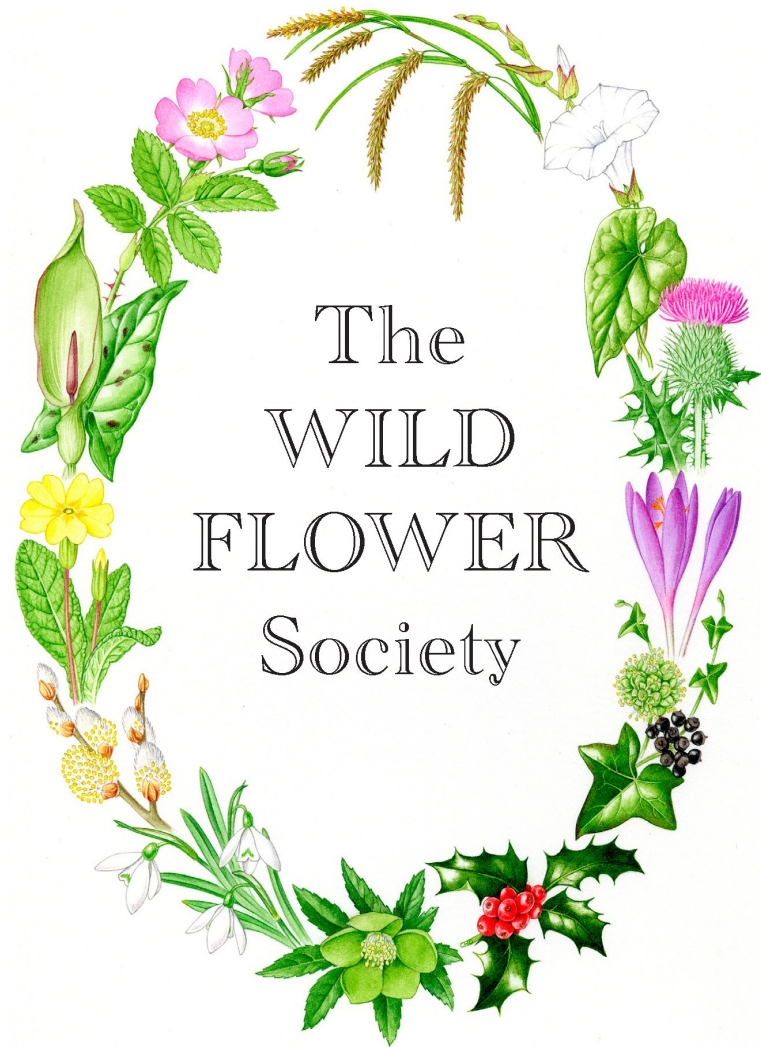


WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE



SUMMER 2025

WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE

Published four times a year by the Wild Flower Society

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SUMMER 2025

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Photograph on back cover - Ragged-Robin *Silene flos-cuculi* by Sue Southall.



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As I write this message to you, I am about to go to a meeting about one of our local rarities, the Plymouth Pear *Pyrus cordata*. There is an initiative to increase the number of individuals and to draw attention to one of the plant species named for this city. This

appetising to humans, but the species is very important for its genetic material that may be used in the breeding of other fruit trees.

In May, as I write, it is in flower, though the scent is rather unpleasant and various people have compared it to rotting scampi, wet carpets or soiled sheets. In the UK, this species was first discovered in hedges near Plymouth in 1871 by the Plymouth naturalist Thomas Richard Archer Briggs (1836-1891) and was named after the place where it was originally found. Briggs was the author of the very useful *Flora of Plymouth* (1880). The subspecies name given to the Plymouth Pear by David Coombe and Peter Sell, *Pyrus cordata* ssp. *briggsii*, is generally now regarded as a synonym. The Cornish consider this a Cornish species as the local name in Cornish is *perbren Kernow*, meaning Cornish pear.

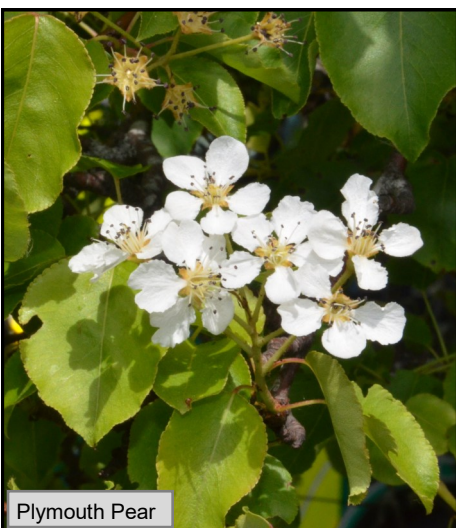


Photo: Ghilleen Prance

small, spiny tree or shrub is only known in the UK from a few wild individuals around Plymouth in Devon and near to Truro in Cornwall but is also cultivated in various botanic gardens. Occasionally it has been found growing in hedgerows and it is thought that it may have been introduced from Europe for use in hedges.

This species is extremely rare in England but is also found in Western Europe and Morocco and is common in Brittany. As it is so rare in England, it is a protected species under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The fruit of the pear is small, hard and sour and not

Some years ago, efforts were made to hybridise plants from the Plymouth and Cornish populations in order to save the species and increase genetic diversity. These successful hybrid individuals were planted in 1996 at the Lanhydrock estate in Cornwall and can still be seen there. My searches to see this rare species around Plymouth have taken me to some strange places, such as the grounds of the local hospital and a large roundabout in the middle of the city. It would be nice to see this tree planted in many more gardens but this needs to be carefully controlled to avoid it crossing with the domestic pear. The rule is that it must be planted at least half a kilometre from

PRESIDENT'S LETTER continued

any cultivated pear, which rather restricts efforts to spread and increase this interesting plant. You can also find the Plymouth Pear growing at Kew and at Kew's Sussex garden, Wakehurst Place. The only

place allowed to distribute the Plymouth Pear, under the restrictions and regulations of Natural England, is Trebourn Nurseries, near Liskeard in Cornwall.

GHILLEAN PRANCE

EDITORIAL

I must admit that this time it has been an uphill battle to get this magazine out on time. What with yet another 'internet outage' and, worse still, my computer going on the blink, it's a wonder I have any hair left!

I have had to have a new computer much earlier than anticipated and hope that next year, when Microsoft's 'Publisher' software is discontinued, it

won't be another steep learning curve for me. Fingers crossed!

I am grateful to all those fellow members who have written meetings reports and sent in relevant photographs to accompany them. In this issue you'll see a few of those photographs on pages 51 and 52.

KEN SOUTHALL

NOTICES

THE ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The photographic competition has always been an integral part of the Members' Weekend although you do not have to attend the AGM to participate. As a reminder the categories are: -

Habitat: A photograph of a plant or plant community within its environment or locality.

Plant Portrait: A photograph of a plant that illustrates its uniqueness while at the same time revealing something of its character.

Close-up: A photograph that reveals, in a more scientific way, the uniqueness of a plant by means of a close-up photograph.

Foreign Fields: A photograph of a plant or plant community that can clearly be seen to be growing in a foreign country.

Human Element: A photograph that concentrates on botanical personalities and/or their activities. Please ask any person involved for their permission before submitting the picture.

Digital (jpegs at full resolution) must be submitted to and received by Ken Southall no later than Monday 11th August 2025. Please refer to the 2025 Yearbook (pages 29 and 30) and/or the Wild Flower Society Website for full details of how to submit your entries.

Ken's email is: ken.southall@btinternet.com

NOTICES continued

NOTICE OF THE WILD FLOWER SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

The Wild Flower Society AGM is to be held on Saturday September 6th 2025
at 2pm at the Weston Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield Road,
Monkton Heathfield, Somerset, TA2 8NE, what3words:
lighters.takes.fronted

Please note there are no retirements of any ordinary Committee members due this year, and therefore no nominations for elections to this role, on the Agenda. The present Officers of the Wild Flower Society's Executive Committee are all willing to stand for re-election to current posts, as permitted by the Aims and Rules of our Society. (Gentle Reminder - Should vacancies or challenges for these posts arise, then the General Secretary needs to receive nominations, in writing, not less than two weeks before the relevant AGM.)

The AGM 2025 agenda and full details of the Members' Weekend are contained in the insert accompanying this Summer Edition of our magazine.

To book, contact Janet John by email wfs.meetings@gmail.com or by phone 01753 884490. Please do this by July 31st.

I am also available to help with enquires; email;
wfs.secwfsociety@gmail.com or 07786 782224 (no land-line),
as are Barbara Lewis (herbalist_barbara@hotmail.com)
and Steve Little (stimheaidh@aol.com), via email.

The Branch Secretaries' Meeting will be held in advance of the AGM, by Zoom, on September 2nd 2025 at 7pm. Details will be circulated to the Secretaries before then.

CAROL ARMSTRONG

BRIAN 'JESSE' TREGALE

We were saddened to hear of the death of Jesse Tregale, on Wednesday, 11th June, in the Marie Curie Hospice, Bradford.

He had been a WFS member since 1985 and was Secretary for the 10km square study (North) from 1998. He was an enthusiastic participant in the study, amassing a huge total of almost 1900 taxa for his square SE13 in Bradford. We offer our condolences to his wife, Rachel, and his family.

An obituary will follow in the Autumn magazine.

The 2025 password for the Members' page of the website is **beeorchid77**.
Copy deadline: 1st September for the Autumn 2025 magazine.
Uncredited photographs in this magazine are by Sue Southall.

A MOST UNUSUAL ROAD-VERGE

Just north of Stow-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire by the A429 is a botanical curiosity - a road-verge hosting seemingly the only naturalised British population of Młokosiewicz's Peony *Paeonia daurica* ssp. *młokosiewitschii*. The

good population of Straw Foxglove *Digitalis lutea*, while subsequent visits revealed the presence of a huge amount of Sowbread *Cyclamen hederifolium*, a few Tall Eryngo *Eryngium giganteum* and two hellebore species, Stinking

Helleborus foetidus and Corsican Hellebore *H.*

argutifolius. One year there was a single Martagon Lily *Lilium martagon* and there remains a good patch of Honey Garlic *Allium siculum*.

However, the bank and, increasingly, the back part of the verge have become very overgrown with brambles and all the more exotic species

appear to have died out. The exception is the Peony, which is thriving; there were dozens of young plants when I visited the site in the spring last year. In flower, in mid-May, it is a sight to behold, with its large, pale-yellow, moon-like flowers. It is a native of the Caucasus, named after the Polish explorer, zoologist, botanist and plant-hunter, Ludwik Młokosiewicz (1831-1909), who studied the Caucasus region extensively and discovered around 60 new species of plants and animals.

It would be nice if 'the Council' (or someone else) could clear away the brambles, to see if any of the original oddities reappear. However, as non-natives, they are regarded as having no conservation value, hence any efforts which might benefit them are likely to relate only to road safety or the British preoccupation with environmental tidiness.

verge first came to attention in 1996 with a short entry in the Aliens section of BSBI News 73 listing the Peony along with other weird and wonderful taxa such as Cornish Bellflower *Campanula alliariifolia*, Waldstein's Hawkweed *Hieracium waldsteinii* and Heath-leaved St. John's-wort *Hypericum coris*, with others yet to be identified (two of these turned out to be Persian Stonecress *Aethionema grandiflorum* and Blue Flax *Linum narbonense*). It seemed that the source of this botanical cornucopia was a local nurseryman who used to discard any unused seeds from the nursery onto the verge at the end of each season.

The verge consists of a long, wide grassy area, with a stony bank behind it. When I first went there in summer 2018, the bank was still quite clear and the whole verge was regularly maintained. The Waldstein's Hawkweed was still there, as was a



Photo: Steve Little

If you want to go and see the Peonies, it's quite straightforward. Driving north from Stow, after about a mile, you will see the grassy verge on the left, just after which there is a small turning on the right to Broadwell SP194274, (what3words: this.poetry.caramel). There is room for one car to park on the verge at the junction with the main road, though

owners of low-slung vehicles please be careful not to ground them! Then (and again, please be careful - it is a busy road) turn left, cross over and work your way along the bottom of the stony embankment on the other side.

