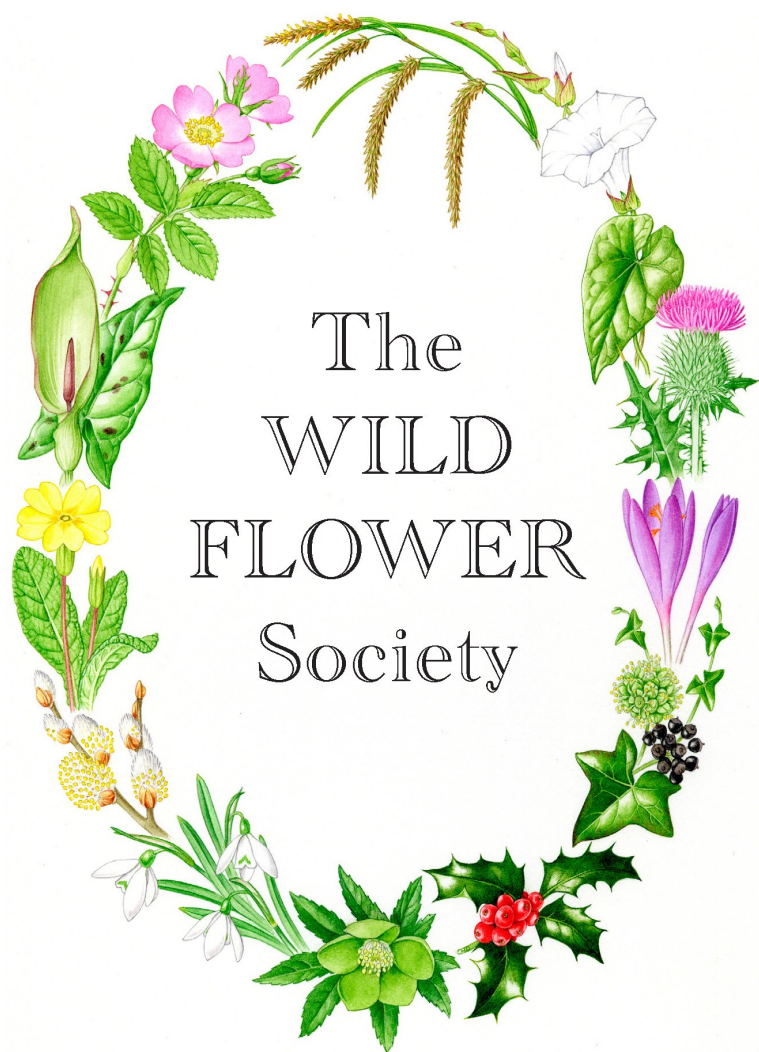


WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE



The
WILD
FLOWER
Society

SPRING 2025

WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE

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SPRING 2025

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Illustration on back cover:
Greater Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus angustifolius* by Ken Southall



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Peat has been very much on my mind after walking through and over it on Dartmoor recently and reading a lot about the underground peat fires smouldering away in Indonesia. Peat is such an important product of nature that, like many other environmental features, it has been much abused by humankind. Kew Gardens were an early advocate of the need to change from using peat as a growing medium and I am glad to see that the Royal Horticultural Society recently launched an advice service for gardeners on how to garden without peat.

Until recently, the use of peat in horticulture was the reason for much of the loss. Also, so many of our peat bogs have been drained for agriculture and forestry, yet they are vital for all the wildlife that they support. Most importantly, over millennia peat bogs have sequestered a large amount of carbon as the *Sphagnum* mosses that grow profusely in them deposit their carbon as they die.

The destruction of peat bogs for any use contributes to climate change and so it is vital that we conserve and expand what we have left in this country. To us members of the WFS, peat bogs are also important and interesting for the many plant species that they support. I am eagerly awaiting the reappearance of Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* (not really a grass but a sedge) on Dartmoor this summer to

remind me of my childhood exploring the moors of Scotland.

I am only just beginning to explore Dartmoor but last year I found a lot of two insectivorous plants: Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*



Round-leaved
Sundew

and Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*, as well as an abundance of Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*. One new species for me last year on Dartmoor was Shoreweed *Littorella uniflora* growing in a leat that I was walking along. I hope that we can do all that is possible to leave peat in the ground and encourage the restoration of peat bogs to store more carbon. I know that it would be beneficial to many species of wild flowers as well.

GHILLEAN PRANCE

EDITORIAL

In mid-January this year my wife Sue and I stumbled upon a book called '*East Anglia Teashop Walks*'. Being quite soon after the Christmas festivities (and too much food!) we decided to have a go at some of these walks. It took us seven weeks to finish the book's twenty walks plus 48 miles on our usual local walks amounting to 168 miles! We have seen many different habitats on these walks; especially noticeable have been the wide variety of plants. This has been of great interest and we have added several plants in flower for our WFS Winter Hunt. We have encountered a huge range of weather conditions including near freezing temperatures, strong winds, heavy rain and spring-like sunshine – none of which have deterred us. We both feel greatly improved in our overall health now and are raring to go on the WFS meetings we have booked to attend.

One disturbing thing we noticed on our walks was the plethora of Alexanders *Smyrniium olusatrum*

plants, growing particularly along road verges, and other areas. It seems that there is no stopping these plants (thugs) from spreading, causing a complete smothering of anything else trying to grow. I fear for the future of our much-loved late spring and summer wild flowers in these areas.



On our walk at Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, We noticed Alexanders were particularly thickly growing at just about every footpath edge and this photo was of one of only two plants we saw in flower on 13th February. In a few weeks, they will be flowering everywhere. On a happier note, we saw huge numbers of snowdrops, particularly in northern Norfolk.

I wish to thank everyone who has provided articles and reports, and Gareth Bursnall for his colourful plant quiz which appears on pages 24 to 27, with answers on page 44. (This quiz was first presented at the 2024 AGM). Thanks also go to our proofreaders who have helped me greatly in compiling each issue of our magazine.

KEN SOUTHALL

NOTICES

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING CORRECTION TO THE 2025 YEAR BOOK:

On page 25, the contact details of the North West Branch Secretary were unfortunately missed out.
The North West branch covers Cumbria, Merseyside, Lancashire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, North Wales and the Isle of Man.
The secretary is Mrs Julie Clarke, 9 Hillcrest Drive, Stackhead, Beetham, Near Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7BB email: colinjulie9@gmail.com

Photo: Mick Massie



RODNEY BURTON

We are sad to report the death on 26th November 2024 of Rodney Burton, a member for 58 years, one-time Chairman and a long-standing Branch Secretary. We offer our condolences to his son, Geoff and his wider family.
His obituary starts on page 38.

The 2025 password for the Members' page of the website is **beeorchid77**
Uncredited photographs in this magazine are by the editor.
Copy deadline: 1st May for the Summer 2025 magazine.

THE ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The photographic competition has always been an integral part of the AGM Members' Weekend. This year, rather than spread over three days as in previous years, the event will take place on 6th & 7th September at West Monkton, Taunton, Somerset. You do not have to attend the AGM to participate in the competition. Please note, the last day for receipt of entries is Friday 15th August 2025. Entries are to be sent digitally (jpegs at full resolution please) to Ken Southall; email: ken.southall@btinternet.com. Full details of the competition can be found in the 2025 Year Book on pages 29-30 and on the WFS website.

AUTUMN WEEK HUNT 2024

Anne and Dennis Kell	South Suffolk and North Essex	171
Paul Green	Ireland	184
Simon Leach	Taunton, Somerset	209
Susan Denness	Hayling Island, Hampshire, and Storrington, Sussex	104
Mary Ashworth and Sir Ghilleen Prance	Plymouth Hoe, Devon	53
Enid Barrie and Carol Hawkins	Norfolk and Suffolk	163
Barbara Allen	South Lancashire	93
Julie Clarke	Lancashire	122
Rosemary FitzGerald	West Somerset	211
Lindsay Pyne	Alderney, Channel Islands	149
Ian Green	Scotland	145
Pauline Wilson	South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	90
Janice Reynolds	Newhaven and Seaford, East Sussex	86
Susan Grimshaw	Cox Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire	92
Anthony and Rita Grainger	Yorkshire	81
Barbara Mathews	Suffolk	145
Ken and Sue Southall	Suffolk	185
Caroline Bateman	Surrey and Hampshire	130
Nicki Mottram	Warwickshire	73
Gill Watkins	Cambridgeshire and Leicestershire	55
Helen Dignum, Jill Oakley, Sue Denness	Hayling Island, Hampshire	82
Stephen Clarkson	Hadleigh and Ipswich, Suffolk, and Spurn Point, East Yorkshire	93
Jackie Ellis and Jim Hough	Halesowen and Brierley Hill, West Midlands	52
Susan Simcock	West and North Yorkshire	54

Wendy Hofmaier	Somerset	23
Dorothy Ross	Darwen, Lancashire, and RSPB Marshside, Southport	98
John Swindells	Tower Hamlets, London	111
Nick Aston	Hayling Island, Hampshire, and Isle of Wight	214
Priscilla Nobbs	Salfords, Surrey	73

This season the weather in most parts of the country was mild but very windy. However, whatever the weather, this did not deter 37 members from going out to look for wild flowers, either individually or in small teams. They found a total of 551 species, an increase of 54 compared to 2023.

Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Dandelion *Taraxacum* agg. and Common Chickweed *Stellaria media* were found by all participants. Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*, Smooth Sowthistle *Sonchus oleraceus*, Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua*, Shepherd's-purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris* and Yarrow *Achillea millefolium* featured in 26 out of 29 lists. Only a few garden escapes were found. Here are my comments for each person/team:

Anne and Dennis Kell: During the walks that they did over the week, Anne and Dennis found a record 171 plants in flower. They were able to visit and explore a varied range of habitats, including saltmarsh and woodland. Many of the plants were ruderals growing in paving and agricultural field margins. Anne mentioned that the Council rarely sprayed or cleared the pavements and gutters in the urban areas,

allowing more plants to survive. These included Thorn-apple *Datura stramonium* and Common Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit*.

Paul Green spent two days in the field at Kilbarry, stopping at Passage East and Duncannon. He sent a very varied list, of which his favorite was Clustered Clover *Trifolium glomeratum*, a plant he had not really expected to find in flower. It was also great to see Hoary Stock *Matthiola incana*; he had almost given up hope of finding it, but then spotted one plant still in flower! Fragrant Agrimony *Agrimonia procera* was also lovely to see; it had sent up a new shoot after the verge had been cut.

Simon Leach went out on his own and with the Somerset Rare Plants Group in Taunton and other nearby areas. Balkan Spurge *Euphorbia oblongata* was noted only by two people in Somerset. Hairy Finger-grass *Digitaria sanguinalis* and Cockspur *Echinochloa crus-galli* were amongst other more unusual finds.

Susan Denness spent two days on Hayling Island and found Hollyhock *Alcea rosea* and Toothed Medick *Medicago polymorpha*. She also hunted for plants in Storrington, West

Sussex. Her list included Wall-rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria*, Hart's-tongue *Asplenium scolopendrium* and Hairy Finger-grass *Digitaria sanguinalis*.

