finished the day, we all thanked Paul for his enthusiasm, patience and exemplary organisation that had enabled us to see such a wealth of plants in just one day.

**Day 2:** We all assembled in the car park by the shore of the lake on Our Lady's Island. Paul guided us around the edge of the lake, where we got to grips with some interesting aquatic flora. The brackish habitat yielded Parsley Water-dropwort *Oenanthe lachenalii*, Greater Plantain *Plantago major* ssp. *intermedia* and the prostrate form of Red Goosefoot *Oxybasis rubra* var. *pseudoblitoides*. In the lake, Paul fished out some Soft Hornwort *Ceratophyllum submersum* and Beaked Tasselweed *Ruppia maritima*. Notable also was the abundance of Foxtail Stonewort *Lamprothamnium papulosum*, a protected species in Ireland. The short brackish turf was particularly rich with diminutive plants that required us to get down on our hands and knees. One small patch was studded with Lesser Centaury *Centaureum pulchellum*, Allseed *Linum radiola*, Chaffweed *Lysimachia minima* and the hybrid between Confused and Western Eyebrights *Euphrasia confusa* x *E. tetraquetra*. Getting down to ground level was the perfect way to admire this tapestry of small plants. Moving around the lake, we encountered some of the shingle

flora, that included Ray's Knotgrass *Polygonum oxyspermum* ssp. *raii*, Yellow Horned-poppy *Glaucium flavum* and some very attractive small plants of Early Orache *Atriplex praecox*, the latter generating a great deal of interest among the group. Further exploration of the fixed shingle and sand dunes enabled us to see the plant that we were particularly enthusiastic to see, namely Cottonweed *Achillea maritima*. Paul explained that the population of Cottonweed had diminished significantly over the last few decades due to the sand dunes becoming overgrown, but that efforts to reverse this decline had produced pleasing results. Paul showed us the tiny native population before leading us to an enclosure where plants had been introduced to bolster the extant population. Carol Hawkins was especially pleased to see Cottonweed, reminding us of the impact that plants can have on us,



Photo: Nick Aston

particularly those that we must wait years to see. Nearby, on a sandy track, we saw the prostrate subspecies of Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris*

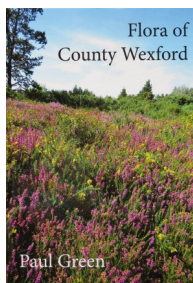
*radicata* ssp. *ericetorum* and Greek Sea-spurrey *Spergularia bocconeii*.

Moving on, the group made a quick stop to see Lanceolate Spleenwort *Asplenium obovatum* in a hedge bank before heading to the beach at Carna. On the sand dunes at the back of the beach, Paul pointed out the dune subspecies of Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* ssp. *dunensis* and helped us to pick out the different characteristics of Sticky Stork's-bill *Erodium lebelii* and Musk Stork's-bill *E. moschatum*. A nearby area of coastal grassland supported a population of Wild Clary *Salvia verbenaca*, a very rare and protected plant in Ireland. Patches of disturbed ground held an array of plants including Tall Ramping-fumitory *Fumaria bastardii* var. *bastardii* and three dead-nettle species: Red Dead-nettle *Lamium purpureum*, Cut-leaved Dead-nettle *L. hybridum* and Northern Dead-nettle *L. confertum*. We spent some time comparing the diagnostic features of the three species, after which Paul showed us the hybrid between Wavy and Hairy Bittercress *Cardamine flexuosa* and *C. hirsuta* = *C. x zahlbruckneriana*. On the sand dunes close by, we saw Intermediate Evening-primrose *Oenothera x fallax* and the yellow blooms of Orange-peel Clematis *Clematis tangutica*, which was scrambling over dune vegetation.