STEVE LITTLE

BRANCH REPORTS FOR 2024

KENT (Branch A) including 1 km SQUARE STUDY

Annual	New	Total
Devina Ellis	43	43
Cumulative		
José Gibbs	38	556
Claire Horder	99	827

Devina noted plants from Kent, Hampshire, Dorset and (although not included in this report) Valencia, Spain. Early in the year she came across Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*, parasitic (as is usual) on Hazel roots near Bicknor church on the back of the North Downs. The 'teeth' as such are not apparent at that season but are revealed when the flowers decay and the shiny ivory calyces are left for British botanists to see. AI will tell you that the teeth are on the rhizomes, but that is for an unrelated American toothwort. Her most notable records were from chalk grassland at Bredhurst Hurst, with Grass Vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia*,

Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* and a remarkable spread of orchids including Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and Greater Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*.

José's 2024 botanising was restricted to East Kent, where she took full advantage of county recording group meetings, especially in improving her recognition of grasses. As well as the commoner species, she was shown the hybrid between Sea and Sand Couch *Elymus athericus* x *E. junceiformis* = *E. x obtusiusculus* behind the sea wall at Viking Bay and Pheasant's-tail

Anemanthele lessoniana, established along Beach Road at St Margaret's Bay. Also at St Margaret's was a rare opportunity for her with the group to see St Margaret's Bay Sea-lavender *Limonium sanctamargaritense*, a species so local that, apart from an old record for another bay about 4km north, it has never been found elsewhere. Because Clive Stace did not have the opportunity of examining specimens, his *New Flora* does not commit to recognition of this and some other Sell & Murrell sea-lavenders and he tentatively places it under his *L. binervosum* ssp. *binervosum*. Hence, although well

worth mentioning, it is not included in José's total. Above the cliffs, she was delighted to see Autumn Gentian *Gentianella amarella* in the chalk grassland of South Foreland Valley.

Claire's most spectacular records were those arising at the WFS Cumbria meeting in June and she has already reported on some of them in writing up the first day's finds for the WFS magazine. Otherwise, her finds were nearly all in Kent. These included, perhaps not to be celebrated, Floating Pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* in a brackish ditch at Seasalter, an invasive alien which may yet be countered by an alien weevil introduced elsewhere in Kent. Other non-natives noted by her were Japanese-lantern or Chinese -lantern *Alkekengi officinarum* (one wonders why different floras and lists adopt different nationalities for the lantern fruits) and Cardoon *Cynara cardunculus* var. *cardunculus*, both seen naturalised at St Margaret's at Cliffe with the county recording group. Also with the group, she was shown the cross between Curled and Wood Dock *Rumex crispus* x *R. sanguineus* = *R. x sagorskii* in the Bewl valley at Scotney.



1 km SQUARE STUDY

Name	Monad	Location	New	Total
José Gibbs	TR3370	Westbrook, Margate	10	108
	TR4069	North Foreland	33	97

José's forays through coastal TR3370 (Westbrook) resulted in records for previously overlooked species such as cliff-top Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense* and Spear Thistle *C. vulgare*. Vegetational change, rather than overlooking, seems to lie behind her recording of Rock Samphire *Crithmum maritimum*, since she remarks on new plants arriving at the undercliff and on this species being encountered more frequently on Thanet. For her other square, TR4069 (North Foreland), José led a Kent Botanical Recording Group meeting in June and the extra pairs of eyes helped her towards many of the 33 new plants which she noted in 2024. These included 12

grasses and sedges, plus a couple of dog-roses now separated out as species: Hairy Dog-rose *Rosa corymbifera* and Glandular Dog-rose *Rosa squarrosa*, which required close scrutiny. If José benefited from providing leadership for the recorders' meeting, then the latter also benefited from the choice of square, with its splendid colony of Lizard Orchids *Himantoglossum hircinum*, which had featured in her list from an earlier year.

GEOFFREY KITCHENER

SOUTH COAST and CHANNEL ISLES (Branch M)

Annual	New	Total
Maureen Fidkin	772	772
Ruth Ridley	233	233
Cumulative		
Richard Coomber ***	62	1342
Helen Dignum	172	1447
Pippa Hyde	8	1700
Sarah MacClennan	155	1010
Andy & Sue Skarstein	295	721
Peter Whitcombe	6	1044
*** adjusted total		

Maureen, with the help of experienced WFS member and mentor Richard Coomber, saw 772 plants in flower in her first year. Most were in her home county of Hampshire. For example, in April she saw Shepherd's-cress *Teesdalia nudicaulis* and Spring Vetch *Vicia lathyroides* on Hayling Island, then Mousetail *Myosurus minimus* and Small Cleavers *Galium murale* at Port Solent. By attending a wildflower identification course in the New Forest during May and June, Maureen was able to add many grasses and sedges including Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina*, Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, Divided Sedge *Carex divisa* and Few-flowered Spike-rush *Eleocharis quinqueflora*. Other nice plants added from the area were Bog Pimpernel *Lysimachia tenella* and Upright Chickweed *Moenchia erecta*. In a local copse in June, Maureen saw White Helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium* and the rarer Narrow-leaved Helleborine *C. longifolia*. On the popular WFS New Forest meeting, also in June, she added many plants including Slender Marsh-bedstraw *Galium constrictum*, Brown Beak-sedge *Rhynchospora fusca* and Hampshire-purslane *Ludwigia palustris*. Also in the New Forest, in August, Maureen found Marsh Gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe*. By attending some Hampshire Flora Group meetings, she added Perennial Glasswort *Sarcocornia perennis* and four confirmed species of annual glassworts *Salicornia* spp.

It was **Ruth's** second annual diary

recording plants in flower. Most of the 233 plants on her list were spotted around Seaford and in the varied habitats of East Sussex. She started in February with many urban weeds



and the early-flowering Winter Heliotrope *Petasites pyrenaicus*. Ruth did particularly well spotting orchids in flower, starting locally in April with Early-purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*. Then in May, on a trip to Kent (inspired by a WFS meeting she had missed the previous year), Ruth saw Early Spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes*, Fly Orchid *Ophrys insectifera* and Lady Orchid *Orchis purpurea*. Back in Sussex she added Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio* on Seaford Head and in June, Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. Near the coast path in Newhaven, Ruth saw several clovers including Bird's-foot Clover *Trifolium*

ornithopodioides, a very nice find. Many of the chalk down plants on Ruth's list were seen on the Seven Sisters including a locally frequent speciality, Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata*. In September, Ruth visited Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, adding wetland and coastal plants to her list, including Trifid Bur-marigold *Bidens tripartita* and Sea Aster *Tripolium pannonicum*.

Richard saw nearly half of the new plants on his list at the WFS Lizard meeting in May. Many of these were local specialities including Fringed Rupturewort *Herniaria ciliolata*, Twin-headed Clover *Trifolium bocconeii* and Irish Sorrel *Rumex acetosa* ssp. *hibernicus*. In his home county of Hampshire, Richard found the rare hybrid orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* x *D. praetermissa* = *D. x hallii* in May, White Forget-me-not *Plagiobothrys scouleri* in June and Common x Lax-flowered Sea-lavender *Limonium vulgare* x *humile* = *L. x neumanii* in August. On visits to Dorset, Suffocated Clover *Trifolium suffocatum* was a nice find in May, and in October Richard spotted a naturalised Wrinkled Viburnum *Viburnum rhytidophyllum*. Some late additions were made in December on a New Year Plant Hunt in West Sussex. These included Chenault's Coralberry *Symphoricarpos x chenaultii*.

Helen found English Scurvygrass *Cochlearia anglica* in April, a nice find in West Sussex. She then saw the very attractive Pasqueflower *Pulsatilla vulgaris* on a trip to Martin Down, Wiltshire. On the WFS Lizard meeting in May, Helen added many local specialities including Long-

headed Clover *Trifolium incarnatum* ssp. *molinerii*, Upright Clover *T. strictum*, Cornish Heath *Erica vagans* and the extremely rare Land Quillwort *Isoetes histrix*. Almost 100 of Helen's new plants were seen in July on the 3 WFS meetings in Ireland. Plants seen on the Burren included Hoary Rock-rose *Helianthemum oelandicum* ssp. *piloselloides*, Narrow-leaved Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza traunsteinerioides* and Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala*. In Connemara, Helen found Pipewort *Eriocaulon aquaticum*, the only representative of its family in Britain and Ireland. Other interesting finds were Slender Cottongrass *Eriophorum gracile*, Blue Moor-grass *Sesleria caerulea* and the alien Broad-leaved Rush *Juncus planifolius*. In Co. Wexford there were more nice finds including the rare Recurved Sandwort *Minuartia recurva*, Cottonweed *Achillea maritima* and Early Orache *Atriplex praecox*. Back in West Sussex at the WFS Amberley meeting in August, Helen added the rare local plant Cut-grass *Leersia oryzoides* and also Arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia*.

Pippa added just a few plants to her cumulative list this year. Most of them were seen on Holme Dunes at the WFS AGM in Norfolk. New to Pippa were Rock Sea-lavender *Limonium binervosum* agg. and Matted Sea-lavender *Limonium bellidifolium*. Other nice finds there were Slender Club-rush *Isolepis cernua* and Smooth Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris glabra*. In Sussex Pippa spotted an unusual casual, Tall Fleabane *Erigeron annuus*.

Sarah added many plants to her list this year at WFS meetings beginning

with Yellow-vetch *Vicia lutea*, Italian Catchfly *Silene italica* and Rough Clover *Trifolium scabrum* at Shoreham Beach in May. Then on a holiday to the Isle of Lewis, new plants seen included Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica*, Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica* and Scots Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum*. Back in her home county of Hampshire, Musk Orchid *Herminium monorchis* and Frog Orchid *Coeloglossum viride* were nice finds on the chalk downland at Noar Hill. In the New Forest, on the WFS meeting in June, Sarah added more than 30 new plants including Pillwort *Pilularia globulifera*, Many-stalked Spike-rush *Eleocharis multicaulis*, Lesser Water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides* and Allseed *Linum radiola*. On the Somerset WFS meeting, she saw many new plants, for example Wall Bedstraw *Galium parisiense*, Cut-leaved Dead-nettle *Lamium hybridum* and Hairy Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus subbiflorus* in disturbed habitats, then Flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus* in a river. Finally, on the rewilded Knepp Estate in the Sussex Weald, Sarah spotted Broad-leaved Spurge *Euphorbia platyphyllos*.

In their third year of keeping a diary, **Andy** and **Sue** saw 536 plants in flower, adding 295 new plants to their cumulative total. They both benefited from an Identiplant course and found most of their plants in their home county of Hampshire. In April, nice finds were Pink Shepherd's-purse *Capsella rubella* and Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*. In June, they added River Water-

crowfoot *Ranunculus fluitans*, then Bastard-toadflax *Thesium humifusum* in July, Large Venus's-looking-glass *Legousia speculum-veneris* in August and Guernsey Pigweed *Amaranthus blitum* in September. Sue and Andy made many nice finds while on holiday: Roseroot *Rhodiola rosea*, Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica* and Wood Bitter-vetch *Vicia orobus* on the Isle of Mull; Rough Dog's-tail *Cynosurus echinatus* in Dorset; and Starry Clover *Trifolium stellatum* at the WFS Shoreham Beach meeting. Exploring the Teesdale area in June, they found Pyrenean Scurvygrass *Cochlearia pyrenaica*, Alpine Penny-cress *Noccaea caerulea* and Dark-red Helleborine *Epipactis atrorubens* in a lime quarry. At the WFS Members' Weekend in Norfolk, Sue and Andy added Grey Hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens*, Kidneyweed *Dichondra micrantha* and Hoary Mullein *Verbascum pulverulentum* at Holkham Dunes and Thread-leaved Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus trichophyllus* at Snettisham Beach.

Peter added to his list whilst on trips away this year. In Suffolk he saw Clustered Clover *Trifolium glomeratum* and Coriander *Coriandrum sativum* as a casual, then in Derbyshire he found some naturalised Londonpride *Saxifraga x urbium*. In Wales he saw wetland plants including Ivy-leaved Crowfoot *Ranunculus hederaceus* and Bog Stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*.