Mary Ashworth and Sir Ghilleen

Prance enjoyed a calm and warm autumnal day by the sea. They searched the area around Plymouth Hoe, from the famous red and white lighthouse to the rocks by the sea. Mary commented that their prize find was the Plymouth Thistle *Carduus pycnocephalus*, which was having a second flowering and was only about eighteen inches tall. They found plenty of plants showing adaptations for their wall or seaside habitats.

Enid Barrie and Carol Hawkins

compiled a joint list, botanising together for three days in a variety of places in Norfolk. This included weed-filled corners in Wymondham, Smockhill Common, a field in Thetford, Cranwich Camp, Lynford Arboretum and East Wretham. They also attended the WFS Autumn Hunt around Ipswich Docks and the old town, when the weather was like a summer's day. They were very



Proliferous Pink

pleased to find Proliferous Pink *Petrorhagia nanteuilii* with one flower at Cranwich Camp and Stinking Fleabane *Dittrichia graveolens* with a couple of flowers along the A47. They also found Nettle-leaved Goosefoot *Chenopodium murale* at Ipswich Docks.

Barbara Allen commented that the weather had been dryish and mild for her Autumn Week Hunt. On a 3-mile route with friends at Penwortham, Preston, led by Marion Chappell, they saw Witch-grass *Panicum capillare* and Crown Daisy *Glebionis coronaria*, which was the first time that Barbara had seen it in the wild. However, she was disappointed not to see any flowering Red Clover *Trifolium pratense* or Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*.

Julie Clarke looked around Avenham Park in Preston, including investigating wild flowers in a weedy area. Her find of the day was Witch-grass *Panicum capillare*. She also included Common Blue-sowthistle *Cicerbita macrophylla* ssp. *uralensis*, found in Cove Lane, Silverdale, and Alsike Clover *Trifolium hybridum*.

Rosemary FitzGerald's interesting list features many plants that she had not found since 2012. She was the only person to include Pale Corydalis *Pseudofumaria alba* (a much rarer species than Yellow Corydalis *P. lutea*), Two-rowed Barley *Hordeum distichon*, which she had only seen in flower once or twice before, and Pepper-saxifrage *Silene silaus*, a sole find. Pale Galingale *Cyperus eragrostis* was only included in two other people's lists.

Lindsay Pyne enjoyed doing the

Autumn Hunt on Alderney and found more plants in flower than usual this year, including some that she had not expected to find. She had the good fortune to receive a visit from Anne Haden, VCR for Jersey, during the week and they had an afternoon plant-hunting together, which helped Lindsay add to her total.

Ian Green looked for his plants partly in Moray and partly in the Scottish Highlands. He enjoyed getting out this year and the weather was good for all seven days. Ian sent a picture of a Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* with one flower and the comment 'A species I thought I would never see for the Autumn Week Hunt!'. He also found Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* in Craigmere Wood, Abernethy Forest.

Pauline Wilson found most of her plants locally near home in South Gloucestershire, including 17 species that she had not seen before. Her list featured Stone Parsley *Sison amomum* and Crown Vetch *Securigera varia*. One plant that she had not seen before was Field Penny-cress *Thlaspi arvense*, which was growing on a building site, and Pauline thought it had probably come in on the tyres of a lorry. She also went for a walk into Wiltshire and saw a few different plants there.

Janice Reynolds commented that her usual stubble field had been sprayed, as happened last year, so there were no arable weeds. She found most of her plants around a new housing estate in Newhaven. She was one of only two people to include Spanish Broom *Spartium junceum*, at Bishopstone.

Rottingdean Sea-lavender *Limonium hyblaëum* has spread along the seafront in Seaford and she managed to find a plant still with a few flowers. This neophyte is naturalised on cliffs at Rottingdean as noted in Stace 4th Edition.

Susan Grimshaw writes that she found all of her plants within a short distance around the Cox Green suburb of Maidenhead. She found Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides* in a waterway and Gallant-soldier *Galinsoga parviflora* outside Sainsbury's in the town centre.

Anthony and Rita Grainger were pleased to add four new species to their list this season. These included Hop Trefoil *Trifolium campestre* and Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*, seen at Wharfe Valley, and Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus*, seen at Kirkstall Forge.

Barbara Mathews was able to join the Autumn Hunt meeting in Ipswich along the waterfront, docks and River Orwell, adding Perennial Wall-rocket *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* and Springbeauty *Claytonia perfoliata* to her list. In Felixstowe, she looked along pavements, gutters, footpaths and bridleways and found Annual Wall-rocket *Diplotaxis muralis*, Fennel *Foeniculum vulgare* and Silver Ragwort *Jacobaea maritima*.

Sue and Ken Southall decided to spend the whole week looking for plants all over Suffolk, including meeting up with friends on the WFS Autumn Hunt on 27th October. They looked at their local fields around Ipswich and the marina, the saltmarsh at Levington, the riverside

at Melton and numerous surrounding villages and towns. One of their favourite finds was Small Teasel *Dipsacus pilosus*. Other flowers that were only included by Sue and Ken were Crimson Clover *Trifolium incarnatum* ssp. *incarnatum*, Large Thyme *Thymus pulegioides* and Masked Twinspur *Diascia personata*.

Caroline Bateman found urban weeds and garden escapes in paving cracks and odd corners in Redhill, Surrey, and Winchester; arable weeds in a field near Kings Worthy, Winchester; and aquatics from the River Itchen, where there was no Himalayan Balsam in sight. In Redhill, she noted that Common Morning-glory *Ipomoea purpurea* was well established on a chain-link fence, having spread from allotments. Arable weeds included Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine* and Round-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia spuria*. Caroline was the only person to find Annual Buttonweed *Cotula australis* in cracks in paving and in a scruffy street near Clapham Junction.

Nicki Mottram observed that, of the plants that she had noted in flower in 2023, there were 40 that she did not see for the 2024 Autumn Week Hunt. Nicki had a trip to the Burton Dassett Hills and also looked around her hometown, near Kenilworth in Warwickshire. This year Nicki was one of only two people to find Wild Thyme *Thymus drucei*. Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and Green Field-speedwell *Veronica agrestis* were only included in four other lists.

Gill Watkins was the only person to record Little-Robin *Geranium*

purpureum and Blue Globe-thistle *Echinops bannaticus*. She visited Ferry Meadows and Bretton in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire and Launde Abbey in Leicestershire. Gill



also found Cut-leaved Dead-nettle *Lamium hybridum*, White Campion *Silene latifolia*, Grey Field-speedwell *Veronica polita* and Lesser Hawkbit *Leontodon saxatilis* - some lovely finds for her first Autumn Week Hunt.

Helen Dignum went to Hayling Island with **Sue Denness** and **Jill Oakley** for a day of flower hunting. Her list included some different species, including Giant Fescue *Schedonorus giganteus* and Galingale *Cyperus longus*, seen at Northney, and Moth Mullein *Verbascum blattaria*, seen at Ferry Road.

Stephen Clarkson went to Spurn Point in East Yorkshire and Hadleigh, Ipswich and Sudbury in Suffolk. He was one of only two people to find Fern-grass *Catapodium rigidum* and the only person to include the annual Rough Bristle-grass *Setaria verticillata*, and Hop *Humulus lupulus*. Narrow-leaved Pepperwort *Lepidium ruderale* was only noted in four lists,

all based in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Jackie Ellis and Jim Hough spent two days looking round their local area in Halesowen and Brierley Hill for their first Autumn Week Hunt. They were one of two teams to find Narrow-leaved Michaelmas-daisy *Symphyotrichum lanceolatum*, which was also seen in East Anglia. Their other species included Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Wild Turnip *Brassica rapa* ssp. *campestris* and, a plant increasingly seen in town areas, Water Bent *Polypogon viridis*.

Susan Simcock was able to visit parts of North and West Yorkshire, where she noted some interesting species such as Peppermint *Mentha x piperita*, Common Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit* and Marsh Ragwort *Jacobaea aquatica*.

Wendy Hofmaier participated in the Autumn Hunt for the first time. Her list included Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana*, Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Bell Heather *Erica cinerea*, all found around the Cannington area of Somerset.

Dorothy Ross enjoyed botanising locally and went to Salthill Quarry in Clitheroe and RSPB Marshside, Southport. Her best finds at Salthill were Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acris*. Southport coastal species included Sea Mayweed *Tripleurospermum maritimum* and Sea Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp. *maritimus*. On overgrown land next to a stream were Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* ssp. *carota* and Common Comfrey *Symphytum*

officinale, while pavement edges had Water Bent *Polypogon viridis* and Thale Cress *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

John Swindells noted that one of his most interesting finds was Japanese Anemone *Anemone x hybrida*, growing in a crack at the base of a wall. He also included Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* and White Melilot *Melilotus albus* in his list. John mentioned a variety of *Malva sylvestris*, var. *mauritiana* or Mauritanian Mallow, which he had found in a prairie-style planting in some housing estates. John thought that some plants were from seed that had blown from one of the parent plants.

Nick Aston noted Coral-necklace *Illecebrum verticillatum*, Small Fleabane *Pulicaria vulgaris* and Pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium* as some of the special plants that were flowering well in the New Forest. He writes that an unusual alien was Tree Groundsel *Baccharis* at its only known extant UK site on the coast at Mudeford. It flowers late in the year and was at its best at the end of October. As joint VCR for the Isle of Wight, Nick managed a day on the island, doing some recording in weedy areas around Ventnor. Red Nightshade *Solanum villosum* was in flower and fruit, with beautiful red berries, and some established alien plants in the same vicinity included Shoddy Ragwort *Senecio pterophorus* and Scentless Geranium *Pelargonium inodorum*.

Priscilla Nobbs follows the same local route each year, which includes Salford Station and which she did on 25th October. Unfortunately, 'the



weeds had been strimmed the previous day,' observed Priscilla, as has happened in previous years before doing her survey! However, she did find five new plants this season including Garden Strawberry *Fragaria ananassa*, Wall Speedwell *Veronica arvensis* and Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*.

JACKIE HARDY

NEW FOREST, HAMPSHIRE, 27th JUNE 2024

Report for Day 1 (please see page 24 of the Winter 2025 magazine for Day 2)

Twenty-one members met in the car park at Matley, near Lyndhurst, having travelled from various parts of the UK to enjoy this two-day meeting under the leadership of the knowledgeable Nick Aston. Thank goodness the meeting was not held the previous day, when temperatures approached 32°C as I drove down from Suffolk to this neck of the woods. Thankfully the temperature had dropped to a much more comfortable 21°C and it stayed that way for the rest of the day.

Why did I stick my hand up to volunteer to do the write-up for the day? Because I enjoy doing it! I don't know why other members don't volunteer to compose a précis of the day, as it confirms what you have seen and consolidates your knowledge of the Latin and English names to associate with the beautiful flora that you have seen.