Our final stop was another coastal location, at Rosslare Harbour. On the way, we stopped to see a large colony of Honey Spurge *Euphorbia mellifera*, extensively naturalised in a woodland at Ballycronigan. Warm weather greeted us as we arrived at

Rosslare Harbour. Paul informed us that the ferry terminal area was formerly rich in aliens and introductions. While its alien flora has diminished over the years, some notable exotics were still present. By the railway station, we were shown Slender Oat *Avena barbata*, which Paul had recently discovered, new to Ireland, while on a paved path above the harbour we got down on our hands and knees to inspect Small Cleavers *Galium murale*. Further along the same footpath, we saw Algerian Ivy *Hedera algeriensis* and, on a grassy bank, the presence of Pineapple *Ananus comosus* sparked discussion about how it had got there. Descending the path and heading toward the nearby sand dunes, we grappled with some sand dune grasses, including Dune Fescue *Vulpia fasciculata* and its distinctive hybrid with Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, X *Festulpia hubbardii*. The numerous bulbous bases of Bulbous Meadow-grass *Poa bulbosa* were duly noted. Also on the dunes were other alien plants, among them Coastal Daisy-bush *Olearia solandri* and Stern's Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster sternianus*. Yet again, Paul had delivered a day of incredible botanising in County Wexford, for which the group was enormously grateful.

NICK ASTON AND  
CAROL HAWKINS



Paul Green's WFS-BSBI Presidents' Award.



## BLACKDOWN HILLS, SOMERSET, 27<sup>th</sup> JULY

Eight intrepid botanists turned up at Staple Hill car park to follow an extremely knowledgeable Stephen Parker into mire and bog on the edge of the Blackdown Hills, the top of which is dryish heathland...but we should have been warned; he had his wellies on!

The Blackdown Hills comprise acidic, iron-rich greensand overlying impervious, clayey marl. Rainwater percolating down through the sand seeps out in a mire line where it reaches the clay, producing lowland acid bogs or mires, a rare habitat in southern Britain.

Stephen led us down the wooded, steep, north-facing scarp, from which we emerged to glorious views over farmland towards the Quantocks and Exmoor. We turned left straight into our first mire, where we found some people walking a cat and looking for butterflies. None of us professed to be butterfly experts. The damp meadow was covered with Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, making a beautiful show in the intermittent sun. Other flowers with a predominantly yellow theme included Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* and Greater Bird's-foot-

trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, with purple contributions from Marsh Willowherb *Epilobium palustre* and the diminutive Lesser Skullcap *Scutellaria minor*, these amongst a plethora of sedges and rushes - at least nine species in this mire alone, including Bristle Club-rush *Isolepis setacea*, Bulbous Rush *Juncus bulbosus* and Common Yellow-sedge *Carex demissa*. We also found a fine example of Lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina*.

We then made our way into another mire, where we found Leafy Rush *J. foliosus*, a West Country speciality, Star Sedge *C. echinata*, as well as Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre* and Water-purslane *Lythrum portula*, with its tiny pink flowers. We were warned not to tread where the Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* grows, identified by its characteristic leaves, as it really does like deep bog.

We then headed down a wooded path, past Lemon-scented Fern *Oreopteris limbosperma*, to a sunny bank for lunch. Then, onwards to four different horsetails *Equisetum* spp., eight grass species and 22 sedges and rushes in all, not forgetting the striking Greater Tussock-sedge *C. paniculata* hidden in a mire in



the middle of the wood. We also admired Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, a characteristic plant of acid bog, Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*, with its olive/purple leaves, and Bog

Pimpernel *Lysimachia tenella*, with its little pink-striped flowers. We then walked beside a stream through mixed woodland, with Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga* and Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* present in the shade.

And the rain held off...leaving just a steep climb back up to the car park! A fascinating day in a very diverse and rich environment. I hope I haven't missed anyone's favourite plant, so many of them being new to me.

SARAH MACLENNAN

## WHARRAM QUARRY, MALTON, YORKSHIRE, 3<sup>rd</sup> AUGUST

The venue for this joint meeting between Bradford Botany Group and the WFS was Wharram Quarry, a Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Reserve situated in the undulating folds of the East Yorkshire Wolds. It was actively quarried for chalk between 1919 and the 1940s. Nineteen of us met in the Wharram Percy Medieval Village car park, stepping out of our cars into a surprisingly refreshing breeze. As we set off down the path, which descended to an old disused railway track, the breeze disappeared, and it turned into a perfect summer's day. There was a walk of over a kilometre, much of it along the railway track, to get to the quarry. There was much to see en route and Andrew Kafel was

very busy recording a wide range of species along the way.

Probably the most unexpected find was Blue Water-Speedwell *Veronica anagallis-aquatica* growing out of the grass which ran along the centre of the old railway track. There was also Sainfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia* by the side of the path. Time passed very quickly as the pace was typically 'botany slow', no-one wanting to miss anything. We needed to put a spurt on to get to our destination in time for lunch!