SUE DENNESS

YORKSHIRE including 1 km SQUARE STUDY (Branch N1)

Cumulative	New	Total
Michael Harford	177	574
Robin Blades	5	1311
Anthony & Rita Grainger	37	1835
Kerry Morrison	50	725
Susan Simcock	95	1519
Thomas Simcock	84	1481
Mary Sorsby	47	1001

Michael has had an interesting year and continues as a member of the Bradford Botany Group (BBG) and Wharfedale Naturalists. He went with the BBG to Silverdale, Lancashire, and Dewsbury, where he saw lots of grasses including False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Wavy Hair-grass *Avenella flexuosa* and Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* amongst many others. In Wharfedale his new grass list continued to grow with Downy Oat-grass *Avenula pubescens* and Crested Hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha* and he also saw Bristle Club-rush *Isolepis setacea*. A holiday in Northumberland included time on Lindisfarne, where he saw many of the island's specialities including the Lindisfarne Helleborine *Epipactis sancta*, which he says now has cages round it to protect it, and the ubiquitous Pirri-pirri-bur *Acaena novae-zelandiae*. These all add to his growing list of new finds.

Robin retired and moved house last year from London to Harrogate, which occupied him for the first part of the year. He has joined the Harrogate and District Naturalists'

Society and on his first meeting with them found the rare Upright Spurge *Euphorbia stricta* at Farnham Gravel Pit, near Knaresborough. His other local highlight was seeing the large population of Thistle Broomrape *Orobanche reticulata* at Quarry Moor, Ripon. He had seen this years before with Phyl Abbott but it was nice to see it again. This is an easy site for anyone looking for this rare broomrape. Robin's other finds were provided by the AGM in Norfolk, where he was pleased to see Norfolk Everlasting-pea *Lathyrus heterophyllus* and Grey Hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens*. I hope that Robin enjoys being back in the north and seeing lots of new northern flowers.

Anthony and Rita had a good start to the year finding the hybrid between Sweet and Hairy Violet *Viola odorata* x *V. hirta* = *V. x scabra* at Brockadale, a lovely site in Yorkshire. On an interesting trip to Kent with the BBG they saw Late Spider-orchid *Ophrys fuciflora* at Folkestone Down, where the flowers have to be hand-pollinated by the warden as the

spider pollinator is now extinct at the site. They also found a single flower of Sea Pea *Lathyrus japonicus* at Dungeness. Whilst glancing through a nature trail leaflet at Rye they found a mention of Rottingdean Sea-lavender *Limonium hyblaeum*, which they were very pleased to find. Then to the delights of the Norfolk AGM, where the highlights for them were Beaked Tasselweed *Ruppia maritima*, Creeping Lady's-tresses *Goodyera repens*, Matted Sea-lavender *Limonium bellidifolium* and Saltmarsh Goosefoot *Oxybasis chenopodioides*. A good year's botanising for Rita and



Anthony.

Kerry's field trips with the Harrogate Naturalists took her to the Malham area, where she saw several upland species including Baneberry *Actaea spicata*, Pyrenean Scurvygrass *Cochlearia pyrenaica*, Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala*, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and Dwarf Milkwort *Polygala amarella*. In Upper Teesdale, with the WFS, she was pleased to meet John O'Reilly and Lizzie Maddison and see lots of new

rushes, including Alpine Rush *Juncus alpinoarticulatus* on Cronkley Fell, and Scottish Asphodel *Tofieldia pusilla*. The Irish WFS meeting on the Burren was memorable and led to more new plants including Irish Saxifrage *Saxifraga rosacea* and the rare Irish Sea-lavender *Limonium recurvum* ssp. *pseudotranswallianum*, which only grows in Co. Clare. Again, an interesting year with lots of lovely new finds.

Susan and Tom's field trip to Kent with the BBG led to an impressive list of new finds including many orchids. They saw Lizard Orchid *Himantoglossum hircinum*, both Early and Late Spider-orchids *Ophrys sphegodes* and *O. fuciflora*, and Man, Lady and Monkey Orchids *Orchis anthropophora*, *O. purpurea* and *O. simia*. Like Rita and Anthony, they also found Rottingdean Sea-lavender *Limonium hyblaeum* at Rye Harbour with the help of the leaflet. At Dungeness RSPB Reserve they found Hog's Fennel *Peucedanum officinale*, which was confirmed by the warden as a new site for this species. The WFS field trip to the New Forest yielded many more interesting plants such as Wild Gladiolus *Gladiolus illyricus*, Coral-necklace *Illecebrum verticillatum* and Hampshire-purslane *Ludwigia palustris*. Nearer home, in Silverdale, Yellow-flowered Strawberry *Potentilla indica*, Solomon's-seal *Polygonatum multiflorum*, Slender Borage *Borago pygmaea* and Celandine Saxifrage *Saxifraga cymbalaria* were all new finds and added to their impressive list.

Mary has had an interesting year visiting places as far apart as Guernsey and Glencoe. She went to Guernsey with the Ramblers and was pleased to find Eastern Gladiolus *Gladiolus communis* ssp. *byzantinus* scattered along the northern side of the island, making a lovely show with its dark red flowers with a white streak. The star of the Glencoe field trip was Rannoch-rush *Scheuchzeria palustris*. A favourite on a trip out with Naturetrek to a wild flower farm was Crown Vetch *Securigera varia* growing on banks where it had escaped from the fields. Sorby Natural History Society, based in Sheffield, took her to different sites

including Forgemasters Tip, an old industrial site, where she saw Spanish-dagger *Yucca gloriosa* and, on a wet, foggy, boggy day, Ringinglow Bog, to find Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* and Crowberry *Empetrum nigrum*. On a late visit to her native Liverpool, she found Shaggy-soldier *Galinsoga quadriradiata* growing in paving along the waterfront.

Mary's aim last year was to reach 1,000 plants; pleasingly she has achieved it.

1 km SQUARE STUDY

Name	Monad	Location	New	Total 2024
Anthony & Rita Grainger	SE 2338	Horsforth, Leeds	7	325
	SE 2339	Horsforth, Leeds	1	271
	SE 2438	Horsforth, Leeds	2	249

Anthony and Rita's new finds were mainly in the urban part of their home



monad. They found Chives *Allium schoenoprasum* and Pencilled

Crane's-bill *Geranium versicolor* on waste ground and a Large-flowered Evening-primrose *Oenothera glazioviana* on builder's waste. They also found a young Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea* in their garden, probably sown by a squirrel.

JUDITH COX

NORTH EAST (Branch N2)

Cumulative	New	Total
Judith Line	62	334
Richard Friend	59	789
Mel Rocket	?	85
Kevin Story	16	403

Judith reported a number of highlights in 2024, including some excellent botanising in Alsace, France, and a hugely rewarding WFS Members' Weekend in Norfolk. Dersingham Bog, in particular, was of great interest, as were the many new species Judith was shown in Holme Dunes, not least of which was Matted Sea-lavender *Limonium bellidifolium*. Judith's involvement in the flora of the local churchyard continues and the number of species has grown from 68 to 93. A change in management and the introduction of some new species have been successful. Both Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus* and the Mullein moth thrived last year.

Richard had another interesting season, adding 59 new species to his list. Some of these he found during a first visit to the southern chalk - New Forest and Salisbury Plain. Highlights there were Dwarf Sedge *Carex humilis*, Squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica*, Chamomile *Chamaemelum nobile*, Marsh Clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata* plus some sneaky Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum* on an acid bit. Back on

the northern limestones, Bird's-foot Sedge *C. ornithopoda*, Fly Orchid *Ophrys insectifera* and Perennial Flax *Linum perenne* were also new. Coastal finds included Sea Pea *Lathyrus japonicus*.

Mel's wild flower hunting last year was somewhat inhibited by family illness. However, the lack of opportunity to travel too far was more than compensated for by him being able to join a Northumberland Natural History Society course on the botany of Northeast England. Starting at Tynemouth, he made a number of field trips across the region, ending with a visit to Hareshaw Linn in October. Every day was a delight for Mel but the standout has to be Holy Island, where he found the Lindisfarne Helleborine *Epipactis sancta* in full flower and had first sight of Frog Orchid *Coeloglossum viride* and Small Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum azoricum*. A visit to Upper Teesdale added Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*, Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica* and Alpine Bistort *Bistorta vivipara*. Thanks to a previous visit with Margaret Bradshaw, Mel was able to



a solitary, but large, clump of Large Speedwell *Veronica teucrium*. On a visit to the Lizard, Cornwall, the star species for Mel were Hairy Greenweed *Genista pilosa*, Wild Onion *Allium vineale* and Bristly Oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*.

Kevin wasn't able to do much botany this year but a 50th anniversary college reunion resulted in some pleasing finds. An evening stroll on and around Plymouth Hoe yielded Wild Clary

show the group the leaves of Alpine Meadow-rue *Thalictrum alpinum*, although it was not yet in flower. Other highlights included seeing the Golden Snowdrops *Galanthus nivalis* Sandersii group in Bywell churchyard, Narrow-leaved Ragwort *Senecio inaequidens* at Walker Riverside and Purple Ramping-fumitory *Fumaria purpurea* at Cullernose Point. On his lone rambles, Mel was pleased to find a further significant patch of Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea lutea* close to Wylam, to add to the other sites along the Tyne, and hundreds of Dark-red Helleborine *Epipactis atrorubens* at Bishop Middleham Quarry. On a day out to the River Greta in Cumbria he discovered the very striking Coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera* and Salmonberry *Rubus spectabilis*. The dune systems along the northeast coast provided much variety as usual, with lots of Purple Milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus*, and Great Lettuce *Lactuca virosa* on the North Gare reserve, at the mouth of the Tees. The dunes at Warkworth presented hundreds of flowers of Maiden Pink *Dianthus deltoides* plus

Salvia verbenaca, Trailing St John's-wort *Hypericum humifusum* and Pellitory-of-the-wall *Parietaria judaica*. Furthermore, whilst walking in Teesdale, Kevin spotted a distant pink haze which provided a new entry for his diary. It turned out to be a mass of Amphibious Bistort *Persicaria amphibia*, blooming on a shallow pond bed. Finally, Kevin was able to add a few common, previously missed species, such as Osier *Salix viminalis*, Laburnum *Laburnum anagyroides*, Hop Trefoil *Trifolium campestre* and Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*.

Robert did not find much time to botanise this year. However, he did attend a WFS field trip up in Northumberland. He was pleased to see the Yellow Snowdrop, having looked for it in years past without success. He also saw the cross between Snowdrop and Pleated Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis* x *G. plicatus* = *G. x valentinei*.

LIZZIE MADDISON

NORTH WEST and NORTH WALES (Branch N3) including 1 km SQUARE STUDY

Annual	New	Total
Paul Nightingale	690	690
Dinesh Patel	378	378
Rowena Tylden-Smith	338	338
Cumulative		
Barbara Allen	23	1408
Susan Riley	21	1216
Emma Graney	15	260
David Morgan	31	1022
Dorothy Ross	8	985



Bird's-eye Primrose

Paul has restarted his WFS recording list after a lapse of some

years due to business priorities. He has attended many WFS meetings plus those of the Cumbria Flora Group, which he has joined. He saw a good number of plants in Scotland, namely Bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* at Teanga Fhiadhaich, Forked Spleenwort *Asplenium septentrionale* at Cliff Hill, Poolewe, Alpine Bistort *Bistorta vivipara* at Keltneyburn Nature Reserve and Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala* at Meall Mor, Glencoe. More or less all the rest he found in Cumbria: Brookweed *Samolus valerandi* and Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa* in Frith Wood and Narrow-leaved Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza traunsteinerioides* at Orton Pasture.