The New Forest is heavily grazed by the resident ponies, donkeys and cows, some of whose foals and calves annoyingly stand in the middle of the road and refuse to move! Our first plant of interest was a virtual carpet of Chamomile *Chamaemelum nobile*, with its rosettes of filigreed leaves, mild scent when crushed and several daisy-like flowers. Interspersed were a few low-growing plants of Lesser Centaury *Centaureum pulchellum*, with their lovely pale pink flowers.

Many of the grasses were over but I have never seen so much Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, which was only showing the empty, flattened spikelets typical of its growth. It is one of only three native species of grass to have a ring of hairs instead of a ligule. Not long afterwards, we were shown a second member of this group, Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Another grass requiring a good look is

Squirrel-tail Fescue *Vulpia bromoides*, in particular the relative lengths of the glumes, to separate it from its cousin Rat's-tail Fescue *V. myuros*. Nick then showed us a stunning population of the very rare Brown Beak-sedge *Rhynchospora fusca*, which covered a huge area, with White Beak-sedge *R. alba* dotted throughout. Marsh Clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata* was also growing throughout the Brown Beak-sedge.

I was able to show members the differences between Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and Jointed Rush *J. articulatus*. In both species you can feel ridges, called septa, at intervals along the leaves. You need to split the leaves open to look inside. In Blunt-flowered Rush, you will notice fine white longitudinal tissue between each septum. This does not occur in Jointed Rush, which also has fewer than one septum per centimetre (looking towards the middle of the leaves). There is also a colour difference in the tepals that is more obvious earlier in the season; whereas those in Blunt-flowered Rush are a pale chocolate brown, those in Jointed Rush are a much darker brown.

After lunch near Beaulieu Road railway station, we walked along a track toward Shatterford Bottom. We soon came upon a very large population of Coral-necklace *Illecebrum verticillatum*, a trailing annual that has whorls of small white flowers borne in the axils of the paired leaves. Coming across some open water, we saw Lesser Bladderwort *Utricularia minor*, with a few, very pale yellow flowers

showing. The bladders themselves were so minute that it made you wonder what underwater insects they can actually catch. There were dense patches of Marsh St. John's-wort *Hypericum elodes*, which had beautifully pale green, densely hairy leaves surmounted by equally lovely bright yellow flowers with dark veining. Around the edges of the water was the equally fascinating Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, with its red-hued leaves covered in sticky hairs ending in a glistening globule of glue.

Unfortunately, I had to leave the group at this point and return to my car, while Nick led the other members onwards to an area of open heathland in the Woodfidley Passage area to see Wild Gladiolus *Gladiolus illyricus*. They found some flowering spikes under the bracken in pristine condition before returning via a bog to see Intermediate Bladderwort *Utricularia intermedia*. I waited for the group to return and Nick very kindly said that he could take me to another site to see the Gladiolus. As we got closer to Holmsley, I recognised where we were and, sure enough, dotted sparsely throughout the bracken, were the vivid magenta spikes of the Wild Gladiolus. With the sunshine and the blue skies, it was enough to make one's heart sing. What an end to a most beautiful day, spent in some great company too. It wasn't until I got home and was checking my records that I discovered that many of the wild flowers that I had seen over these two magical days I had seen over 20 years ago!

STEPHEN CLARKSON

AMBERLEY WILDBROOKS, WEST SUSSEX, 11th AUGUST

Amberley Wildbrooks is an extensive floodplain landscape comprising grazing marshes dissected by numerous ditches dug out for drainage some 200 years ago. The site is an SSSI and nature reserve, owned by the RSPB, Sussex Wildlife Trust and private landowners. It is situated within the Arun Valley, to the east of the River Arun. The Wildbrooks lies on Greensand but in the south is fed by chalk springs so that there is an influence of both calcareous and acidic hydrology, giving rise to a fantastic variety of wetland plants. Access is restricted to the Wey-South Path, which runs north-south through the centre of the Wildbrooks.

Thirteen members met in the village car park on what promised to be a glorious, sunny day. Our leaders were Sue Denness and Sue Adams. After a short introduction, we walked through the peaceful village of Amberley, admiring the many thatched cottages and occasionally stopping to note some of the species growing at the roadside. We then turned onto the Wey-South Path, from which we emerged onto the Wildbrooks itself, with a backdrop of the South Downs behind us. Distant herds of grazing cattle reminded us that the Wildbrooks includes working agricultural land. Sue Denness handed out a list of some of the wetland plants we hoped to see during the day.

Firstly, an Almond Willow *Salix*

triandra was pointed out. This was inaccessible through the dense brambles but Sue had earlier managed to get a small branch for us to examine. We noted the male catkins with three anthers in each floret, from which it gets its species name '*triandra*'. Almond Willow was much planted in the past for the basket-making industry, as was Osier *Salix viminalis*, which was growing nearby. Before moving on, we looked at a Jersey Elm *Ulmus minor* var. *sarniensis*.

We then turned our attention to the vegetation growing along the banks of the ditches. Upright Hedge-parsley *Torilis japonica* was frequent, along with Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Purple-loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* and Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*. We admired the pink flowers of Narrow-leaved Everlasting-pea *Lathyrus sylvestris* as it scrambled over the dense vegetation. Also among the tall wetland vegetation we noted Marsh Ragwort *Jacobaea aquatica*, Marsh Woundwort *Stachys palustris*, Gipsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*, Water-pepper *Persicaria hydropiper* and Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare*, with its inflorescence having the appearance of a bunch of golden buttons. We had enjoyed the juicy, ripe blackberries alongside the track so it was interesting to compare these with Dewberry *Rubus caesius*. The fruits have fewer drupelets and a

distinctive bloom.

One of the benefits of field meetings is the expansion of one's botanical knowledge when discussing identification characteristics. For some of us, the orange on the margins of the sepals of Yellow Loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris* was



a new feature, while for others, it was the ripe black seeds of Tall Melilot *Melilotus altissimus*, which were distinctly reticulate and pubescent when viewed with a lens.

The Wildbrooks is noted for the variety of aquatic plants in the ditches themselves and for the variation in plant communities. Water levels are controlled by sluices. Sue Denness had thoughtfully brought a grapnel along to pull out some of the smaller floating and submerged species. Searching through the haul we found Duckweed *Lemna* sp., Broad-leaved

Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*, Rigid Hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum*, Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii* and Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*. Among the many other species in or at the margins of the ditches we spotted Water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, Arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Tufted Forget-me-not *Myosotis laxa*, keyed out by those who knew their isosceles from their equilateral triangles. One ditch offered us stands of both Branched and Unbranched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum* and *S. emersum* growing together, which allowed us to compare the branching inflorescence of the former against the simple inflorescence of the latter. Branched Bur-reed has distinctive dark tips to the leaves, which allow it to be easily spotted among other tall vegetation.

Our target species was Cut-grass *Leersia oryzoides*, now very rare and occurring at only a few sites in Sussex, Amberley Wildbrooks being a stronghold. We carefully felt the sharp leaf margin from which it gets its name. We noted the terminal culm leaf held at an angle. As is typical of this grass, the slender panicle remained enclosed in the leaf sheath until it was gently teased out. Once we had our eye in for the distinctive yellow-green colour, we noted several more patches scattered along the edge of the ditch in the more open vegetation.

As we approached our lunch stop, we were moving from the calcareous influence of the chalk onto the acid of the Greensand. The change was

clearly visible as previously clear water had become brown from the peat. At the lunch stop we were treated to a large area of Frogbit in flower in one of the ditches; previously this had mainly been floating leaves. Here we also added Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* to our tally, its fruits out of reach but the large leaf unmistakeable. Other species growing in or at the side of the ditches were Cyperus Sedge *Carex pseudocyperus*, Fine-leaved Water-dropwort *Oenanthe aquatica*, Marsh Foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus* and the rare Marsh Willowherb *Epilobium palustre*.

After lunch we continued north but the path became more overgrown, so we only went a short distance, noting both Nodding Bur-marigold *Bidens cernua* and Trifid Bur-marigold *B. tripartita*. We stopped in a welcome patch of shade to admire Climbing Coydalis *Ceratocapnos claviculata*, Greater Tussock-sedge *Carex paniculata* and Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* before heading back south the way we had come.

On our return we made a detour to the seat erected in memory of Sue

Adams' late husband, Mike. It was situated in a beautiful location overlooking the River Arun and the Wildbrooks. Here, some explored the riverbank, finding both Common Club-rush *Schoenoplectus lacustris*, with three stigmas and smooth glumes, and Grey Club-rush *S. tabernaemontani*, with two stigmas and red papillae on the glumes.

Sue Adams very kindly invited the group back to her house in Amberley village for tea. This was a most welcome end to a good day's



botanising on a wonderful wetland site. Our thanks to Sue Denness and Sue Adams for leading this most interesting walk.

SUE COOPER

RIVER THAMES AND DOCKLANDS, 23rd AUGUST

On a bright and breezy morning, a group of us joined leader, Geoffrey Hall, at King George V DLR station for a day botanising in London's East End and Docklands. The walk was varied, passing through post-

industrial areas, new developments, and along vegetated stretches of the Thames. Many of the plants we saw during the day were non-natives, some of them invasive, for example self-seeded Foxglove-trees

Paulownia tomentosa growing right outside the station. Geoffrey gave us an example of the speed at which non-natives can establish. Narrow-leaved Ragwort *Senecio inaequidens*, a plant from South Africa which is now found throughout much of the UK, is mentioned in the first edition of Clive Stace's *New Flora* (1991) as only being on a beach in Kent, with a comment that it might spread.

It was tempting to linger and look at the many species growing in the paving and rough ground by the station, but we had lots to see and set off. Before we left, we checked a planted Shrub Ragwort *Brachyglottis x jubar* to see if it was being parasitised by Common Broomrape *Orobanche minor* var. *heliophila* but we didn't see it on that plant or any others that we checked during the day.

We made our way down to a point on the river near the Woolwich Ferry terminal with fine views up and downstream. A large Olive Willow *Salix eleagnos* was growing there. Often planted in windy and coastal sites, this shrub has narrow leaves that are tomentose underneath and can be confused with Osier *Salix viminalis*. At the side of the ferry structure, and in a most unpromising dead end, various plants had found the habitat to their liking: Sea Club-rush *Bolboschoenus maritimus*, Sea Aster *Tripolium pannonicum*, Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and Marsh Yellow-cress *Rorippa palustris* were all enjoying the damp brackish conditions. A little further along, at the head of a shingly inlet, we found a Beggarticks *Bidens*



Studying Beggarticks seeds

frondosa, its identity confirmed by examination of its seeds.

We cut in from the shore, walking past the northern exit of the Greenwich foot-tunnel, to a street where a number of Nettle-leaved Goosefoot *Chenopodium murale* plants were growing. This archaeophyte, introduced in Roman times and associated with places near the sea, has sharply declined in the London area and is now on the Kent rare plant register (by a quirk of vice-county boundaries, this small area north of the Thames is in botanical Kent). Two other non-natives that we saw here, and frequently throughout the day, are faring better: Tall Nightshade *Solanum chenopodioides*, a plant of stature with velvety leaves from South America, was first seen in the wild in the UK in the 1920s and is now naturalised in the London area;

and Water Bent *Polypogon viridis*, which is found in many places along pavement edges and has increased rapidly over the last 20 years or so.