Once there, we were treated to the sight of a wonderful species-rich chalk grassland covering the bottom



Woolly Thistle

of the quarry. Our first aim was to find Woolly Thistle *Cirsium eriophorum*. That did not take long; the first one that we saw was easily 6 feet high and so heavy that it could not hold itself up straight! We looked hard for Thistle Broomrape *Orobanche*



Thistle Broomrape

*reticulata*, initially without success. However, we spread out and Jesse Tregale was the first to spot it - a

thistle with five spikes of the Broomrape. Throughout the day, the group counted 17 seed spikes (it flowers in May).

Very satisfied, we adjourned to a slight hillock in the quarry and enjoyed lunch. By this time, we had also seen Autumn Gentian *Gentianella amarella* and Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata* and we still had a lot of the quarry to wander around in the afternoon. As well as several orchid species, including Pyramidal *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, Bee *Ophrys apifera* and Chalk Fragrant *Gymnadenia conopsea*, there was both Burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* and Greater Burnet-saxifrage *P. major* close together, so we could compare their stems (solid or hollow) and their leaves.

It was a day tailor-made for enjoying the butterflies and Nyree Fearnley recorded 11 species. The Marbled Whites were amazingly obliging, pleasing the photographers.

When sadly it was time for us to leave the quarry, we retraced our steps back to the car park. We passed close by the Medieval Village of Wharram Percy and some of the group peeled off to have a look and enjoy the view of the Wolds from higher ground. At that point we said our farewells. We thanked everybody for coming and sharing their knowledge and also thanked those who had helped to organise the meeting and record the plants. It was a happy group that left for home.

ANTHONY AND RITA GRAINGER

## MINCHINHAMPTON COMMON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE, 7<sup>th</sup> AUGUST

Botanising in August can be dull but not so at this meeting. With our leaders Mark and Clare Kitchen, we explored both the flat top and steep sides of Minchinhampton Common and yet hardly strayed beyond a 1 km square. Dwarf Thistle *Cirsium acaule* and Burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* were extensively scattered across the lightly grazed flat top. Classic limestone plants such as Autumn Gentian *Gentianella amarella*, Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, Strawberry Clover *Trifolium fragiferum* and Corky-fruited Water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides* were rather more localised. We spent time examining three look-alikes - Lesser Hawkbit *Leontodon saxatilis*, Rough Hawkbit *L. hispidus* and Autumn Hawkbit *Scorzoneroideis autumnalis*. Common grasses were picked out, but also Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* and Quaking-grass *Briza media*. Features of Chalk Knapweed *Centaurea debeauxii* and Common Knapweed *C. nigra* and then Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis* and Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* were compared.

Continuing onto steeper slopes, we reached the Black Ditch. This is an area where wet flushes are present on the limestone hillside and where the two highlight species - Whorl-grass *Catabrosa aquatica* and Flat-sedge *Blysmus compressus* - were found. Soft-rush *Juncus effusus* var. *subglomeratus* and Compact Rush *J. conglomeratus* were also present. Clare and Mark took especial pleasure in showing us a hundred

year re-find of Bulbous Rush *J. bulbosus* - only the second extant colony in the county east of the River Severn. Amongst the many Marsh Thistles *Cirsium palustre* and other wetland plants, we also found an excellent specimen of Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*.

Progressing on to the steep slopes of Swellshill, we encountered the rich flora of undisturbed dry limestone grassland, where Autumn Gentian, Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata*, Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris* and Woolly Thistle *Cirsium eriophorum* were plentiful. There was also a population of Common Juniper *Juniperus communis* and Chalkhill Blue butterflies *Lysandra coridon* were flying.

Over the course of the day several mint species and hybrids were seen and we were shown a colony of Various-leaved Fescue *Festuca heterophylla* which had been found by the leaders on the previous day at only its second county site.

To complete the day, we returned to the flat top of the Common where, in the base of an old quarry area, we found an emerging population of Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*.

Our thanks are due to Mark and Clare for reconnoitring the area so well and leading us seamlessly to see the plants of these varying habitats.

PETER HILTON  
(Picture next page)





Our group being led by Mark and Clare Kitchen, enjoying the lovely views of the Minchinhampton area. Woolly Thistle in the foreground.