Dinesh joined our April meeting at Arnside. During the year, he travelled about the country locating many

orchid species, two being Bog Orchid *Hammarbya paludosa* on Carrock Fell and Burnt Orchid *Neotinea ustulata* at Pewsey Down, Wiltshire. An early start in March at Dawlish Warren gave him Sand Crocus *Romulea columnae*, while in the north west, our northern grass, Blue Moor-grass *Sesleria caerulea*, was seen at Ingleton and Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea lutea* by the River Kent, Kendal. Further south, in Derbyshire, he saw Jacob's-ladder *Polemonium caeruleum* in Lathkill Dale. He also listed a number of ferns: Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* at Brockadale Nature Reserve, West Yorkshire, and Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis* in Eggerslack Woods, Grange-over-Sands. In addition, he had a rewarding climb up Cwm Idwal, where he saw Snowdon Lilly *Gagea serotina*. I feel exhausted just reading about his finds.

Rowena joined the Society in 2023 and I am pleased that she is starting to record. She too has travelled up and down the country, both on business and for pleasure. She saw Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris* at Tilly Whim Caves and Wild Clary *Salvia verbenaca* at Dancing Edge, both in Dorset. On the towpath of the canal at Leeds she found Narrow-leaved Ragwort *Senecio inaequidens*, which seems to be spreading across the country at a rapid rate. She saw two *Geums*: Large-leaved Avens *Geum macrophyllum* at Compstall, Cheshire, and Wood Avens *G. urbanum* in Stockport. Over in the Morecambe Bay area, she found Bog-myrtle *Myrica gale* at Meathop Moss, Cumbria. She tells me she is hoping to increase her tally by filling in some gaps of common plants during 2025. I

look forward to meeting Rowena at one of the meetings this year.

Barbara has added a healthy number to her list. The Southport coast is very handy from her home and she was able to attend meetings held there. She saw Clustered Clover *Trifolium glomeratum* in quantity on grass verges around Hightown and Baltic Rush *Juncus balticus* at a well-known site at Birkdale. Another meeting took her to Bidston, on the Wirral, for Eelgrass *Zostera marina*, while she saw Witch-grass *Panicum capillare* during our Autumn Hunt at Miller Park, Preston.

Susan has recorded locally this year. She attended several meetings, including our Grange-over-Sands meeting at Eggerslack Wood, where the emphasis was on ferns. Here she saw Beech and Limestone Ferns *Phegopteris connectilis* and *Gymnocarpium robertianum*. An early visit to the St. Helens area gave her Whorled Coralroot *Cardamine quinquefolia*, a beautiful plant, by the Carr Mill Dam. She also recorded the Witch-grass *Panicum capillare* mentioned above, growing in a weedy flowerbed in Miller Park, Preston.

Emma has made some good additions to her list. She spotted Gallant-soldier *Galinsoga parviflora* near Liverpool Cathedral, while a walk in Sefton Park gave her Black Nightshade *Solanum nigrum*. While on Hayling Island, Hampshire, she came across Three-cornered Garlic *Allium triquetrum*. I have always considered this to be a southern species but we also see it around here now. She also found Wood Avens *Geum urbanum* flourishing all

around the car park at Rainford Tennis Club.

Travelling through Scotland, **David** stopped at Oban, where he saw Wood Vetch *Ervilia sylvatica*. He then went on to the Outer Hebrides, saying what a beautiful part of the country it is. On South Uist, he recorded Baltic Rush *Juncus balticus* and Distant Sedge *Carex distans*, while Barra gave him Many-stalked Spike-rush *Eleocharis multicaulis*. Back home in Cheshire, whilst on a meeting with the Cheshire Flora Group, he was pleased to see Mousetail *Myosurus minimus* and Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus*. He also recorded two subspecies of Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* namely ssp. *fertilis*, in which tubers are not formed in the leaf axils, and ssp. *verna*, in which tubers are found in the leaf axils after anthesis. I think that you have to look for this later in the season.

During April, **Dorothy** visited

Foulshaw Moss, a relatively new nature reserve in South Lakeland, where she found Bog-myrtle *Myrica gale*. To bring the habitat back to its original peat bog, Cumbria Wildlife Trust felled some trees, thanks to which water-loving *Sphagnum* moss soon reappeared. Ospreys have also taken up residence here. The following month, on Fairhaven Dunes, Lytham, Dorothy spotted Tassel Hyacinth *Muscari comosum*, while at the edge of moorland at Stonyhurst, Lancashire, she found Himalayan Honeysuckle *Leycesteria formosa*, the only shrub with a hollow stem. Lastly, she found White Mustard *Sinapis alba* growing outside the Cley next the Sea Visitor Centre, Norfolk.

I hope that 2025 brings some good weather to enable us to get out there and enjoy the plants.

NORTH WEST 1 km SQUARE STUDY

Name	Monad	Year	New	Total
Barbara Allen	SJ5391 Merseyside	5	1	293
	SJ5692 Merseyside	1	185	185
	SJ5693 Merseyside	1	95	95
	SJ5792 Merseyside	1	101	101
	SJ5793 Merseyside	1	88	88
Pauline Grimshaw	SJ9620 Tameside	2	11	130
Sheila Wynn	SD7444 West Bradford, Lancashire	5	10	259

Barbara has really gone to town, taking up four more monads. These all adjoin each other in the area of

Burtonwood. During the 2nd World War, the U.S. Airforce were stationed here. The base closed in 1991 and a

Heritage Centre was opened on part of it, focusing on the lives of the servicemen.

Firstly, in SJ5692, early in the year, Barbara was pleased to see Primrose *Primula vulgaris* by a stream. Another early find was Common Whitlowgrass *Erophila verna*. A plant which I associate with the Isles of Scilly, Three-cornered Garlic *Allium triquetrum*, Barbara spotted in the local Nature Park. Later, she saw Goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis*, with its unusual seed-head, on Clay Lane. In SJ5693, Barbara spotted Lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis* on a footpath to Fir Tree Lane. Of the four *Prunus* species that she sighted, two were Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* and Japanese Cherry *P. serrulata*. She also saw the hybrid Highclere Holly *Ilex x altaclerensis*, which usually has larger flowers, fruit and leaves, and Charlock *Sinapis arvensis*, off Back Lane and Lumber Lane respectively. In SJ5793, on the bridleway at Hall Road, she noticed Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, the unusual Square-stemmed Bamboo *Chimonobambusa quadrangularis* in an entrance way off Lumber Lane and, on Winsford Drive, Garden Grape-hyacinth *Muscari armeniacum*. SJ5792 gave Barbara Early Forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima* on Alder Lane, while she found both Fool's-parsley *Aethusa cynapium* and Black Horehound *Ballota nigra* on Fir Tree Lane. Green Field-speedwell *Veronica agrestis* was spotted on tipped waste - always a good place to

look for 'goodies'. Lastly, just one new plant for SJ5391, namely Nasturtium *Tropaeolum majus*, which she found at the back of Crawford Street.

Pauline has just 11 new plants for her monad. She started the year off well but got a bit distracted by a holiday to the Gargano National Park, Italy, which I can well understand. She has added Fringe cups *Tellima grandiflora* and two speedwells, namely Thyme-leaved *Veronica serpyllifolia* and Ivy-leaved *V. hederifolia*.

Sheila's first find for her 1km list was Yellow Crocus *Crocus x luteus* on the banks of the River Ribble. A surprise find in her garden were both Hairy and Smooth Tares *Ervilia hirsuta* and *Ervum tetraspermum* growing on new topsoil a few months after delivery. A first for the area was Hoary Mustard *Hirschfeldia incana*. Sheila decided to have a go at dandelions and armed with her BSBI Dandelion Handbook and an eye glass, she literally walked round the corner of her home to find some in the lane. She chose two and spent some time identifying them, coming up with Close-lobed Dandelion and Selland's Dandelion *Taraxacum densilobum* and *T. sellandii* respectively. These came back as being correct from the referee. Well done.

JULIE CLARKE

THAMES and CHILTERNs (Branch O) including 1 km SQUARE STUDY

Annual	New	Total
Mary Bentall		352
Philip Youd		178
Cumulative		
Susan Grimshaw	1	1203
Roger Heath-Brown	30	1999
Barbara Spence	41	1156

Mary's diary is based largely on her own area in the Oxfordshire Cotswolds, but also with records across the south of England from Cornwall to Suffolk. She saw Grape-hyacinth *Muscari neglectum* at its west Oxfordshire site, where it is believed by some to be native. Another nice record was Wood Vetch

Ervillea sylvatica, at Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire. It is totally absent around me. I was also interested to see that she had Field Penny-cress *Thlaspi arvense* as a weed in her garden - so do I! Next year she will start cumulative recording.



Henbane

This was **Philip's** first year with the Society and he sent me an interesting diary, with records almost entirely from his local area around Chesham and Amersham. My favourites from his list are Henbane *Hyoscyamus niger*, which is always a spectacular plant to find, and Coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera*, which is a local speciality for him. We had an interesting email exchange about a gladiolus he had found on a country roadside verge. After careful

examination of his photos we decided it was likely to be Eastern *Gladiolus Gladiolus communis*.

Susan added just one to her list, Stinking Chamomile *Anthemis cotula*, from a patch of rough ground at Croydon Airport. Nonetheless, she had an interesting botanical year, playing “hunt the Spider-orchid” *Ophrys sphegodes* with her grandchildren near Swanage, enjoying the Military Orchids *Orchis militaris* on a visit to Homefield Wood, Buckinghamshire, and protecting Bee Orchids *Ophrys insectifera* on a local grass verge.

I, **Roger**, come next in alphabetical order. Most of my additions came from the WFS Lizard meeting, where we were shown many of the famous local plants, but I also enjoyed visits to Hampshire, chasing up records from the Hants Flora News. This led me to Heath Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia borealis*, in the New Forest, and to Dwarf Arrowhead *Sagittaria subulata*, in a lake near Kinsley.

Barbara's list has lots of nice records as usual. I am particularly envious of her visit to Anglesey, which yielded South Stack Fleawort *Tephrosia integrifolia* ssp. *maritima*, Spotted Rock-rose *Tuberaria guttata* and Seaside Centaury *Centaurea littorale*. She also saw the delightful little Spring Vetch *Vicia lathyroides*, near Frilford, Oxfordshire, and Nottingham Catchfly *Silene nutans*, at Hayling Island, Hampshire.

I received New Year messages from a number of members. Amongst them, Margaret Holmes mentions adding Stone Parsley *Sison amomum* to her list, and also finding the cultivar Cut-Leaved Elder *Sambucus nigra* f. *laciniata* – a plant I'd not previously heard of!

In addition to hearing from those with plant records to report, it was good to hear from various other members during the course of the past year, with identification queries or news – many thanks for writing in!

1 km SQUARE STUDY

There was only one 1km square study again in 2024 – my own! I continued work on SP5801 for a third year. The square includes my home in the village of Garsington. There are quiet roads and footpaths, a churchyard and old stone buildings, a pond and stream, and some rather dull arable and grazing land. I was only able to make 7 additions to the list, bringing the total up to 249. The most notable new plants were Fig-leaved Goosefoot *Chenopodium*

ficifolium and Johnson-grass *Sorghum halepense*, the latter presumably originating from bird seed. There are still some notable gaps in my list, so there's more work to be done!

Do keep in touch everyone, and here's hoping for some fine flowers in the coming year.

ROGER HEATH-BROWN

SEVERN VALLEY, MID and SOUTH WALES (Branch P)

Cesca Beamish only joined in the autumn but as she helps run the BSBI North Worcestershire Flora Group. I will look forward hopefully to interesting news from her in this good area in 2025.

Marian Davidson struggled with the horrid effects of Long Covid in 2024, so had to miss out on botanising in her home county of Worcestershire, but hopefully the summer of 2025 will be kinder to her.

Monica Davis sent me her highlight list from botanical outings as well as from localities near Bristol. Her star find was the fascinating Early Spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes* on the Dorset coast, but she also saw White Helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium* at Odd Down near Bath. She joined a WFS meeting on Berrow Dunes in Somerset, and found the pretty Crown Vetch *Securigera varia* in a pavement crack near home!