We took a lunch break in the Royal Victoria Gardens. In the mid-nineteenth century, this peaceful green space was the pleasure ground of the Pavilion Hotel, which fronted the River Thames. Amongst the attractions to tempt visitors were a tea-room, a ballroom, a maze, a gypsy's tent and a rifle gallery. When visitors stopped coming later in the century, the gardens were redesigned and opened as a public park in 1890 by London County Council.

Back by the river after lunch, we walked along a stretch of closely-cut grass that was brown and desiccated after a dry spell. From a shrivelled plant growing amongst the grass, Geoffrey picked a seed-head which had the unmistakable one-sided spiny shape of Knotted Hedge-parsley *Torilis nodosa*. This annual is now spreading in urban areas as mowing contractors carry its seeds from site to site. Growing in longer grass nearby was Brown Knapweed *Centaurea jacea*, with its brown papery involucre bracts. This plant probably arrived at this site in a seed mix.

Amongst the grasses on the next more vegetated stretch of the river were tall stands of Greek Dock *Rumex crispatus*, now completely dried out, rust-coloured and in seed. There was a large clump of Dittander *Lepidium latifolium*, which, we were interested to hear, was used in the

past medicinally and as a hot flavouring before horseradish was widely used. It's a native of coastal and brackish areas so this riverside location is its typical habitat, although the plant is now becoming quite common along roads, especially the M25 and M40, finding a habitat there, along with other plants that are tolerant of salt spray from the roads.

We then rounded a bend in the river and were onto the last stretch of our walk. We crossed footbridges over the entrances of what had been docks and are now marinas. Across the river from here we could see Tripcock Ness, one of the last naturally vegetated stretches of the Thames this far downstream. We passed fenced-off areas that had been completely cleared ready for new developments. On the edges of these plots, plants were still managing to survive. A Wild Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* was growing happily, the rough ground being similar to its natural dry grassland habitat, and a few plants of Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus* were growing along the gutter.

Our day of urban botanising was very enjoyable but also thought-provoking. The native and archaeophyte flora of Greater London is in sharp decline because of pollution, development, climate change and invasive species. Geoffrey showed us some of the plants involved in these changes and gave us an insight into how quickly things are changing. Many thanks to him for an excellent meeting.

MAUREEN PARRY

BIRKDALE DUNES, SOUTHPORT, 29th AUGUST

Twenty of us met at Selworthy Road, Birkdale, on a sunny, if slightly breezy, day. I, Steve Cross, President of Liverpool Botanical Society, led the group through the dunes and slacks of Birkdale Local Nature Reserve. The targets were the rarities Sharp Club-rush *Schoenoplectus pungens* (at its only British site), Baltic Rush *Juncus balticus* (at its only English Site) and Perennial Ragweed *Ambrosia psilostachya*, at its only reliable site in the country. Happily, we were able to enjoy all three.

The first plant that we found was the white garden form of Hedgerow Crane's-bill *Geranium pyrenaicum* f. *albiflorum*. Nearby was another garden plant, Red Bistort *Bistorta amplexicaulis*, and even the Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula* was of garden origin. Along this path, close to houses, were also many of the problematic non-natives that are a threat to the dune system: Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* (though native on the East Coast), White Poplar *Populus alba*, Snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus* and Russian-vine *Fallopia baldschuanica*. Indeed, 24 out of the 470 non-native or introduced native plants that have been found on the Sefton Coast show invasive qualities and are having a big impact on the ecology of the dunes.

Crossing the busy Coastal Road we soon were amongst classic dune plants such as Common Restharrow *Ononis repens*, Dewberry *Rubus caesius*, Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis*

vulneraria, Sand Cat's-tail *Phleum arenarium*, Sand Sedge *Carex arenaria*, Polypody *Polypodium vulgare*, Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Hoary Ragwort *Senecio erucifolius* and Umbellate Hawkweed *Hieracium umbellatum*. Also here were a selection of aliens including Evening-primroses *Oenothera* spp. (though these have been on the dunes since 1802), Balm-of-Gilead *Populus x jackii*, Cotoneaster species, Michaelmas-daisies *Symphyotrichum* spp., Broad-leaved Everlasting-pea *Lathyrus latifolius* (in white, white-pink and pink forms) and Montbretia *Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora*. Trees that you would not really expect on dunes included Apple *Malus domestica*, Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Yew *Taxus baccata* and Holm Oak *Quercus ilex*.

We dropped down into a slack to find Marsh Horsetail *Equisetum palustre*, Bulrush *Typha latifolia*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus*, Grey Club-rush *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*, Sea Club-rush *Bolboschoenus maritimus*, Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Parsley Water-dropwort *Oenanthe lachenalii*, Hard Rush *Juncus inflexus*, Marsh Willowherb *Epilobium palustre*, and Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*. The Alder *Alnus glutinosa* leaves had been decimated by the abundant black

larvae of the Alder Leaf Beetle *Agelastica alni*, an amazing turnaround for a species extinct in the country as recently as 2003.

The Round Pool (officially Slack 38) had its north-west corner dominated by Sharp Club-rush *Schoenoplectus pungens* at its only site in Britain,



Sharp Club-rush

though it used to occur on Jersey from the 18th century to the 1970s and was native there. A few still showed the distinctive orangey-brown flowerheads. First found locally in 1909, it was recorded up until 1978 but then died out 'in the wild'. It was, however, reintroduced with cultivated plants from that original stock in 1990 and has since spread naturally, now being found at a total of six sites at Birkdale. Arguments still occur about its status and it is often believed to be an introduction, despite being very widely found across Europe, the Americas and Australia. This pool also had Eyebrights *Euphrasia* agg., Gipsywort *Lycopus europaeus* and Slender Rush *Juncus tenuis*. Two Emperor Dragonflies *Anax imperator* patrolled the pool, while the shallows hosted abundant Great Pond Snails

Lymnaea stagnalis.

Heading south to Slack 27, we saw the biggest population in England of Baltic Rush *Juncus balticus*, which is only found at ten sites in the Birkdale



Baltic Rush

area and nowhere else south of the border. It stood out because of the many pupal cases of a *Coleophora* moth (most likely the Common Rush Case-bearer *Coleophora alticolella*) on the fruits. First found here in 1913, Baltic Rush is a species of the early stages of dune slack development but is eventually outcompeted by taller plants. Also in this slack were



Grass-of-Parnassus

flowering Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Common Milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Toad Rush *Juncus bufonius*. Nice to see was some flowering Round-leaved Wintergreen *Pyrola*



Round-leaved Wintergreen

rotundifolia ssp. *maritima*. The Creeping Willow *Salix repens* was shining silvery in the sunlight and was of the dune form var. *argentea*. By a ditch across the dunes, we had Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris* and Sea Arrowgrass *T. maritima* growing together, allowing side-by-side comparison. The Perennial Sowthistle *Sonchus arvensis* had distinctive galls on the leaves caused by the midge *Cystiphora sonchi*.

Heading west towards the tall line of Alders that marks the strandline of just thirty-five years ago, we saw how control of Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa* had opened up bare sand, allowing the growth of plants such as Rosebay Willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, Canadian Fleabane *Erigeron canadensis*, Creeping

Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Fat-hen *Chenopodium album*, Sea Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp. *maritimus* and Common Orache *Atriplex patula*, but also recolonisation by the true open dune species such as Kidney Vetch and Common Restharrow.

The mature dunes held Marram *Ammophila arenaria*, Lyme-grass *Leymus arenarius*, Wild Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* ssp. *sylvestris*, Common Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, Lesser Hawkbit *Leontodon saxatilis*, Smooth Hawk's-beard *Crepis capillaris*, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Common Restharrow, Garden Asparagus *Asparagus officinalis*, with its orangey berries, Hound's-tongue *Cynoglossum officinale*, its fruits like little hedgehogs complete with eye spot, gone-over Thyme-leaved Sandwort *Arenaria serpyllifolia* and flowering Sea-holly *Eryngium*



Perennial Ragweed

maritimum. A Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* was seen hunting over the dunes. After lunch by a large dune blow-out, we headed south past Robin's Pincushion Gall *Diplolepis rosae* on roses and a patch of the tiny dune form of Lady's Bedstraw, *Galium verum* var. *maritimum*. A steep climb up a dune took us to the only reliable site in the country for Perennial Ragweed *Ambrosia psilostachya*, around twenty plants of which were just coming into flower. This North American alien was first recorded at Birkdale way back in 1903.

Returning through the dunes we did not add many more plants to our list, though we did find Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor* still in flower, Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris* and another plant that can become

invasive on the dunes, Traveller's-joy *Clematis vitalba*. Insects, however, drew most attention, with abundant grasshoppers, Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* butterflies, Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* dragonflies, a caterpillar of the Fox Moth *Macrothylacia rubi*, while the hawkweed had galls of the wasp *Aulacidea hieracii*. Crossing the Coastal Road brought the group back to the cars happy with what they had seen.

Pictures in this article supplied by Steve Cross

Further details and more photographs can be found on the Liverpool Botanical Society website at <https://livbotsoc.weebly.com/trips-with-the-wildflower-society.html>

STEVE CROSS

EGGERSLACK WOODS, GRANGE-OVER-SANDS, CUMBRIA, 14th SEPTEMBER 2024

This was a joint meeting with the British Pteridological Society and this report was written by Robert Sykes and Daisy Baggs for their magazine. They have kindly agreed to let us publish it in the Wild Flower Society magazine.

This meeting was to have been led by Alison Evans, but she had broken her wrist so handed the role to Roger Golding; happily, she came along anyway. It was a joint meeting with the Wild Flower Society and also included representatives from Kew and Natural England. There were 15 of us in all, but only four from the North West Fern Group.

Walking along the road, we saw indications of the excitements to come on the roadside wall and in gardens: Maidenhair Spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes*, Wall-rue *A. ruta-muraria*, Hart's-tongue *A. scolopendrium*, Male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina* and Intermediate Polypody *Polypodium interjectum*.

Once in the woods, we saw Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum* and Hard Shield-fern *P. aculeatum*, Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis* (three fronds!), one thriving clump of Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and a single, but

generous, Lemon-scented Fern *Oreopteris limbosperma*. There was some – but not much – Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, including a forked specimen up on the open fell. And Alison saw a Hard-fern *Blechnum spicant* which we had missed. There was also an attractive Wood-sedge *Carex sylvatica*.

With the benefit of Roger and Alison's specialist knowledge, we were able to compare Golden-scaled Male-ferns *Dryopteris affinis* ssp. *affinis* and *D. affinis* ssp. *paleaceolobata*; also Borrer's Male-fern *D. borrieri* and Male-fern x Golden-scaled Male-fern *D. filix-mas* x *D. affinis* = *D. x complexa*, as well as an odd *D. affinis* which Alison collected for investigation. (Editor's Note: The Latin names above were taken from Stace 3, not Stace 4. Stace 4 no longer recognises *D. affinis* ssp. *paleaceolobata*, placing it under ssp. *affinis*, and *D. borrieri* has changed to *D. affinis* ssp. *borrieri*).