## A PROFILE OF WFS MEMBER JIM BLACKWOOD PUBLISHED IN BSBI'S TRIFOLIATE NEWSLETTER

### A comment from Book Reviewer Ro FitzGerald, our Branch Secretary for Scotland and Ireland.

Jim Blackwood spreads the good word for field botany in his native Renfrewshire in an admirable number of ways – leading walks, giving talks, negotiating the conservation of rarities. Many uncommon local plants will have been found by him as he is a dedicated recorder, scouring under-recorded monads even if they look dull! He is a very active WFS member and often mentions inspiration from our recently lost Helen Jackson. He is a fine ambassador for the Society and a delightful correspondent for me as his Branch Secretary!

### Jim, how did your interest in plants arise and subsequently develop?

Since I was a small child I've always

Jim Blackwood by Kilbirnie Loch, North Ayrshire



loved nature. I grew up in Lochwinnoch and have fond early memories of family walks with our dogs by the lochs, up the Calder Glen, Glenlora, Muirsheil etc - all on our doorstep. In those days, children, even very young children, roamed and played freely. Flowery fields and burns, bluebell woods and lochside were my playground. My Primary One teacher, Miss Speirs, was a wonderful lady who had a love of



nature which she used in her lessons. There were aquaria in the classroom with minnows and frogspawn. Watching the frogspawn hatch and the tadpoles metamorphose captured my infant curiosity. She also had dozens of old jam jars displayed at the side of the classroom, each neatly labelled with the English names of the wildflowers contained. I was thrilled when she chose me to replenish the Marsh Marigolds. I knew exactly where to find them, by the Cloak Burn, five minutes gambol over our garden fence. She only needed a few stems, but the next morning I turned up with an armful. Looking back I now see that Miss Speirs was developing in us ID skills, habitat knowledge, and the poetry of the wildflowers' names.

### **How did you develop your ID and recognition skills?**

I still have my childhood collection of Observer's Books, most of them nature related. Around the age of 12 I realised that although I knew the names of many of the wildflowers I saw on my Lochwinnoch walks, I frustratingly didn't know all of them. So I started keeping the Observer's Book of Wildflowers in my pocket, a handy practice for which the Observer's series was designed. When I came across an unknown flower I flicked through the pages comparing the illustrations with the plant in situ. This was an imperfect but nonetheless reasonably successful self-teaching process for our common wildflowers. It opened up a new world. Indeed I can honestly say that the humble Observer's Book of Wildflowers provided me with a Damascene revelation - about buttercups no less!

Until then I had no idea that Meadow and Creeping Buttercups were different species. Knowing the difference pleased me greatly.

By the time I was an undergraduate at Glasgow University in the 1980s, my wildflowers interest had developed into something more akin to botany. I kept a Wild Flower Society diary under the aegis of the then Scottish secretary Helen Jackson, with whom I corresponded botanically for about 40 years until her recent passing. Keeping a botanical diary is a very effective way to develop one's ID skills, especially with a tutor as astute as Helen. Your annual total increases markedly if you include grasses, sedges, rushes and ferns. My knowledge of those began then. I joined the Paisley Museum Natural History Society and also the Glasgow Natural History Society when Jim Dickson was doing his Flora of Glasgow fieldwork. I soon discovered that Glasgow is indeed a dear green place, and my proper field botany skills rapidly improved.

### **What's the personal attraction of field botany?**

It's hard to say. I guess in life we each of us gravitate towards certain things and not others. It's probably a mix of nature and nurture. I am sure that one's experience as a child has a big part to play. I have always loved all natural history, and I sort of click with botany (specifically the vascular plants) more than with birds or beetles, mushrooms or mammals. Excepting Tumbleweed, plants tend to sit still for ease of study! I've tried and don't really enjoy sitting in a bird hide waiting for something interesting to appear.

I enjoy the detail, and the intellectual logical stimulation of keying out plant species. Equally I love the art of identifying by a plant's jizz. To me field botany is as much art as science. Whilst out in the field alone, I am just as likely to be inspired to poetry or sketching, as to scientific analysis. I oddly don't personally see my botany as science, though of course it is. There is also the joy of reconnecting with old friends each season. For example, since discovering a glorious population of Globeflowers *Trollius europaeus* on Shutterflat Muir, not far from



Lochwinnoch, I do an annual pilgrimage just for the exquisite pleasure. And of course there is the excitement of finding something new or unexpected.