Ruth Dawes writes that her most exciting botany came on a BSBI trip to Guernsey. She mentions enjoying 'orchid fields' with Loose-flowered Orchid *Anacamptis laxiflora* and seeing the 'exquisite' Small-flowered Catchfly *Silene gallica* var. *quinquevulnera*. This variety seems to have been dropped from Stace 4 though it used to be recognised on the Isles of Scilly. Ruth mentions the picturesque detail that it can be called



Melancholy Thistle

'five-wounded' from the blood-red spots on the petals, so it was a great treat to see it in quantity.

Richard and Judy Gosnell are the most dedicated observers of some of their local woods and meadows near 'Royal' Wootton Bassett. This year they commented on the dampness prevailing much of the time, allowing them to enjoy unusually good quantities of Ragged-Robin *Silene flos-cuculi* and Trifid Bur-marigold *Bidens tripartita* in local fields, the North Meadow National Nature Reserve and near the Thames at Cricklade. They also enjoyed extremely good Bluebell

Hyacinthoides non-scripta displays.

Ruth Harding always sends in diaries which are just what a branch secretary hopes for! Her entries are neat, give habitat and location, and her recording for groups like the Ceredigion Rare Plant Register takes her to excellent sites and ensures that her records are reliable. In 2024, the majority of her finds were local and included nice things such as Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio*, Heath Dog-violet *Viola canina* and an admirable 11 sedges. A trip to Yorkshire added lovely northern species, including Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum*, Wood Crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum* and Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata*. Her total was 175.

William Howard sent me a delightful note last year saying that he had been a WFS member 59 years ago, and that finding a childhood diary had reminded him of the Society and of the pleasure of recording the flowers seen on walks. Well, he has certainly put that into action as he sent me a very nice diary totalling 338 species, nearly everything seen round his home near Stroud but also including some seaside plants from a visit to Cornwall. I had to smile because he also visited East Lothian in Scotland, where I botanised with my first illustrated 'Bentham & Hooker' when I was only six! William sent me a lovely photo of a Fly Orchid *Ophrys insectifera* - a patch of these had been his local highlight.

Steven Law only put 77 species in his actual diary, but he was involved in a huge amount of work connected with plants throughout the year.

These activities included managing work to restore flowery meadows and orchards, pruning workshops at Guiting Grange, Gloucestershire, and fund-raising and grant applications for Farming in Protected Landscapes and Severn Trent Environmental Protection schemes. It sounds as if he is becoming something of an expert in the world of apple varieties and tree management. He hopes to get further arboricultural training. His work in all these commendable schemes in the Cotswold area brought him a precious contact so he had permission to visit the private Barton Larches SSSI to see the rare Perfoliate (or more affectionately 'Cotswold') Penny-cress *Microthlaspi perfoliatum*. His close-up photo of a flowering head was a real treat for me.

Steve Little has given himself a break from his long pursuit of Cotswold-naturalised cotoneasters and taken a high dive into hawkweeds! His courage and energy in approaching these difficult groups are admirable and he says he has had great help and support with local Hieracia from Mark and Clare Kitchen, with Tim Rich (who recently produced a *Key to Hawkweeds in Gloucestershire*) providing the critical overview. Steve also ventured to Scotland with Tim to try to rediscover a very rare endemic hawkweed (see page 30 in the Spring WFS magazine), so he has had no lack of excitement.

Noelin Mallatratt is a new Worcestershire member, who reports that she is on a steep learning curve, coming from a non-scientific background, and needs to learn more

scientific language. Inspired by visits to the Burren (her family is Irish) and to the rewilded Knepp estate in Sussex, she is approaching this with great enthusiasm, joining the BSBI as well as us, applying for their Identiplant course and meeting members of both societies whenever she can, as well as completing an online course offered by Edinburgh Royal Botanic Garden. She lives only five minutes' walk from Ipsley Alders Nature Reserve, which is a Worcestershire Wildlife Trust holding – a grazed marsh on sedge peat with high botanical interest, so she will be able to study several of the rarities of this habitat at close quarters as well as becoming familiar with her local common plants.

Georgina Millway says she didn't have as much time as usual to botanise locally as her year included a trip to Slovenia, with many thrilling plants. However, she also found plenty of common plants nearer home (including her own garden 'weeds') as well as excitements such as Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria* and Henbane *Hyoscyamus niger*. A U3A day on the nearby Malvern Hills added small, uncommon treasures including Annual Knawel *Scleranthus annuus* and Shepherd's Cress *Teesdalia nudicaulis*. Her good total of 263 was bolstered by visiting Rye Harbour, Sussex, and Yorkshire, and specially by attending the WFS meeting at the Emorsgate farm and wild seed nursery near Bath, where their rich meadows had plants such as Pepper-saxifrage *Silene silaus*, which is now so scarce. I was pleased to see a remarkable number of thistles in her diary – Watted *Carduus crispus*, Musk *C. nutans*,

Slender *C. tenuiflorus*, Dwarf *Cirsium acaule*, Creeping *C. arvense*, Woolly *C. eriophorum*, Melancholy *C. heterophyllum*, Marsh *C. palustre* and Spear *C. vulgare*. I couldn't help trying to visualise them all in one place!

Andy Phillips sent me a splendidly full diary with a total of 669 plants. Many were found in and around his home county of Glamorgan, where he managed to visit a wide range of habitats, including his favourite spots at Park Slip near Bridgend and Mumbles, on the Gower. Of course, he attended the WFS meeting on Llantrisant Common, where he photographed a favourite of mine – Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*. He also joined two other, quite contrasting meetings in the New Forest and on Minchinhampton Common, Gloucestershire, where he admired the superb veteran tree Black-poplar *Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*. The New Forest meeting was of course full of exciting specialities – Slender Marsh-bedstraw *Galium constrictum* was a highlight, and I enjoyed seeing mention of two plants I used to work on surveying: Pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium* and Pillwort *Pilularia globulifera*, both of which can be hard to spot, as indeed can Coral-necklace *Illecebrum verticillatum*, which he still managed to photograph quite strikingly.

Janet Vernon always sends her highlights and some lovely photos, and this spring she added a sweet poem about snowdrops – all most enjoyable for me! A holiday in Dumfries and Galloway provided a colony of Lax-flowered Sea-lavender *Limonium humile* and, much nearer

home, Goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis* in a place that it had not been seen since 1991, showing how worthwhile it can be to revisit familiar places. With Ruth Dawes assisting in its identification, she also recorded the uncommon and inconspicuous Smith's Pepperwort *Lepidium heterophyllum* on a local playing field!

Pauline Wilson with her husband **Richard** work in so many areas of wild flower recording and conservation that her news sometimes makes me feel quite breathless. They are central in Cotswold activities and on and around the famous surviving Sodbury Commons near where they live. Pauline tells me that in 2024 they joined Mark and Clare Kitchen for a Gloucestershire meeting; continued encouraging plant awareness through their U3A group (including an introduction to winter flower hunting); and worked towards environmental awards to be made by a Chipping Sodbury church Eco group and the improvement of the graveyard flora there. As well as all this, Richard works with Cotswold Wardens on scrub clearance at a Castle Combe SSSI, Pauline is keeping an eye on pavement weeds in Old Sodbury, and they manage to be joint secretaries of the popular Spring Week Hunt. No other members could be more active! Pauline's cumulative total now stands at 1084.

Carol Wood is a new member in north Shropshire who is involved with local surveys and churchyard conservation, so I look forward to hearing of her activities in 2025.

Aaron Woods always sends a fascinating diary, documenting his intensive recording round his Worcestershire home and in adjoining counties. He pays careful attention to 'escapes' and aliens in general as well as to more established species but he always lists these carefully so that I can see what is 'not in Stace' but still have the interest of these unusual records. Graham Lavender, a West Somerset member, and I share these interests, and I enjoyed seeing Aaron's record of the odd little 'new' Cryptic Bittercress *Cardamine occulta*, which lurks almost unseen in dim places - Aaron found it at a railway station and we have it in shrub pots in a Minehead garden-centre. He also recorded a naturalised daffodil, the pretty little Cyclamineus group 'Jetfire'. Escaped daffodils can include long-established historic varieties and the BSBI now offers a daffodil key by Professor Mick Crawley. Spotting and trying to identify them really adds to spring fun. In 2024, Aaron took a holiday in Devon (his first since Covid), which added lots of nice coastal species not seen for years, and a highlight in tiny Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*, on a heathy Devon common. Another highlight was seeing 'gorgeous clumps' of Whorl-grass *Catabrosa aquatica* in a Buckinghamshire SSSI, but getting close enough for a photo meant getting 'truly stuck in rather stinking mud', followed by a most uncomfortable drive home - proof of being a real botanist! His cumulative total is now over 1,000 and 2024 added 47 new plants.

RO FITZGERALD

MIDLANDS (Branch U) including 1 km SQUARE STUDY

Annual	New	Total
Louis Adlington		399
Sheila Curzon		44
Sue and David Rogerson		23
Cumulative		
Jackie Ellis	30	1065
David and Sue Emley	13	1082
Judith Lee	48	767
Nicki Mottram	74	918
Richard Pykett	1	871
Mary and Claire Smith	20	1584
John and Monika Walton	93	1477
Irene Wilkinson	43	481

Thank you to our Branch members who wrote and told us that they had no new finds for 2024.

Commiserations to you all but do keep looking as we are happy to report on even a single find.

Louis is a professional gardener but would like to expand his knowledge of wild plants and has already completed certificates with the Field Studies Council. His aim is to be able to undertake surveys, and he has already carried out a grassland survey for the National Trust. He will find that keeping a diary is a good way of learning and we wish him well. He has cleverly roped in his wife and dog as assistants; the dog provides the daily walks and his wife looks for,



Toothwort

Photo: Ken Southall

and photographs, possibly interesting plants when out on her own. She provided Louis with an excellent record for Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*. We were impressed with Louis's Green Field-speedwell *Veronica agrestis* and Bristle Club-rush *Isolepis setacea*. With these and a selection of rushes and sedges he has got off to a flying start with his recording.

Sheila has amazed us with her total of 44 plants achieved since joining the WFS on 6th November as a complete beginner. She concentrated on the town, where it is warmer, so there were more flowers out and the plants tended to be closer together, making it quicker to find them. This helped her with the BSBI New Year Plant Hunt as she knew where the most productive spots were. Sheila is looking forward to attending an 'Introduction to Botany' course to help her sort out the different species of sowthistle *Sonchus* spp, bittercress *Cardamine* spp. and spurge *Euphorbia* spp. Like most of us, she thinks learning all the Latin names is an impossible task! We are confident she will manage it. Winter Heliotrope *Petasites pyrenaicus* was a good find for a first diary and managing to include three umbellifers *Apiaceae* most commendable.

A good range of plants was seen by **Sue and David** on a visit to Scotland. Two in particular we found interesting. Firstly, Salmonberry *Rubus spectabilis*, because we have never seen it, and you would think it fairly obvious with its orange

fruit. And secondly, Sea Spleenwort *Asplenium marinum*. This was spotted on Hirta in the St Kilda archipelago. The history of the island, and the extremely harsh lives its inhabitants led, should make the rest of us very grateful for the luxury of time for hobbies such as botany! It was pleasing to see that Sue and David found Annual Beard-grass *Polypogon monspeliensis* locally. This has seemed reluctant to spread into the colder reaches of the Midlands but rising summer temperatures seem to have done the trick as other members too have reported it in our northern parts.

Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* has been a must-see plant for **Jackie** for a while so a sighting at a country park near Birmingham was very pleasing. A chance tip-off led her to Somerset, where she saw 'masses' of White Rock-rose *Helianthemum apenninum*, a superb find. She has continued to have a go at a few grasses, sedges and rushes each year and did particularly well on the Welsh coast with these. A very interesting record was Reversed Clover *Trifolium resupinatum*, seen by Jackie on verges in Dudley town centre. Various described in identification books as a wool alien or casual annual, the seed is available commercially, but it doesn't appear happy with too cold a temperature, so we are not expecting to see it near us any time soon!