Finally, at the top and out into the sun, we sat and ate our lunch on the rocks, which obligingly sheltered Rigid Buckler-fern *Dryopteris submontana* and Brittle Bladder-fern *Cystopteris fragilis*. From the lunch spot, we then headed west from the boundary of the woodland across the limestone pavement.

Nestled in the grykes of the limestone pavement and growing abundantly in selected locations above Eggerslack Woods was Limestone Fern *Gymnocarpium robertianum*, an elegant, calcicole plant with two to

three-pinnate fronds suspended on a delicate black stipe. Roger pointed out the pattern of the sori and absence of indusia. The key described the presence of minute glands down the rachis and on the abaxial surface of the frond and whilst we struggled to see the glands, even under a x10 loupe, upon gentle crushing, we detected the apple-like scent that they exude as indicated in Merryweather's 'Britain's Ferns'.

Although there was a historic record of Rustyback *Asplenium ceterach* on the limestone pavement, the group didn't manage to find it, despite a thorough search. As we descended the hill, conversation turned to the contrary nature of Rustyback, namely its ability to virtually desiccate despite its preference for habitats with high rainfall. To make up for the earlier disappointment, Roger's keen eyes revealed its presence on a mortar wall on Main Street in Grange, much to the delight of the group.

Also on the way back, a polypody colonising a patch of thick moss on top of a limestone wall that looked different from the ubiquitous *Polypodium interjectum* turned out to be *P. vulgare* on examination.

A day well spent, and much learnt by those of us who consider ourselves novices in the world of Pteridophytes! Many thanks to those who patiently educated us.

ROBERT SYKES AND DAISY
BAGGS

Flowers found in
Cornwall in
December 2024
(left to right)



EAST VERS

It's December, it must be the start of the Winter Months' Hunt. In 2024 the first week of the Winter Months' Hunt whilst walking the local paths. Over five days we'd walked 73km and Darragh and the need to escape Cornwall before the railways closed down. Having sat c gave us an interesting comparison between the west and east coasts of England in the l and accumulated a tally of 133 species in flower in Suffolk and Essex. We found 56 spe walks were coastal, including saltmarsh and sands, although rocky cliffs are hard to com with the streets and untended fields yielding many of our finds.

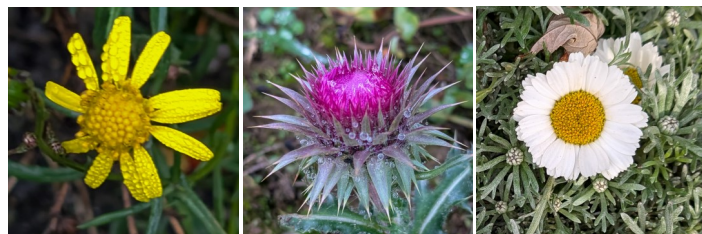
The dominant flowering plant on the Cornish coast was Winter Heliotrope *Petasites pyre* early flower spikes in Suffolk it was nothing like as prolific. As might be anticipated, Fuch flowering along with Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum* and Rose-of-Sharon *Hypericum c* cornered Garlic *Allium triquetrum* flowering and the scent filling the air. None of these ap flowering in Suffolk, while in Cornwall there were still many flowers hanging on. Shaggy-one of the first to suffer, along with Gallant-soldier *Galinsoga parviflora*, as soon as we h

Over the summer we did many walks in Devon and Cornwall and the flower of these trek Coast. So, unsurprisingly, it was still flowering on the cliffs. Here too we found Bell Heath through the heath.

Both areas yielded Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* in the first two weeks of December, p Red and White Dead-nettles *Lamium purpureum* and *L. album* are assured plants on ou Neither did we find Green Alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens* in Cornwall. Another notab in both areas whilst the streets of Ipswich yielded both Oxford and Narrow-leaved Ragw streets. Finally, Jersey Cudweed *Laphangium luteoalbum*, once a rare plant in the UK, h on our travels in Cornwall.

As I write this it is New Year's Day and the rain is lashing down outside so there may be species in flower this month but we are looking forward to seeing the spring bulbs comin

Flowers found in Suffolk
in December 2024
(left to right)
All pictures by Anne
and Dennis Kell





Winter Heliotrope, Bush
Vetch, Betony,
Sowbread, Bell Heather,
Three-cornered Garlic

RSUS WEST

of December saw us on a walking holiday in west Cornwall so we decided to start our hunt and amassed a total of 88 species in flower, our sixth day being cut short by Storm sat out the storm we then started our hunt again, but this time in Suffolk and Essex. This the beginning of December. Over the following three weeks we walked a further 200km species in common to both areas but it was the differences that intrigued us. Most of our come by in Suffolk and Essex. We covered similar habitats from urban to agricultural,

pyrenaicus with great carpets hugging the cliffs and banks. Whilst we did find a few *Fuchsia* *Fuchsia magellanica*, as a notable garden escape in the West Country, was still *um calycinum*. Amazingly, we discovered a sheltered cove with a great carpet of Three- appeared on our home walks. We were challenged to find Ivy *Hedera helix* still ggy-soldier *Galinsoga quadriradiata* was still flowering in Cornwall, while we find that it is we have a frost and so had long since faded away in Suffolk.

treks was Betony *Betonica officinalis*, a plant we don't see very often on the East leather *Erica cinerea* hanging on and lots of Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana* poking

er, possibly one of the earliest records we have for this plant.

n our winter hunts in Suffolk but we didn't see a single White Dead-nettle in Cornwall. otable difference was in the Ragworts, with Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* found agwort *Senecio squalidus* and *S. inaequidens*, both shining out bright yellow in our grey IK, has now invaded our streets becoming a common weed of urban areas but unseen

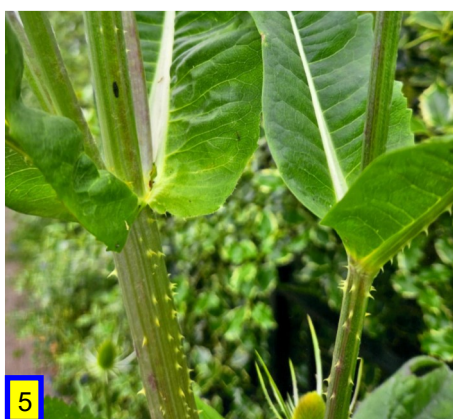
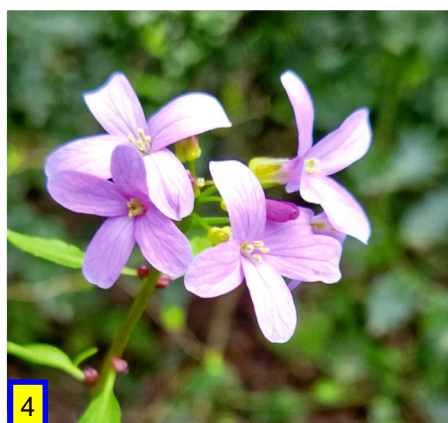
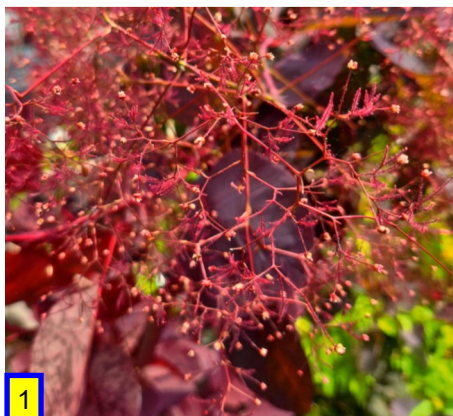
y be a slight delay in starting our January hunt. I'm not sure we'll find quite so many oming through to raise our spirits.

ANNE KELL

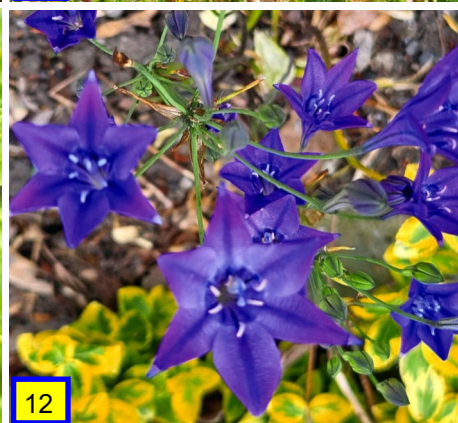


Narrow-leaved Ragwort,
Musk Thistle,
Sicilian Chamomile,
Musk Mallow, Sweet
Violet, Field Pansy

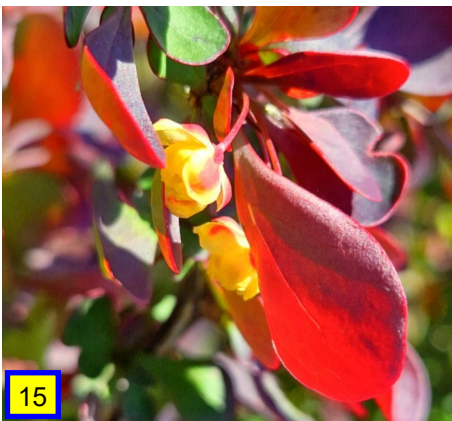
Identification quiz provided by member Gareth Bursnall



Just for fun.



Continued



Continued. (Answers on page 39)



AUTUMN HUNT, PRESTON, LANCASHIRE, 26th OCTOBER

In late October, a group of us met up at Hurst Grange Park in Preston, where we set out on a 3-mile stroll, weaving through the parks and streets, recording any plant species we could spot which were still in flower after this year's mild conditions.

The walk was led by Marion Chappell, and the group ranged from first-timers, like myself, to technically-minded botany gurus, all wonderfully welcoming and keen to share knowledge and answer questions. We had a species list from last year's replica walk, to check things off and

add things to. After combining lists, we recorded a total of 73 different species still in flower, falling just short of last year's total of 80. Personal highlights of the day for me were the exotic Witch-grass *Panicum capillare*, with its showy, yet delicate panicles, and Procumbent Pearlwort *Sagina procumbens*, another new one for me. It was great to have features pointed out, such as the petal-margins of Dotted Loosestrife *Lysimachia punctata* with their glandular hairs, a plant I would previously naively have assumed was Yellow Loosestrife *L. vulgaris*.

Another curiosity was a large, showy pale-pink campion, which turned out to be the hybrid between Red and White Campion *Silene dioica* x *S. latifolia* = *S. x hampeana*.

Thanks Marion, Sheila and everyone for an interesting and relaxed day plant-hunting in the autumn sunshine!