I also very much enjoy targetting 'never-before-recorded' monads - these are becoming much rarer now in Renfrewshire! There's a geeky pleasure in knowing that even your *Bellis perennis* is new to science! And although monad recording is far from a perfect method, it does take you to neuks which you would not otherwise have

chosen to visit. There is almost always something interesting waiting to be found.

The Spanish poet, Federico Garcia Lorca, wrote "En la pradera bailaba mi corazón" / "My heart was dancing in the meadow." That's what attracts me to field botany.

### **What advice would you give to any budding field botanist?**

Go for it! Enjoy it! Your heart will soon be dancing in the meadow! Find a field guide which suits you. None is perfect, so you'll probably end up with several. Don't shy away from the Latin scientific names. You'll be surprised how easily they stick in the memory with a wee bit of effort.

Take it easy. Don't expect to cover everything in one season, if you're a beginner or rusty. Nobody can do grasses, sedges, rushes and ferns in one fell swoop. Choose one to get to grips with one season, and move onto another next year. Step by step.

Learn from others. Go out on field meetings such as the network outings; join your local natural history society and get involved. Botanists are a lovely breed, always eager to share knowledge and skills. Equally go out on your own in your local patch, and practise your ID skills independently. Take photos. Never be shy to ask for help and advice. Your local expert is but a WhatsApp or an email away. I cautiously also mention plant ID apps because I am relatively new to them. But they're becoming more useful and reliable. Take advantage of them, but in moderation. And always check what

an app says with your book and/or friendly human expert.

Adopt a monad, maybe the one in which you live. Visit different areas throughout the year, targeting various habitats. You'll be surprised how much you find, and you can eventually submit your records to BSBI. It's a super way quickly to advance your knowledge by doggedly identifying everything you find in one monad. Only record what you confidently know to be correct.

You will very soon be better than average. Indeed you probably already are! The main thing is to keep enjoying your botany. It soon becomes a virtuous circle.

I would also encourage you to play to your strengths and combine your botany with another interest or skill such as writing or photography, drawing or spreadsheets, folklore or geology... whatever.

### **What, in your view, is the value of species recording?**

As I've said, I'm no scientist. But there is no doubt that species recording is important. I disagree with the view that recording common species is pointless and just floods a database with superfluous data. All data are useful. Computers these days can cope with whatever you throw at them, and you can manipulate that data according to your needs. The waxing and waning of species is important to record, not least in this worrying age of climate change, habitat loss and biodiversity collapse. Every record is grist to the mill, building local, national and

international pictures.

### **How did your involvement in leading groups arise, and do you have advice for others thinking of doing similar?**

Simply, I was asked, and I said yes. I guess as a teacher it seemed like a natural thing for me to do. I've now led several Network recording outings in Renfrewshire. Indeed, you soon get asked to help with other things by other organisations, and you have to learn sometimes to say no! However, if you're thinking about leading a botany outing, I'd say give it a go. Going on a recce a few days before will enable you to work out the topography of the site, and you will have time to work on the ID of anything tricky you find. But don't fret if you find something you can't identify in front of your audience. They'll respect your honesty in admitting you don't know. *Humanum est errare*.

### **Where, in your experience, would you recommend, within our Network area, for interesting plants or habitats?**

I can only really talk about my local patch, Renfrewshire. If you've never visited my home village of Lochwinnoch and environs, I would recommend it botanically. There's a rich tapestry of habitats with Castle Semple and Barr lochs; willow carr and marshland; ancient woodland up into the Calder Valley up to Muirshiel and the moorlands of the Renfrewshire Heights; tributary burns; remnants of species rich grasslands e.g. Cruick Hills; and much more...

### **What, if any, unusual plants have you found locally or further afield?**

Wherever you go there's always something unusual to find. We tend to take especial note of the rare and exotic. However, I think it is all too easy to become habituated to the common. There's a vivid patch of Red Campion by the roadside between Lochwinnoch and Beith which delights me every year, and I cannot fail to admire the annual sea of Dandelions by the A737 between Howwood and Johnstone. Life is too short not to visit a Bluebell wood at its best every year.