Another plant that doesn't usually survive the winter was recorded by **Dave and Sue**. This was Water-

lettuce *Pistia stratiotes* at Doxey Marshes, a new plant for them and a first record for the county. They worked hard with Violas, successfully identifying not only Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor* but also its hybrid with Field Pansy *Viola arvensis* = *V. x contempta*. At this point their enthusiasm waned and they decided to give eyebrights *Euphrasia* spp. a miss. Who can blame them? Dave and Sue also reported that they were unable to find Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* where they had seen it before. Over the last few years, we too have noticed a very marked decline in sightings in our own county. To end on a happier note, Dave and Sue did report a good number and variety of orchids, which seemed to have done excellently in 2024. However, our favourite of their new finds was Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum*, such a splendid oddity.

Judith was able to catch up with some of the typical, but not necessarily common, plants of the limestone Peak District during the year. *Hutchinsia Hornungia petraea* often proves difficult to find as it flowers early and then withers and dies quickly as the weather warms, growing as it does on thin soil on rock outcrops or scree. Later in the year, she recorded another plant that also favours the scree, Red Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis angustifolia*. She also ticked off Limestone Fern *Gymnocarpium robertianum*. Away from the limestone, we were pleased to see that Musk *Erythranthe moschata* still flourishes at Calke Abbey. From its humble beginnings in a ditch on the estate, it

now often makes quite a nice carpet in the flagstones. Congratulations to Judith on getting every name right on her lists, both English and Latin, and all according to Stace 4. Not many of us can claim the same!

Although a first recordable sighting of American Skunk-cabbage *Lysichiton americanus* in the town brook was pleasing for **Nicki**, her Vice-county Recorder commented that she could well watch it take over the world. Oh no she didn't - within a week it had been dug out and destroyed! However, somewhat cynically, we await next year's exciting instalment, which just might involve a reappearance! Nicki was one of the lucky ones who joined the WFS meeting on the Lizard, as well as one or two other trips. She appreciated the chance to have her sightings confirmed by experts, as well as having more common things pointed out. Two good things that she saw were Wild Asparagus *Asparagus prostratus* and Yellow Centaury *Cicendia filiformis*. Nearer home in Warwickshire, Nicki saw one of our favourites, Pepper-saxifrage *Silaum silaus*. The yellow petals make it easy to learn and, fingers crossed, it is making a bit of a comeback. Finally, we note that Small-flowered Buttercup *Ranunculus parviflorus* turned up for Nicki in a car park in Coventry. We saw it two years ago, where block paving had been laid in connection with water repairs, so this plant appears to be using human agency to make a comeback.

Despite being unable to make botanical outings, **Richard** makes

the most of living in the city by observing all the local pavement cracks for 'weeds'. A new plant for his cumulative diary duly popped up, Rose Campion *Silene coronaria*. Elsewhere, we have also reported a further two finds for his city monad, showing what a rich botanical source our local streets can be!

Mary and Claire: we were lucky enough to start off 2024 with a new record on 1st January! This was Fortune's Holly-fern *Cyrtomium fortunei*. It was at the side of a footpath on wasteland at the rear of houses. Presumably a property owner had had a clear-out and lobbed it straight over the fence, where it took advantage of the shelter provided by the fence and the protective brambles to dig itself in and thrive. A more challenging record was Hay-scented Buckler-fern *Dryopteris aemula* on Dinas Head, in Pembrokeshire. It was a day at the tag end of one of the named storms, with lashing rain and howling winds, and we were clinging on by our fingertips while standing on a narrow cliff path fit only for sheep. What lengths we go to for a new find. Less taxing, but very pleasing, was our sighting of Hairy Greenweed *Genista pilosa*, also in Pembrokeshire.

John and Monika joined a number of WFS meetings, with their knowledgeable leaders, this year and so were able to add an excellent number of records to their total. We particularly enjoyed hearing about the meeting in Ireland, as it gives us an opportunity to mention three plants unlikely to be seen

elsewhere. These are Irish Whitebeam *Sorbus hibernica*, Irish Heath *Erica erigena* and Pipewort *Eriocaulon aquaticum*. The last of these is, at first sight, the typical bunch of green fronds that defies identification. Dismissing it as a clump of drowned grass is the easiest solution until the flowers appear! John and Monika were also told the identity of a daunting number of eyebrights *Euphrasia* spp. These strike fear into most of us so how convenient to have someone on hand for advice.

Without straying too far from home, **Irene** visited contrasting habitats to pick up some good plants. Top of the list must be Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata* on the Magnesian limestone. This is usually quite elusive for us as a native plant, sightings these days being more likely of garden escapes. In sharp contrast, the Longshaw Estate has an acidic flora, with stunning displays of Heather *Calluna vulgaris* in late summer and early autumn. Cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* finally turned up here for Irene. This plant is actually much easier to find in the winter of course, as it is evergreen, but tramping the moors in howling winds, driving rain and often a dusting of snow is seldom much fun! Much easier to see and examine closely was Ploughman's-spikenard *Inula conyzae* alongside the Chesterfield Canal. As the ray florets are usually absent, it makes for a somewhat dingy-looking flower and it normally takes a while to get your eye in and recognise it easily. Hence, a close look at the plant and

MIDLANDS (Branch U) 1 km SQUARE STUDY

Name	Monad	Location	Year	New	Total
Judith Lee	SK3264	NW of Kelsedge, Derbyshire	3	11	107
	SK2952	Prathall Lane, Winkworth, Derbyshire	2	37	148
Richard Pykett	SK5742	Sherwood, Nottingham	6	2	157

Judith's square, SK3264, is in a very much less-visited part of Derbyshire so even the most ordinary of plants provide useful additions for the records. Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis*, Meadow Crane's-bill *Geranium pratense* and Silverweed *Potentilla anserina* were all new records for the monad on the BSBI database. Judith only started on this monad because she was regularly visiting her beehives after they had been moved to this new site. The different flora here certainly provided the bees with a new range of flavours. Her second year visit to SK2952 was very, very wet! Fortunately, this worked in her favour as the small streams noted the previous year had now become quite a wide, muddy area with good plants such as Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris* and Large Bitter-cress *Cardamine amara*. The main purpose of this early visit was to check for

spring-flowering plants. In addition to the usual, obviously pretty ones, we liked Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* and Early Dog-violet *Viola reichenbachiana*.

There were two new additions for **Richard**, probably thanks to the local council being unable to afford weedkiller. These were Hollyhock *Alcea rosea* and Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare*, both weeds in the pavement. One assumes that the popularity of urban meadows and the availability of packets of wild flower seed have contributed to the increase in sightings of the latter. This is very useful for our members who are confined, for whatever reason, to the area close to their home.

MARY AND CLAIRE SMITH

GREATER LONDON (Branch V)

Cumulative	New	Total
Ann Allen	2	200
Clare Million	100	806
Jane Lowe	61	1368

Ann found Upright Hedge-parsley *Torilis japonica* in bud whilst on holiday in North Devon and waited for open flowers before naming it. Whilst there, she enjoyed seeing the beautiful yellow flowers of Reflexed Stonecrop *Petrosedum rupestre* on walls in Woody Bay, brightening a dull day. The wonderfully informative BSBI Online Atlas tells me that this plant has been cultivated since the 16th century for its leaves, which were eaten as spring salad. Its vegetative shoots are readily detached and frequently dispersed by birds.

Clare attended her first WFS meeting in 2024 at Shoreham Beach in West Sussex and afterwards very admirably wrote the magazine report for the day. Star find was of course Starry Clover *Trifolium stellatum*, which, as Clare says, has been established there for over 150 years and has only one other British station. A Surrey Botanical Society meeting to Chobham Common really stood out for her, with hundreds of Marsh Gentians *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, a wonderful plant to see for the first time. However, Clare confesses to being a fan of small plants, so tiny Orange Bird's-foot *Ornithopus pinnatus*, Hairy Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus subbiflorus* and Small-flowered Buttercup *Ranunculus parviflorus* featured on a lovely trip with her husband to the Isles of Scilly in May. Whilst there, Clare did very well to find many of the special plants as well as a lot of showy exotics including Aeonium *Aeonium cuneatum* on St Mary's, Giant Herb-Robert *Geranium maderense* on Bryher and Blue Corn-lily *Aristea*

ecklonii on Tresco. Also new for Clare on the Chobham Common day was Stinking Fleabane *Dittrichia graveolens*, not far from the M3 motorway, where it has been spreading, as indeed it has along much of southern England's major road network. Native aquatics Arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia* and Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* were exciting finds from nature reserves in Somerset, whilst in NW Shropshire, Clare found an oasis full of wonderful plants such as Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris* and Marsh Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia densiflora*.

Jane managed to add to her already very impressive list of sedges whilst attending WFS meetings, recording Water Sedge *Carex aquatilis* and False Sedge *C. simpliciuscula* from Teesdale and Divided Sedge *C. divisa* from Norfolk. In June, she added True Fox-sedge *C. vulpina* whilst attending a Kent Botanical Recording Group meeting at Tonbridge and I am really pleased to see that Jane has since joined the Group. In April, Jane noticed some rather large red shepherd's-purses on a roadside near Woodingdean, East Sussex. Suspecting Pink Shepherd's-purse *Capsella rubella*, she took photos and posted them on the Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland Facebook Group. Tim Rich, the BSBI referee for cabbage family *Brassicaceae*, replied but requested more detail so Jane returned to the site only to find that the roadside had been mown! Luckily, sufficient fruits and flowers remained hidden behind a lamp post for a specimen to be collected and confirmation of the



Pink Shepherd's-purse

suspected species followed. Also in April, Jane managed a distant view and photograph of Tunbridge Filmy-

fern *Hymenophyllum tunbrigense* on Eridge Rocks in East Sussex and later in the summer, on the WFS Scottish meeting, she was able to get much closer to it growing alongside Wilson's Filmy-fern *H. wilsonii*. Another plant that gave Jane access problems was Three-lobed Crowfoot *Ranunculus tripartitus*, for which she made a visit to Hothfield Common in Kent. In spite of a horse, barbed wire and flooding Jane got her photograph. However, a general assessment of the status of some of the UK's populations of this species has led to thinking that some of the southeastern populations are likely to be not *R. tripartitus* but New Forest Crowfoot *Ranunculus x novae-forestae*, its hybrid with Round-leaved Crowfoot *R. omiophyllum*. Since genetic analysis is needed to be sure, things stay as they are for now.

SUE BUCKINGHAM

SCOTLAND and IRELAND (Branch W)

Reports from Scotland in 2024 frequently emphasised bad weather and this is probably why I heard from so few members. News arrived at times in January 2025 when I was myself feeling that there might never be good botanising days again, so everyone had my sympathy! However, there are members who always manage to raise my enthusiasm again, telling me of interesting finds and meetings in wonderful places and sending evocative photos as well.

Jim Blackwood will already be in

readers' minds after his profile appeared in the *Winter 2025* magazine (reprinted from the BSBI *Trifoliate Newsletter*). The story of his botanical life will have resonated with many of our own experiences, and I feel so lucky to be his Branch Secretary at the moment! As usual, he has been very active in his native Renfrewshire, where he both records (even venturing towards a specialised interest in brambles!) and promotes interest in wild flowers in a number of ways. He went to Sweden last summer, where he revelled in the plants of 'limestone meadows at

Kinneville...the stomping ground of Linnaeus' but was equally delighted to find a new site for a humble personal favourite Trailing St John's-wort *Hypericum humifusum* 'growing classically by a farm track' - a perfect way of noting its habitat. A first for him was the little alien ruderal American Speedwell *Veronica peregrina*, which he found near a railway station. He speculates that it is often overlooked for Thyme-leaved Speedwell *V. serpyllifolia* - I agree. Here in the West Country it haunts garden-centres. Jim is also extremely good at seeing the beauty of really common plants and capturing this in his photos - this time he sent me two

marked by foul weather and high winds... as we were on foot there was not a lot to see or do (unless whisky interests you)... apart from wild and shaggy goats and my very first fallow deer'. These ran across a car park near the malting works and Hilary speculates that as the mash gets turned out so the deer eat it. She wonders if it is alcoholic! In 2025 she intends to get more experience with ferns.