PAULA BATESON

Photo: Jane Lowe



As a first-timer, I fully enjoyed being part of a gaggle of botanists gathering around cracks in pavements, peering into flower beds and trying to crane our necks over the new flood defence walls along the River Ribble to try and catch a glimpse of any flashes of colour amongst the vegetation. We were blessed with gorgeous weather, showing Preston's parks off in their autumn colours.

AUTUMN HUNT, IPSWICH, 27th OCTOBER

Seven members of the East Anglian Branch met on the most glorious autumnal day outside the University of Suffolk in the docks area of Ipswich. As has become customary with the group, we covered similar ground for our Autumn Hunt to that explored for the Spring Hunt in

dominant plants. Most of our finds were ruderals, rooting in the paving or road gutters, and plants of disturbed waste ground. The local authority's cutback in maintenance has certainly benefitted this population.



Jersey Cudweed

Slightly more unusual were two Goosefoots, Nettle-leaved *Chenopodiastrum murale* and Striped Goosefoot *Chenopodium strictum*, both expanding in their range in southern East Anglia. Jersey Cudweed *Laphangium luteoalbum*, once considered a rarity, is similarly appearing with greater regularity in local urban areas. One plant, that had us scratching our heads and necessitated pouring over Stace while visiting the café for a much needed cup of coffee, was a very impoverished sample of Narrow-leaved Pepperwort *Lepidium ruderale*, a new species for some of us.

March. We scoured the docks area and adjacent roads for any late flowering plants. The dominant colour was yellow with Bristly Oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*, Perennial Wall-rocket *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* and Narrow-leaved Ragwort *Senecio inaequidens* being three of the

In the end we amassed an impressive total of 87 species in flower, an increase of 20 over the number found in flower on our one-day Spring Hunt.

ANNE KELL

HAWKWEED HUNT: THE QUEST FOR LONG-LOST *HIERACIUM BASICRINUM*

This is the story of a swollen river, a wayward dog and a plant that had only ever been recorded three times, and not since 1953. The plant in question is *Hieracium basicrinum* or Fionn Gleann Hawkweed to give it its English name, a rare endemic of the high mountains of Glencoe. It was discovered in July 1889 by eminent botanists Frederick Hanbury and Edward Marshall on the granite rocks and screes of Clach Leathad and Fionn Gleann and initially described by Hanbury as a variety of the related *Hieracium sommerfeltii* in 1892. Marshall (1893) noted that it was quite distinctive and retained its characters in cultivation, suggesting that it should be treated as a species, to which status it was eventually raised by John Roffey in *The London Catalogue of British Plants* in 1925.

Since its initial discovery, there had only been one further sighting of *Hieracium basicrinum*, by John Raven in Fionn Gleann in 1953. In their 2018 Atlas of British and Irish Hawkweeds, Tim Rich and David McCosh note its conservation status as 'Data Deficient' and, for this reason, Tim decided to organise a BSBI search party to go and look for it in early July 2024. It is fairly distinctive, he reassured us *Hieracium* novices in his preliminary blurb; it's the only hawkweed in the area with spotted leaves.

As usual, the vengeful weather gods turned on the taps as soon as I set foot in Scotland. I spent the first two days looking out of the window of my

Airbnb in Fort William (or Wet Willy as I came to know and love it) at the rain sheeting down and wondering how on earth anyone could possibly live there. On day three there was a tentative break in the precipitation and I got into the car and drove to Glencoe for a preliminary foray. Given the lowering cloud and extensive quagmire, I didn't dare venture too far, but one thing that became apparent was that 90%+ of all the hawkweeds that you encounter in Scotland seem to be Common Hawkweed *Hieracium triviale*.

On the first day of the hunt, the party assembled at the Glencoe Mountain Resort to the prospect of...you guessed it, more rain. The River Etive, at the point where we needed to ford it to reach the mouth of Fionn Gleann, while not a raging torrent, was sufficiently high to prompt Tim to recommend that we drive two miles further down the valley to a bridge in order to get across. In between, there was a pulley contraption for transporting sheep across the river, but we didn't like the look of it and weren't sure whether it would cope with humans.

The full party assembled at the bridge. Among our number and somewhat to my surprise was a fellow Gloucestershire botanist whom I'd not encountered before, Jamie Warren, with his dog Tilly. Our extra descent of the valley now entailed a two-mile slog across the bog to get back to the mouth of Fionn Gleann. I was traipsing along at the back,

faintly rueing the fact that I'd let myself in for this soggy adventure, when Tilly suddenly shot past, heading back in the direction of the cars. Not knowing the first thing about canine behaviour I assumed that she'd picked up the scent of a vole or some such and would return when the trail went cold. Not so. A while later it became apparent that Tilly was missing and Jamie set off back to look for her.

The rest of the party strode manfully onwards, reaching the middle section of the Allt Fionn Ghlinne, the stream which flows down Fionn Gleann, in time for lunch. Thereafter, the group split into two for the long and arduous slog up the steep valley sides to scour the rocks and crags on both sides at the top. There were lots of nice things up there, including Marigold Hawkweed *Hieracium calenduliflorum*, Jagged-toothed Hawkweed *H. anfractiforme* and a new site for the very rare Narrow-toothed Hawkweed *H. leptodon*. However, despite our best efforts, of *H. basicrinum* there was no sign.

We descended back down to the valley floor in disparate groups, each collectively deciding that there was no way they were going to brave the two miles of bog again; it was preferable to risk fording the swollen river and walk along the road. The force of the water shredded the zip of one leg of my waterproof trousers, causing it to flap around and seriously impede my progress across the large, very mobile, rounded stones on the riverbed. It was with a modicum of relief that I reached the other side to the applause of a group of onlookers who'd stopped to watch.

Everyone else made it too, I'm pleased to report.

As the group reunited, there were Jamie and Tilly. We hadn't seen them since late morning. 'Found it', said Jamie. 'Yeah, right' we all said. 'You didn't even make it as far as Fionn Gleann'. Jamie gave us a wry look before producing the evidence: a hawkweed with blotchy leaves. Tim uttered an expletive for which he later apologised, but we understood. We waited with bated breath as he checked the plant's credentials, in particular its obtuse phyllaries. This was the real McCoy.

Needless to say, in view of our own futile efforts, we wanted to know where Jamie had found it. 'Once I'd found Tilly' he told us 'I'd got so far behind that I realised I had no chance of catching you up, so I decided to go and have a look at the rocks up there'. He indicated the crags above Glen Etive itself. 'And there it was'.

The next day, in rather more clement conditions, we all went to see it. There was something rather thrilling about seeing a plant that so few people had ever seen before. And the views down into Glen Etive and Glencoe were stupendous. All in all, we found about 40 plants.

As I later basked in the satisfaction of the expedition's success, I reflected that, without all the rain that had grounded me for my first two days in Wet Willy, we probably wouldn't have rediscovered *Hieracium basicrinum* at all. We would have forded the river as planned, headed up Fionn Gleann and, as likely as not, drawn a blank. Even if Tilly had run off, it probably wouldn't have been in the right



direction. Sometimes I think that there must be a higher power up there somewhere, gently guiding us. Tim is already considering our next hawkweed challenge, but only if Jamie and Tilly agree to come along!

STEVE LITTLE

Tim pointing at *Hieracium basicrinum* with (from left to right) Tim Rich, Jamie Warren, Steve Little, Simon Thomas, Lyn Jones and Tilly.

Article by WFS research grant recipient. **ON THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS: YELLOW BIRD'S-NEST**

Yellow Bird's-nest (or Dutchman's-pipe) *Monotropa hypopitys* is an eerie little organism: short, thin and ghostly, with a pale yellow or red stem decorated with floppy five-petalled flowers. It has fascinated botanists and curious minds for well over a century. One famous fan was the American poet Emily Dickinson, who in 1882 and on receipt of a watercolour painting of the strange bloom, replied "*That without suspecting it you should send me the preferred flower of life, seems almost supernatural...I still cherish the clutch with which I bore it from the ground when a wondering child, an unearthly booty, and maturity only enhances*

the mystery, never decreases it." Little was she to know but the source of her fascination held mysteries far beyond its quirky appearance.

It is commonly understood that plants take in light, water and carbon dioxide, channel them through a series of organelles and, as if by magic, oxygen and glucose appear on the other side. This is a practically ubiquitous process in the plant kingdom, honed over millennia to function in the most extreme environments. We call plants with this incredible ability 'autotrophs', meaning self-feeding.

Yellow Bird's-nest, however, is a philosophically challenging plant. In a world where natural selection and no free lunch are the dominant narratives, a plant which has lost its ability to photosynthesise seems impossible. Instead, it must rely on others to nourish itself. We tend to perceive charity as a distinctly human and intelligent quality. However, Yellow Bird's-nest relies on the

fungal sheaths on its roots. He realised that practically all the necessary chemicals required for survival must be sourced from fungal partners connecting Yellow Bird's-nest to neighbouring autotrophic plants. Plants which live this way are called mycoheterotrophs, myco- meaning fungi, hetero- meaning other and -troph meaning feeding; plants using others to feed.

Photo: Sue Southall



Yellow Bird's-nest

You have probably heard the words mycological, mycelium and mycorrhiza being bandied around, perhaps without really knowing what they mean. Or maybe you've dug a little deeper into understanding their subterranean significance and discovered the microcosmic world of fungal symbiosis. So, what is a mycorrhizal mycelium? It describes a web of fungal threads (or hyphae) which entangle with or even penetrate the roots of plants to form symbiotic relationships based predominantly on the sharing of nutrients and carbon. These networks communicate between the majority of terrestrial plants, potentially providing a nutrient and carbon highway between members of the web.

kindness of strangers too as it lacks chlorophyll, the essential secret sauce which converts light and carbon dioxide into glucose and oxygen. At one point, scientists believed that this meant that it fed on dead leaf matter, which would classify it as a less glamorous saprotroph. But in 1881, Polish botanist, Franciszek Kamienski, made a leap in the right direction regarding its nutrition, after finding

Yellow Bird's-nest muddies the water of the symbiosis hypothesis. We cannot readily describe its relationship with mycorrhizal fungi as 'symbiotic' because, to our current knowledge, the transfer of goods only goes one way; symbiotic suggests a mutualistic arrangement. Yellow Bird's-nest appears to exclusively profit from its fungal partners and offer nothing in return. Perhaps, as hypothesised by British

mycologist, Merlin Sheldrake, with regard to his favourite mycoheterotroph *Voyria* or Ghostplant, our little fragile friends offer shelter from the subterranean storm of microbes, ions, animals and other plants.

The identities of the fungal and plant partners of Yellow Bird's-nest are also challenging to unearth. Following a microscopic thread through the ground as it twists and turns is virtually impossible. Who then are the mysterious benefactors sponsoring these freeloaders?

One technique used to identify which fungal species connect mycoheterotrophs to the autotrophic plants which feed them is to sequence fungal DNA found in root samples of Yellow Bird's-nest and neighbouring plants. If the same species are present in both root samples, it reveals a fungal thoroughfare between donor plant and the Yellow Bird's-nest, including the species of the said donor and the genus of the fungal feeding tube.