Of course I understand the question, and of course the botanically unusual gives me great pleasure. I have already mentioned the Globeflowers at Shutterflat. Last year in a weedy verge by the bus station in Alicante, Spain I saw for the first time the strikingly beautiful blue form of Scarlet Pimpernel. In February this year I saw the Giant Dandelion *Sonchus acaulis*, growing wild and abundantly in the uplands of Gran Canaria, an impressive and beautiful plant. Visiting friends in Lidköping, by Lake Vänern, Sweden in June this year for midsummer, we spent a glorious sunny afternoon walking the

dogs on Kinnekulle, locally called "flower mountain" (whatever that is in Swedish!) This mountain limestone pasture was a favourite botanising haunt of Carl Linnaeus. I saw many Lady's Slipper Orchids *Cypripedium calceolus* in a woodland clearing, frustratingly some two or three weeks too late to catch them in bloom! But the limestone pasture was thrillingly floriferous, abounding in the rare and the beautiful.

### **Having seen the quality of your photographs, is there any advice you can share on equipment or framing the shot?**

Thank you. I certainly do not regard myself as an expert in photography, but I guess I have an eye for a pleasing shot. To be frank, for every "good" shot, I take probably twenty which are pretty rubbish. I don't use any specialist equipment, just my iPhone. Getting your botanical subject in focus is essential, but can be tricky with a phone camera. If you gently tap on the screen where you want it to focus, in theory it should focus there. But it isn't guaranteed success on a subject as intricately shaped as a plant, so it's worth taking several shots to improve your chances. Even then you may find that the camera has focussed on a leaf or an adjacent blade of grass, anything other than the bit you want! Sometimes I have to admit defeat.

Grasses, sedges etc are often beyond my ability to photograph well. Another thing to consider is that plants can move in and out of focus in even the lightest breeze. Patience and a bit of luck are required!



Flower mountain, Kinnekulle, Sweden

With regard to framing, a common mistake is to take the photo from above, like a bird's eye view. This rarely looks good. Much better to get down there to flower height on your hunkers, or kneeling, or even lying.

Small white or yellow flowers can be the trickiest to photograph successfully. Often the inflorescence just gets washed out, especially on a sunny day. So a dull day, even a rainy day, sometimes yields better results. Evening light, in the so called golden hour, can also be a perfect time for a really good photo. Luck can play a huge part. On the cusp of my photographing a Monkey Orchid *Orchis simia*, near Goring-on-Thames

in South Oxfordshire, a Dingy Skipper butterfly landed on it. It was the first Dingy Skipper I'd ever seen. I was so excited that I failed to take the photo.

### **Away from botany, what else holds your interest?**

All aspects of natural history, and walking in the countryside. I love words, etymology, and learning languages, all of which I used in my work as a primary teacher. I read Classics at university and am currently learning Spanish (my fifth language), which I've been seriously doing since lockdown. I also enjoy reading and writing poetry, and gardening in an unkempt weedy way.

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The foregoing is reproduced with kind permission of Jim Blackwood and the Editor of BSBI's Trifoliate Newsletter. The photographs by Jim Blackwood.

'Star of the Show',  
Perennial Wall  
Rocket  
by Janet John.  
1st, Class 5  
(Human Element)  
in the 2024  
Photographic  
Competition.





# OBITUARY

## ALAN GENDLE

18<sup>th</sup> March 1945 – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2024



Remembering Alan who unexpectedly passed away in September.

Alan was widely acknowledged as a local wild orchid expert by both amateur and trained botanists. He was the honorary warden at Waitby-Greenriggs nature reserve (Cumbria WT) and had been responsible for the

maintenance of the wild flower species-rich reserve, for around 30 years.

Alan had a great enthusiasm for the conservation of orchids. He was always pleased to assist with orchid re-introduction projects in NW England, also going to check old records on behalf of the VC recorder, including for BSBI Atlas 2020.

He also delighted in showing groups and individuals sites where native orchid species grow, particularly in Cumbria. His welcoming manner was so obvious as he co-led a 2-day 'orchid-focused field meeting' for WFS this past summer, which was greatly appreciated by the members. Brilliant at explaining morphological characteristics of orchid species, sub-species, variants and hybrids, he shared his considerable knowledge of our native orchids with us.

I will always be grateful to him for his tutoring and encouragement. I know he will be missed by many.

CAROL ARMSTRONG  
GENERAL SECRETARY WFS