Lyn Jones is frequently involved in leading meetings, and of course some members are already excited about the WFS trip to the Swiss Engadine in July. Photos from a 2024 recce were delightful for me to see, but my favourites are a perfectly contrasting pair from the Glencoe meeting last June showing members in a gorgeous sunny Rannoch view, then huddling under bushes in an absolute deluge (report in *Autumn 2024* issue). At this meeting, new populations of the super-rare Rannoch-rush *Scheuchzeria palustris* were found, and more Scottish excitement was provided when Lyn took part in a Marsh Saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus* count in Aberdeenshire. He also managed to find some very unusual sedge hybrids, later identified by BSBI *Carex* referee Mike Porter, and hopes to be able to demonstrate these during the WFS Eastern Scotland event this June. Just to broaden his experience further he came south and thoroughly enjoyed the New Forest meeting, with beauties such as the real Wild Gladiolus *Gladiolus illyricus*.

Photo: Jim Blackwood



really gorgeous shots of Perennial Sowthistle *Sonchus arvensis*, which I usually see as gross and uninteresting!

Hilary Blyth had a very poor year for plant-hunting as their woods suffered badly from the big storms. But she always writes a good account of her year and I'm sure the story of a dire holiday will bring smiles and sympathy (and interest) from readers. A short, local holiday on Islay 'was

Audrey Turner had one of those blips typical of a busy life in the winter of 2023-24 and didn't manage to send me her 2023 news, which she says is most annoying as it was a specially good year, with lovely meetings led by Ian Green giving her 29 new species. We all know those moments when the 'to-do' list seems to edit itself! However, she managed 13 new species in 2024 in spite of the remarkably bad weather, most of them from Inverness Botany Group (IBG) outings, again often with Ian. She will be leading several IBG walks herself this summer on parts of the Spey round Craigellachie and Grantown. I will look forward to hearing about these as I used to stay in this area with relatives and my first sighting ever of naturalised Milky Bellflower *Campanula lactiflora* (a

pale blue form) was on the old railway above the river, while Mary McCallum Webster taught me to search the Spey gravels for washed-down arctic alpines. Audrey also had pleasing finds on her own and sent me photos of Red Lungwort *Pulmonaria rubra* (or one of its cultivars) at Nethybridge - a lucky find while parking at a favourite farm shop - and a specially lovely display of Navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris* seen while on holiday in the Lake District.

Alison Wilson was kind enough to get in touch, but a combination of the grim weather year and a bad foot condition had really made 2024 a non-botanical year. I'm glad to hear that this summer may be more promising.

RO FITZGERALD

PARNASSUS 1

	New	Cumulative
Julie Clarke	11	4232
Jessé Tregale	11	3763
Alan Leslie	63	3542
Carol Hawkins	117	3461
Stephen Clarkson	17	3255
Ted Pratt	0	3182
Paul Harnes	46	3047
Marion Chappell	4	3045
John Hawksford	1	3014
Ron Parker	14	2935
Judith Cox	95	2918

Jan Armishaw	52	2814
Paul Green	80	2796
Sheila Wynn	146	2743
Gareth Burnsall	21	2710
Heather Colls	6	2680
Priscilla Nobbs	19	2608
(Some of these cumulative totals have been revised as a result of revisions of their records by individual members)		

There is always a sense of excitement as the year turns and Parnassus lists start to trickle in and this year was no exception. Almost everyone has found something new; indeed, some have added quite a lot of records, but it is evident that each hard-won entry has given pleasure and satisfaction.

This must be especially true for **Julie Clarke**, who added 11 to her already class-leading total. Two exceptional ferns were on her list, Irish Male-fern *Dryopteris kerryensis* and Pitted Male-fern *D. lacunosa*, both relatively newly recognised ferns in the British Isles and both recorded, with expert guidance, from the woodland of Teddy Heights, Arnside, Cumbria. She was also particularly impressed with Whorled Coralroot *Cardamine quinquefolia*, seen amongst trees at Carr Mill Dam, St Helens, Lancashire, and flowering in early March, whilst I was intrigued to see a record for Celandine Poppy *Meconopsis chelidoniifolia* from Heywoods Hollow, Astley Bridge, Lancashire, seen in 2012 but only now added to her list.

Jessé Tregale also has a small but select list. Self-sown Monkey-puzzle

Araucaria araucana always attracts my attention, in this case on a rock



Photo: Jessé Tregale

ledge in Glen Road, Baildon, West Yorkshire, whilst he had a rare native hawkweed, Lance-leaved Hawkweed *Hieracium stictum*, on sea cliffs at Silverdale, Lancashire. Two other unusual aliens on his list were Wilford's Geranium *Geranium wilfordii*, from a car park at Baildon, and Golden Calla Lily *Zantedeschia*

elliottiana, in scrub along Carr Bottom Road, Greengates, West Yorkshire.

My own list of additions owed many of its highlights to Paul Stanley on the Isle of Wight, where he showed me many exciting new hybrids, including no fewer than three involving Grey Sedge *Carex divulsa* ssp. *divulsa*: with False Fox-sedge *C. otrubae*, Remote Sedge *C. remota* and Prickly Sedge *C. muricata*, all very convincing specimens, but I was perhaps most excited to see two new native species: Small Cord-grass *Spartina maritima* in saltmarsh at Clamartin Lake, Newtown, and, after much searching, Long-stalked Orache *Atriplex longipes* in another saltmarsh along Blackbridge Brook, south-west of Ryde. On home ground in Cambridgeshire, a hybrid Yellow-sedge, Long-stalked *Carex lepidocarpa* x Small-fruited *C. viridula* from Wicken Fen, was a highlight and confirmed by the BSBI referee.

Carol Hawkins has had in her own words 'an amazing year', helped in no small part by teaming up in the field with Nick Aston. In such a long list there is a lot to choose from but I was particularly impressed with a white-flowered variant of Rough Star-thistle *Centaurea aspera* var. *albiflora* from St Ouen's Bay, Jersey, the recently discovered Sharp-toothed Eyebright *Euphrasia stricta*, on a forestry track near Kiltealy in Co. Wexford, and another rare hawkweed, Minute-toothed Hawkweed *Hieracium microspilum*, on road banks at Mickleham, near Box Hill, Surrey. She was also one of the lucky few to see the very rare alien Bifid Dead-nettle *Lamium bifidum* as a weed by the Last Anchor

restaurant in Ipswich, Suffolk, before it was removed by the landowner, who thought it was a nettle!

Stephen Clarkson found most of his new entries in East Anglia, including an often-overlooked hybrid between Smooth Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris glabra* and Cat's-ear *H. radicata*, which he found at Wending, Norfolk, while further afield he tracked down both Jo-jo-weed *Cotula sessilis* and White Forget-me-not *Plagiobothrys scouleri* near Hatchet Pond, Hampshire. His Little-Robin *Geranium purpureum*, however, was another East Anglian record, from Stanway, Essex, as was Moroccan Eryngo *Eryngium variifolium* from Old Hunstanton, Norfolk.

Poor health prevented **Ted Pratt** from making any new records in 2024, but he is hopeful for better luck this year.

Paul Harmes, however, has leapt up the rankings. He also benefitted from Paul Stanley's generosity on the Isle of Wight, which included demonstrating a large urban population of the alien grass *Polypogon fugax* in Newport. We both enjoyed a trip together around parts of Kent, which yielded one of the few British populations of Villous Downy-rose *Rosa villosa* at Kingsdown, several rather enigmatic sea-lavenders along the coast, and the up-and-coming alien Slender Oat *Avena barbata*, which almost eluded us on the side of the A2 near Chartham Hatch. He had a rather fine retrospective record for the hybrid Broad-leaved x Rockery Willowherb *Epilobium montanum* x *E. pedunculare* = *E. x kitcheneri* from a

disused quarry at Dukes Pass, Perthshire, confirmed by the man after whom it was named.

Marion Chappell was only able to add four new entries, but one of these was an admittedly rather small, but flowering plant of Giant Orchid *Himantoglossum robertianum* on an old railway embankment in Oxfordshire. She also visited the same site as Julie Clarke for Whorled Coralroot *Cardamine quinquefolia*, recorded Common (Brachyglottis) Broomrape *Orobanche minor* var. *heliophila* growing on *Brachyglottis x jubar* 'Sunshine' at Sheringham, Norfolk, and a pale pink variant of Broad-leaved Everlasting-pea, *Lathyrus latifolius* 'Rosa Perle' on the dunes at Birkdale, Lancashire.

John Hawksford has had to confine most of his botanising to recording accessible urban and suburban areas around Stockport and Macclesfield, Cheshire, with just one addition to his list: Annual Beard-grass *Polypogon monspeliensis*, which he found in no fewer than three different places. In recent years this species has spread widely as a ruderal weed from its native coastal populations in southern and eastern England but is also sometimes seen as a garden ornamental.

After a blank year in 2023, **Ron Parker** was able to add 14 new entries in 2024, all derived from a day spent with me in Cambridge city, where we visited sites for Pyrenean Petrocoptis *Petrocoptis pyrenaica*, long naturalised on a wall in Shaftesbury Road, Hop Hornbeam *Ostrya carpinifolia*, recently found seeding itself onto pavements and at

roadside wall bases along Tennis Court Road (and looking very like Hornbeam at first sight), and a patch of an often overlooked alien grass Highland Bent *Agrostis castellana* on the verge along Brooklands Avenue.

Judith Cox had a particularly successful year which also included a day in Cambridge, where she saw the hybrid between White Comfrey *Symphytum orientale* and Common Comfrey *S. officinale* near the River Cam in Chesterton. An enviable trip to Ireland included seeing the rare Irish (Poulsallagh) Sea-lavender *Limonium recurvum* ssp. *pseudotranswallianum* in the Burren, whilst Paul Green's meeting in Wexford produced Red Nightshade *Solanum villosum* ssp. *villosum*, naturalised on old walls in Wexford itself, and Early Orache *Atriplex praecox*, on Lady's Island, as two of its many highlights. For some perhaps her star plant would be Leafless Hawk's-beard *Crepis praemorsa* at Orton, Cumbria, one of our rarest native plants.

Jan Armishaw also travelled widely including to the Isles of Scilly, where the strongly scented Vietnamese Coriander *Persicaria odorata*, in perhaps its only British site, on St Mary's, and the pretty, blue-flowered Blue Rock-bindweed *Convolvulus sabatius*, on St Agnes, would both be welcome additions to many lists. Tufted California-poppy *Eschscholzia caespitosa*, self-sown in paving cracks in Broadstairs, Kent, sent me searching in my books for this rarely seen horticultural alien and I was pleased that she continues to keep an eye out for unusual variants, with

a rayless Daisy *Bellis perennis* f. *disciformis* on Bryher and *Clematis vitalba* var. *integrata*, a variant of Traveller's-joy with entire leaflets, in a hedgerow near the railway in Kearsney, Kent.

It is a pleasure to welcome **Paul Green** back to Parnassus after a long break, during which he has written and published no fewer than two Irish County Floras (Waterford in 2008 and Wexford in 2022) and one only has to look at the new BSBI plant atlas to see how his recording has transformed plant records in south-eastern Ireland in particular. In 2024, most of his new Diary records were from this part of the world, such as California Laurel *Umbellularia californica*, self-sown in a churchyard at Briska Upper, Wexford, while a large population of Ikaria Snowdrop *Galanthus ikariae*, naturalised in a field hedge and neighbouring field at Drewscourt, and Triangular Club-rush *Schoenoplectus triquetus*, at Adare, on the muddy tidal margin of the River Maigue, were both from Co. Limerick.

Sheila Wynn is yet another to have had a good year; indeed, she has more additions than anyone else this time. She was with Judith Cox in Ireland, where they travelled to some grassland below the mountain called Maumtrasna, West Galway, to see the very rare Irish St John's-wort *Hypericum canadense*, whilst on Paul Green's Wexford meeting a tricky scramble up a very steep muddy bank in woodland by the River Barrow at Tinnahinch, Co. Carlow, produced one of their highlights in the shape of Killarney Fern *Trichomanes speciosum*.

Fang's Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster fangianus* was an unusual alien record on a wall top along a very productive disused railway in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, whilst I was deeply envious of her Himalayan *Acanthus Strobilanthes pentastemonoides* in Charles Wood, near Ventnor, Isle of Wight, as I tried twice to see it last year without success!