Yellow Bird's-nest connects specifically to groups within the fungal genus *Tricholoma*, which then associate specifically (in Europe) with willow *Salix* species and conifers. In the coastal dunes of North Wales for example, the autotrophic donor is Creeping Willow *Salix repens*, which provides the nutrient or carbon cargo to *Tricholoma cingulatum*, which in turn connects to Yellow Bird's-nest. In South-east England, pine *Pinus* species are responsible for providing the nutrients, this time passing them to *Tricholoma terreum*, which then

delivers them to the Yellow Bird's-nest. With further sampling, more *Tricholoma* partners may be revealed.

The phenomenon of Yellow Bird's-nest and other mycoheterotrophs contradicts Darwin's theory that adaptability is the best method of survival. Here is a plant which hangs in a delicate balance of ecosystem and other organisms, the loss of either of which would be detrimental to the species. It also has no contingency plan, no latent abilities which it can turn to in times of stress. Despite all this it has persisted, apparently on the kindness of strangers.

150 odd years after "as a wondering child" Emily Dickinson "bore it from the ground", the mystery persists. Yellow Bird's-nest challenges our perception of ecosystems, evolution and survival of the fittest. What benefit, if any, do its fungal friends gain from their association with it? Without them, the plant can't germinate or connect to energy sources; without pines and Creeping Willow it can't grow. These bizarrely specific associations go against the commonly-held belief that population variation is the key to weathering ecological threats. Yellow Bird's-nest shows us that strong alliances and charity thrive in nature, that survival does not simply rely on domination and subterfuge, a narrative which, in my opinion, needs more airtime as we watch violent power struggles intensify across the world.

GRACE PALMER

BOOK REVIEWS

***The Accidental Garden*. Richard Mabey. Profile Books (2024). ISBN 978 1 80522070 1. Hard cover £12.99 and available online.**

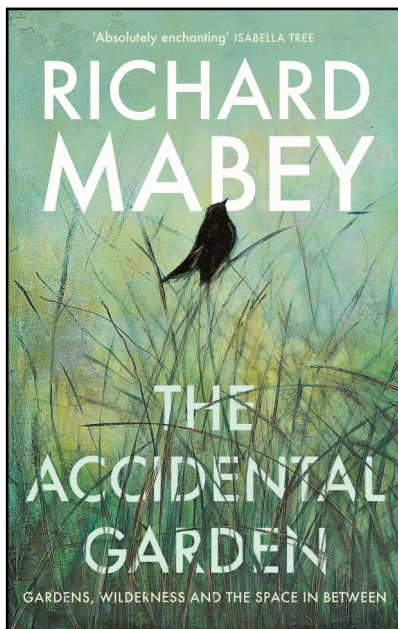
I'm sure that many (or most) of us possess and love at least one book by Richard Mabey. My first was *Food for Free* when in the 1970's I was sometimes travelling in horsedrawn caravans with hippy friends and we wanted to 'live off the land', and the book made hogweed flower buds a staple of our diet! Such youthful adventuring was past when *The Flowering of Britain* came out in 1980, and I was working professionally in conservation when *Flora Britannica* appeared in 1996. Both these became staple go-to books for my life as a field botanist because so soon this writer's distinctive voice became that of a friend as well as someone able to share enormous knowledge.

I've never been lucky enough to meet him, but still feel ease and delight whenever I read his books, and this one is giving me extra pleasure because my 'retirement' life is spread between wild and garden plants. There is a great fashion in garden design now for 'wilding' and I'm sure that many of us will have winced at things like Chelsea

Show gardens which use this label but clearly have no understanding of *habitat*. But the publicity for the concept has raised quite an acute awareness among gardeners of the blurred edges between 'wild' and 'cultivated', and the ethical principles now shaking old cultivation methods. The old question of 'what is a weed' has more resonance now than its old simple answer of 'a plant out of place' and this little book comes in to identify and demonstrate all the questions in a way which feels like a wonderful conversation with one's best friend.

Richard and his wife Polly are dedicated gardeners, but began to feel worried and guilty about how some of their management might be

affecting the biodiversity of their Norfolk patch. The subtitle states exactly how they were thinking – 'Gardens, Wilderness and the Space in between' – and the book is the story of how they examined these concepts. I get overwhelmed by adjectives when I think about the book, 'enchanted', 'enlightening', 'provocative', 'funny', indeed



everything meaning delightful, life-enhancing, and thought-provoking. As they move into trying to find a balance between over-management and allowing an ugly mess which seems to help no living creature, the reader is gripped as well as entertained and educated by the story. I recommend it to every botanist and gardener who cares about the world. It's only just over 150 pages. One is enlightened but never lectured. It finishes with a brief meditation on the gardener's position on the planet when Richard says 'I try my best to stay in my earthworm mode: low profile, minimum intervention' but admittedly belonging to a species of 'meddlers, makers, experimenters' who can't help

wanting to **manage** their scrap of the world.

He ends with words which reassure me that I too can be a gardener but also do my best for the life around me, that like the writer I can be as thrilled by Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* coming into my grass as I am by being able to get some garden rarity established: 'I keep in mind the frankly absurd privilege of owning a patch of planet Earth, and try to pay my dues. We can play other roles beyond the planning and planting and pruning, roles that are also special to our human identity. Be interpreters, scribes, witnesses, neighbours. The welcomers at the gate.'

RO FITZGERALD

***British & Irish Wild Flowers and Plants – a Pocket Guide*: Rachel Hamilton, Chris Gibson & Robert Still: Princeton University Press (2024): ISBN: 978-0-691-24540-9: Publisher's price £12.99 and listed online.**

This is one of the respected Wild Guides (approved by the BSBI) and it is exactly what the title suggests – a truly pocket-sized book, soft binding but tough and looking splash-proof, illustrating about 2,000 species, with extra photographs of key details and a tiny picture of the BSBI distribution maps to help with seeing where plants are likely to be. The photographs are really excellent in spite of the small format, and species are presented in broad groups: Aquatics; Angiosperms, including the flowering plants and grasses, sedges and rushes; Pteridophytes (ferns and allies); Gymnosperms (trees with

needle-like leaves); and Woody plants in general.

So far so good, but the book really made me feel my age. It's one of a newish 'Answer to Everything' genre, and such claims always make me very suspicious. Recent offers such as *Frustrating Flowers & Puzzling Plants* (reviewed in the Summer 2024 magazine) definitely failed to convert me. Many years ago, I had a battered copy of a book written in 1856 called *Enquire within upon Everything*, which was aimed at informing would-be domestic goddesses. This was a source of endless hilarity to those of us living in student discomfort, and I think that this, although remembered with much affection, gave me an unshakable distrust of the 'Everything' principle. This newest botanical handbook includes many widespread plants, and I shall value

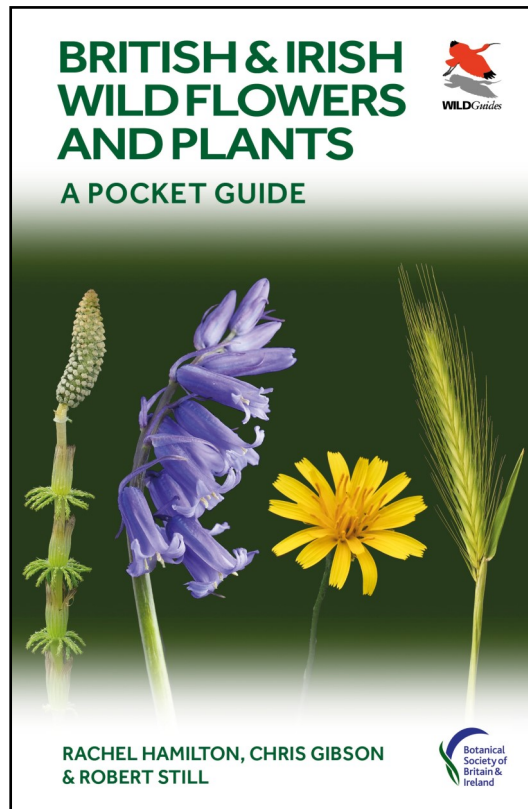
it for the excellent photos of hairs, leaf edges and shapes, fruits, grass parts and other such essential identification clues, but I had real trouble with two elements.

I am an experienced botanist, so in a book like this I can't help noting what is **not** included, and find it maddening if there is no mention of missing species. Of course, most of these are rarer than those included, but I still felt that it could be very misleading if one came to a choice between a couple of species neither of which quite fitted, and there was no mention of possible others.

I also had great difficulty in forcing myself into the 'beginner' position. The book is largely intended for beginners and for readers in the 2020s, who probably have skills in using codes and diagrams, while oldies like me already have some idea of family and can usually find their way to a good old 'either/or' dichotomous key. I was completely foxed by the initial introductory diagram of the structure of the book, and by how to use properly the colour and structure keys. I found that I kept cheating when I tried it out with various plants, both because I already knew where to go and because I found it so shaming not understanding the directions!

I will definitely keep this book to hand for checking details such as dock fruits, alchemilla leaves, grass details, speedwell hairs...It's rare to get such excellent photographs and

these can illuminate the stricter line illustrations of the BSBI Handbooks, but I will never use it as my primary source because I so often know what



is missing. However, if this is kept in mind (and WFS members can always find someone knowledgeable in the Society who will help with rarities) it can be a really good resource and I recommend it as a valuable part of the botanical 'book store' that we all accumulate. Have a look at a copy – it may well be my untechy nature which makes me stand back a bit, and I can see that it is likely to be deservedly popular and much used.

RO FITZGERALD

OBITUARY:
RODNEY MCGUIRE BURTON
20th MAY 1936 - 26th NOVEMBER 2024

Apart from members of the Dent and Schwerdt families and David McClintock, Rodney Burton is probably the individual who has most influenced the organisation and development of the Wild Flower Society, at least in recent years.

Rodney was born in Norwich on 20th May 1936. During the Second World War, in April 1942, his family's house was bombed and the family moved out. After that, Rodney's parents separated and he lived with his mother, who had obtained a post at Long Dene School, a Quaker establishment then based in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, and later at Chiddingstone Castle, Kent, which they lived in. The school has been described by Rodney's son, Geoff, as 'very alternative', by others as 'progressive'.

Rodney's interest in wild flowers goes back at least to those school days. At the age of 15, he worked on a project that included compiling a map of the school grounds and listing all the wild flowers he found there. In his last year at school, by then the Judd School in Tonbridge, where he did his 'A' Levels, he chose the newly-published *Flora of the British Isles* by Clapham, Tutin and Warburg (CTW) as a prize. CTW went with him to Malaya (now Malaysia), where he did most of his national service in the Royal Army Service Corps. From there he went to Cambridge, where he read modern languages and cycled round the countryside

botanising.

A Postgraduate Certificate in Education at Exeter followed and two years teaching at a boys' school in Weston-super-Mare. It seems that teaching did not suit him and he obtained a position in the head office of the Youth Hostelling Association (YHA) in London from 1963 to 1969. It was during this period that he began leading botanical tours in Europe. On one non-botanical European tour Rodney met and, in 1969, married his wife, Yvonne. They had one son, Geoff. Yvonne died in August 2012.

Through the tours and preparation for them, Rodney gained extensive knowledge of the floras of Europe, both the plants themselves and the books about them. Papers in European journals followed. Later he developed a particular interest in the plants of the Greek islands of the Dodecanese and explored the nearby mainland of south-west Turkey. He had aspirations of writing a popular illustrated flora of the area in English. This proved too great a task but resulted in a number of papers reporting his discoveries.

From the YHA, Rodney moved to work in the National Reference Library of Science and Invention, which later became part of the British Library, where he remained for the rest of his professional career.

Inspired by the *Atlas of the British Flora*, published in 1962, Rodney

joined the Botanical Society of the British Isles (now the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland - BSBI), corresponding with Franklyn Perring

of Westminster's libraries. A fellow LNHS member, Dallas Fawdry, told him about the WFS and he joined us in 1966.

Photo: David Steere



Rodney's life in the WFS illustrates vividly how we have changed our recording activities in the years since he joined. Back then, one started life as a Woof (WFS member) in a local geographically-based branch; in Rodney's case Branch V - Greater London. He immediately started filling in a diary (what we now call a record book). This was a very competitive pursuit. Each year, in each branch, the member recording the largest number of plant taxa in flower moved into a winners' branch. Rodney achieved this in his first year, recording 1,151, so moved straightaway into the winners' branch H3. He achieved his high total in part because back then you were allowed to count British plants

and sending in several hundred plant records missing from the *Atlas*. Two years later, after he had begun working in London, Rodney joined the London Natural History Society (LNHS), having read an article by J.E. (Ted) Lousley in the *London Naturalist* which he had seen in one

seen abroad. From H3, he soon moved to Valhalla, where one could count plants not in flower. There were several divisions in Valhalla but Rodney steadily worked his way through them and in 1997 entered Parnassus, the branch for those who have recorded over 2,000 taxa. By

the time of publication of the Summer 2024 report, Rodney had recorded 2,608 wild plants in Britain or Ireland.

In 1972, Rodney became Secretary of the Greater London branch, a post he held for 23 years. Subsequently he was Secretary of a Valhalla division for five years from 2007-2012 before Valhalla was dissolved in 2019, and Branch Secretary of Parnassus Division 1 for eight years from 2013.

from his Valhalla diary. To enable members to report their foreign plant finds, Rodney volunteered to write an annual report which appeared as 'Foreign Holiday Records' articles in the magazine from 1985 to 2006.

Rodney served two stints on the Executive Committee before being elected Chairman of the Society in 1994, a post he held until the end of 2002. He wrote that he believed that "those nine years were the most eventful in the Society's history".



Photo: Sue Buckingham

At the 1984 AGM, Rodney proposed that foreign records of British plants should no longer be counted in the diary competitions. This was accepted and implemented thereafter though members who already had foreign plants in their list were allowed to retain them. Rodney, however, purged (his word) them

Rodney had "the backing of an Executive Committee of imaginative people with a wide range of interests". One of their first actions was the distribution of a questionnaire to all members seeking their opinions and ideas about the operation of the Society. About one third of the membership responded.

Within a year, the WFS had produced its first ever publicity leaflet and at the 1995 AGM, a wholesale change to the branch structure of the Society was agreed.

At the same time as Rodney became Chairman, Violet Schwerdt, daughter of the Society's founder Edith Dent, who had been President since 1956, decided to retire, having reached the age of 80. At the time it was thought by some (though not by Rodney, I suspect) that someone with a high public profile should be invited to be President. That view prevailed and Professor David Bellamy was elected. He was, to quote Rodney, "hopelessly over-committed" and in a contested election in 1997, David McClintock was elected President, followed by Richard Fitter, who, on his retirement in 2002, persuaded Rodney to take on the role. He held the position for one year but did not think he was appropriate for that role so, acting on a suggestion from Pamela Schwerdt, Violet's daughter, he invited Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance, one-time childhood member of the WFS and eminent botanist in adult life, to take over. "He fits the bill perfectly", said Rodney.

AGMs held away from London were introduced during Rodney's chairmanship though Members' Weekends including field meetings as well as the AGM were a later development.

At Rodney's instigation, the Society started taking its charitable aims more seriously, particularly those relating to education. As well as supporting botanical research projects, we started giving bursaries

to young people attending Field Studies Council botany-related courses, grants to Wildlife Trusts for botanical training sessions for adults and, a cause that would have been dear to our founder, Edith Dent, grants for wild flower-related activities for children. Since 2002 we have given over £50,000 in grants to Wildlife Trusts alone.

After several years of discussion, a working group was set up to compile a *Beginner's diary*. The final version, edited by Rodney and illustrated by Olga Stewart, was published in 1998. Two years later Rodney oversaw publication of the fifteenth edition of the *Field botanist's record book*. There were many articles for the magazine, notably a series on plant morphology and some anonymously submitted crosswords. He also proofread the magazine from 2002 to 2021.

Rodney resigned as Chairman in 2002 but in 2007, when Gill Read, his successor, had to stand down because of ill health he returned for a year.

Rodney's considerable contribution to the LNHS, of which he was Recorder for Vascular Plants for 30 years from 1976 to 2006, Chairman of the Botany Committee for a similar period and President in 1981 and 1982, will be detailed elsewhere (an obituary for *The London Naturalist* is in preparation). Of particular interest to WFS members are, I imagine, his annual reports of botanical records in the *London Naturalist* covering the years 1975 to 2006 and his authorship of the *Flora of the London Area* (1983), based on records

collected by LNHS members and friends between 1966 and 1976.

Concerning the *Flora*, I can't do better than quote from David McClintock's review of the book in the Spring 1984 issue of the *Wild Flower Magazine*: "Our member Rodney Burton's *Flora of the London Area* (LNHS, £16.50) is quite unlike any other – a stream of narrative, easy yet scholarly. The only pauses are fresh paragraphs for each genus – there are no headings even when the monocots begin. This is all a remarkable tour de force, full of shrewd, drily witty wisdom on history and distribution, often correcting Lousley and others." McClintock continued with some valid criticisms, including the lack of English names, which he thought would put many people off. Nonetheless, he concluded that "this is a unique and notable production". David McClintock's comments tell us about the book; they also tell us something about its author.

Rodney was involved with the BSBI as well as the WFS and LNHS. He served two stints on their Council, was Vice-County Recorder for VC 21

Middlesex from 1999 to 2006, a referee for *Medicago*, *Galium* and European floras, and a contributor to BSBI journals.

Rodney was active in many other organisations. Latterly in Eynsford, Kent, where he lived, he was a member of Probus, (a local club for retired or semi-retired professionals), a regular croquet player and he excelled as a member of a local group playing Scrabble. He sang bass in several musical ensembles and was an excellent pianist. He was also a composer and those of us who attended his memorial service were able to listen to two piano pieces that he composed while still in his teens and a choral piece which he composed as an adult.

Rodney will be missed but we are thankful for his influential and dedicated contribution to the life of our Society over so many years.

I am grateful to Sheila Wynn, Robin Blades and Geoff Burton, Rodney's son, to whom we send our condolences, for information and advice in compiling this obituary.

JOHN SWINDELLS

RODNEY BURTON: A TRIBUTE

I was invited by Geoff Burton, Rodney's son, to say a few words at the memorial service held on 14th January 2025. The following is an extract from the tribute I made that day.

Rodney was fascinated by plants from childhood and chose the *Flora of the British Isles* (Clapham, Tutin

and Warburg) as a leaving school prize. This was to provide the basis of his interest in plants for the rest of his life.

I joined the WFS in 1979 and the BSBI and London Natural History Society soon after and very soon heard about Rodney Burton. He sounded rather awe-inspiring, clever,

and very knowledgeable. I met him in 1980 and yes, he was all of those things. Not many people reduce me to nervous giggles on first meeting them, but Rodney did. He must have thought I was very silly and was probably right. Rodney's Flora of the London Area was the first flora I ever bought so on one meeting I asked him to sign it for me. He huffed and puffed a bit but did so and I think was pleased I had asked him to do so.

Rodney led walks for the various societies he was involved in, and I started going along to some of them. These were days of being shown new plants and getting to know Rodney better. There was a wonderful walk in 1987 finishing at Rodney's home, Sparepenny Cottage, where his wife Yvonne and the ladies of Eynsford WI had provided a strawberry tea. Rodney confided in me that a great deal of baking practice and sampling of the results had taken place beforehand. Rodney said he had enjoyed the latter a great deal. Shortbread was a particular favourite. After the tea, we were taken on tours around the garden to inspect Rodney's pet wild flowers that he was encouraging in the flower-beds. I remember seeing Venus's-looking-glass *Legousia hybrida* there. There were many other walks, including an introduction to the alien plant species growing along the East London canals. A heady day was spent there prior to Docklands being developed, walking around the Limehouse Basin and what would become the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Rodney showed us some superb plants that day and on finding one plant asked if anyone knew what it was. He

appeared shocked when I said Cannabis *Cannabis sativa* and told me that I should not know about such things!

In 2001 Rodney asked me to take on the editorship of the WFS magazine, an office I held until 2016. Rodney gave me unending support and acted as one of the proofreaders, a thankless task I suspect, as there were so many errors to be found. He was, however, always very kind and encouraging, with his customary gentle smile and way of speaking. He used to send me a lovely letter each year with his Christmas card detailing all his plant-hunting exploits both in the UK and abroad and illustrated with his own superb photographs. I last met up with him at the WFS Members' Weekend in Oxford. He was on fine form and we enjoyed more than one glass of wine together over dinner and set the world to rights on many things apart from wild flowers.

It could be said that Rodney spent his life in flowers, rather a splendid way to spend your life I think. His passing marks the end of an era for the WFS and the wider botanical world. I will miss him so much as will many other people.

Following the memorial service, everyone was invited to join Geoff at Eynsford Village Hall for refreshments. Included were scones with cream and jam. How fitting, and a lovely reminder of that day in July 1987 and the strawberry tea held at Sparepenny Cottage.

PIPPA HYDE

Answers to Gareth's Picture Quiz on pages 24-27

1	Smoke Tree	13	Green-winged Orchid
2	Lawson's Cypress	14	Hart's-tongue
3	Dusky Crane's-bill	15	Thunberg's Barberry
4	Coralroot	16	Crimson Clover
5	Wild Teasel	17	Viper's Bugloss
6	Turkish Sage	18	Yellow-vetch
7	Grass Vetchling	19	Starry Clover
8	Bronze Fennel	20	Oriental Poppy
9	Duke of Argyll's Teaplant	21	Rosy Garlic
10	Garden Angelica	22	Greater Honeywort
11	Hemlock	23	Tree Mallow
12	Triplet Lily	24	Italian Catchfly

Happy memories: AGM 2012 meeting at Sefton Coast, Southport.
 "We're supposed to be here botanising, not plane spotting the Red Arrows!"