Gareth Bursnall's list was an intriguing mix of aliens, hybrids and variants, with Smooth Hydrangea *Hydrangea arborescens*, self-sown on a roadside verge at Faygate, West Sussex, being a very unusual example of the first of these categories, whilst the hybrid Sea x Sand Couch *Elymus athericus* x *junceaformis* = *E. x obtusiusculus* was determined by David Streeter on a Sussex Botanical Recording Group meeting at West Wittering. Amongst his new variants were a leaf variant of Field Maple, *Acer campestre* var. *lobatum* in a hedgerow at Ifield, the cultivated variant of Wild Celery, *Apium graveolens* var. *dulce*, on waste ground at Crawley, plus a white-flowered form of Sowbread *Cyclamen hederifolium* f. *albiflorum* from waste ground also at Ifield, all these sites being in West Sussex.

Heather Colls is now restricted to searching for new plants locally near Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, but did manage to find six that had obligingly skipped the garden fence to make them countable. These included the semi-shrubby Garden Tree-mallow *Malva x clementii* in a rough pasture, a white variant of Nettle-leaved Mullein *Verbascum chaixii* var. *album*, as well as

Mediterranean Spurge *Euphorbia characias* and Turkish Sage *Phlomis russeliana*, all as weeds in other local fields. Yellow Monksword *Nonea lutea* and the increasingly ubiquitous Argentine Vervain *Verbena bonariensis* completed her haul of helpful weeds!

Priscilla Nobbs had a small but select list of plants, her favourite being a good show of the very elusive Starfruit *Damasonium alisma* in a pond in the Priest Hill Reserve in Surrey. It was originally an introduction here but now seems to have established itself. Such introductions pose a problem for recorders but where they have persisted through sowing themselves and are at least in wild surroundings I am inclined to let them count. I did the same myself with Stinking Hawk's-beard *Crepis foetida* ssp. *foetida* at Rye Harbour. Her other finds included three good plants from Holkham, Norfolk: the native Rock (East Anglian) Sea-lavender *Limonium binervosum* ssp. *saxonicum* and two interesting aliens, Kidneyweed *Dichondra*

micrantha and False Alkanet *Cynoglossum barrelieri*.

One name is missing from this list, that of **Rodney Burton**, who died in November last year. His was a long record of involvement with the WFS (culminating in service as President of the Society in 2002-2003), but also as a long-serving branch secretary, leader of meetings and provider of advice and identifications. At his memorial service at Eynsford, Kent, in January it was a revelation to most of his botanical friends to learn of his wide musical interests and to listen to three of his own compositions, including a piano nocturne composed when he was a teenager as a present for his father! I had the pleasure in recent years of twice taking him around Cambridgeshire for a day and knowing that each time he went home with many more new records than he was expecting. I hope you all have a successful season and as always, I look forward to reporting on your finds.

ALAN LESLIE

PARNASSUS 2

	New	Cumulative
Janice Reynolds	8	2429
Sue Southall	202	2425
Geoffrey Kitchener	10	2297
John Martin	82	2227
Peter Jepson	9	2218
Ro FitzGerald	35	2119
Everard Ellis	0	2109
Ted Phenna	13	2065
Dorothy Bullock	2	2057
Nick Aston	238	2016

It is Wednesday 8th January as I sit down to commence checking the Parnassus 2 diaries and it is snowing here! Only lightly, but snowing nonetheless. Where I live, in the south of England, we had, in general, a wet year. It seemed that we were constantly waiting for summer to get going. Let us hope that 2025 is a little drier.

In Season 2024, we welcome two new diarists to Parnassus 2: Sue Southall and Nick Aston. We also welcome back Ro Fitzgerald, who has had a couple of trying years with house-related issues. I am looking forward to sharing your year's records.

Janice stayed close to home for her additions this year. She begins with Broad-leaved Anemone *Anemone hortensis* at its known, naturalised, site at Glynde churchyard, Sussex, records Opium Poppy cultivar *Papaver somniferum* 'Giganteum' and Balkan Clary *Salvia nemorosa* from waste ground in Newhaven and Large Bindweed variant *Calystegia silvatica* var. *quinquepartita* among others.

Our first new branch member is **Sue Southall**. Sue has not sent in a diary for four years, so has amassed an impressive list of records during this time. I will begin with nine bramble *Rubus* species and an equal number of dandelions *Taraxacum* spp., all nicely referenced, together with five thistles *Cirsium*, two of them hybrids. Then there was Great Pignut *Bunium bulbocastanum* from its classic site at Knocking Hoe, Bedfordshire, together with Few-flowered Fumitory

Fumaria vaillantii. These were followed by Narrow Small-reed *Calamagrostis stricta* from Thompson Common, Norfolk. From Cors-y-Llyn National Nature Reserve, Radnorshire, she records *Betula pubescens* ssp. *celtibetica* and, from the Black Hills of Morayshire, Hairless Blue-sowthistle *Cicerbita plumieri*. Elsewhere in Scotland, Sue reports Cabbage Thistle *Cirsium oleraceum*, from the Tay Marshes near Perth, and Heath Spotted-orchid x Heath Fragrant-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* x *Gymnadenia borealis* = *X Dactylodenia* x *evansii*. She saw Thistle Broomrape *Orobanch*



Thistle Broomrape

Ripon, and, finally, Mediterranean Nettle *Urtica membranacea* as a nursery weed in Boxted, Essex.

Geoffrey reports a well-naturalised Garden Stork's-bill *Erodium trifolium* along an industrial access road in Gravesend and Evergreen Huckleberry *Vaccinium ovatum*, probably bird-sown, in Fishponds Wood, Ightham, some 300 yards from the parent, a first British record. He won't mind me saying, but Geoffrey's diary would not be complete without a willowherb or a dock. This year it is the latter: Wood x Greek x Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex sanguineus* x *R. cristatus* x *R. x obtusifolius* from Halstead - another first record, anywhere! Very well done!

John appears to have had another year of travelling to record plants. Ireland was his principal destination, where he benefited from joining Paul Green's meeting in the south-east. I begin with Cottonweed *Achillea maritima* at its only British and Irish location, Our Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, where its status is Critically Endangered. At the same location, John also reports Spear-leaved x Grass-leaved Orache *Atriplex prostrata* x *A. littoralis* = *A. x hulmeana*. Other specialities include St. Dabeoc's Heath *Daboecia cantabrica* from a heathy roadside near Clifden, Co. Galway, Mackay's Heath *Erica mackayana* from Roundstone Bog, also Co. Galway and, finally, Irish St. John's-wort *Hypericum canadense* in a heathy roadside ditch at Ballybunion Mountain, Co. Kerry. Closer to home, John recorded Shaggy Shield-fern *Dryopteris cycadina* from Rectory

Wood, Church Stretton, where it is an escape from cultivation.

Peter, once again, was very busy during 2024. He did, however, take a week's holiday in Scotland and set out to find some specific and interesting plants. Firstly, he reports Alpine Knotweed *Koenigia alpina* from the gravels of the River Dee, near Ballater. Whilst in the area, he also visited the Cairnwell, where he added Cairnwell Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla sciura*. Closer to home, he found Powell's Cape-lily *Crinum x powellii* well-established on the margins of Formby Dunes and at Ainsdale National Nature Reserve he added a good stand of Galingale *Cyperus longus* in a dune slack, where he has known it for about 50 years.

Ro seems to have put the worst of her housing problems behind her and has sent in a diary covering the last three seasons, 2021-2024. The garden centre in Mart Road, Minehead, produced two 'nursery weeds', now spreading quite widely in the UK: New Zealand Bitter-cress *Cardamine corymbosa* and Cryptic Bitter-cress *Cardamine occulta*. A second 'twosome' are Blue Anemone *Anemone apennina* and Early Crocus *Crocus tommasinianus*, both well-naturalised on a bank at Crowcombe Heathfield, north-west of Taunton. Add to this Fern-leaved Corydalis *Corydalis cheilanthesifolia* and Japanese Fernleaf Corydalis *C. heterocarpa*, both arriving unannounced as casuals in her garden, together with Buffalo-bur *Solanum rostratum* and Buckwheat *Fagopyrum esculentum*. It appears

that Beggar's Roost is a haven for alien arrivals. Ro also records a number of meticulously identified naturalised daffodils and the recently described Weeping Crack-willow *Salix x pendulina* f. *albiflorum* at Watchet Station. A very interesting list indeed.

Fortunately, **Ted** has been a little less restricted this year and, although he did not travel far for his north-west Wales base, local botanising in the Llandudno area proved fruitful. Once again, he was guided to some very nice plants by the BSBI recorder: Common x Intermediate Polypody *Polypodium vulgare* x *P. interjectum* = *P. x mantoniae*, American x Short-fruited Willowherb *Epilobium ciliatum* x *E. obscurum* = *E. x vicinum* and Lesser Knotweed *Koenigia campanulata* were all found by an old water mill at Penmachno. He added Blackthorn x Wild Plum *Prunus spinosa* x *P. domestica* = *P. x fruticans* from near Conwy and Garden Tree-mallow *Malva x clementii* from the Great Orme.

Although hampered by a troublesome knee, **Dorothy** made two additions to her diary this year. She rejoices in the spectacle and profusion of Sea Pea *Lathyrus japonicus* on the shingle beach at Aldeburgh, whilst on holiday in Suffolk, describing it as being 'everywhere'. Her second offering was Himalayan Giant Blackberry *Rubus armeniacus*, self-sown in hedges around the periphery of allotments on Broughton Road, Skipton, North Yorkshire.

Our second new branch member is **Nick Aston**. A long-time member of

the Society, Nick cited work commitments as a reason why he has taken a number of years to move through the WFS branches. However, he now feels he can justify the time required to progress. To this end, Nick presents his diary with a monumental 238 additions - phew!! Selecting taxa to highlight is a little daunting! Anyway, here goes! Nick covered a lot of ground in 2024 - from Ireland, the Channel Islands and Isle of Wight, to Scotland and numerous locations in England. I will start with Southern Marigold *Tagetes minuta* as an arable weed on an organic farm in St. John, Jersey. He added Cottonweed *Achillea maritima* and the Kidney Vetch subspecies *Anthyllis vulneraria* ssp. *lapponica* from the dunes at Our Lady's Lake in Co. Wexford, while in the New Forest, at the well-known Hatchet Pond, he records New Forest Crowfoot *Ranunculus x novae-forestae*. Finally, in Cornwall, he recorded Altar-lily *Zantedeschia aethiopica*, naturalised in a wet ditch near Polzeath, and several plants of Yellow-eyed-grass *Sisyrinchium californicum*, naturalised in a churchyard at Gulval, near Penzance.

I have thoroughly enjoyed your many and varied diaries and sharing your botanical years. There have also been a few déjà vu moments, when you have recorded plants where I have done so in the past. I hope that you all have an excellent and fruitful 2025, with lots of interesting finds along the way.

PAUL HARMES

EXOTICS REPORT 2024

This summer's exotics report might have had as its centrepiece a record that was sent in by a WFS member. The finder agrees, however, that the record requires further checking and I will keep it in reserve for a future issue. Meanwhile, I trust I can rely on the forbearance of members as I fall back again on some observations of my own - which of course means (sub)urban botany and garden escapes.

The north-east African perennial Feathertop *Pennisetum villosum* is a familiar sight to me in local gardens; indeed it would be difficult to miss, for while its stems and leaves might be a bit on the wiry side, this loosely-tufted grass is obviously grown for its exotic-looking, white, plumose flower-heads. These are apparent throughout late summer and early autumn and on closer inspection show the green flecks of the inconspicuous spikelets, so completely upstaged by the involucre of long, white, feathery bristles. It was Paul Stanley who first alerted me to its fugitive tendencies, after he had found it naturalised in an Isle of Wight car park, a long way from any possible planting. He assured me that I would find it 'out' too and wasn't mistaken in his prediction, though it did take a while. Having pressed it a few times, I'm well aware of how easily the flower-heads break up and can see how the 'plumes' would assist in the wind dispersal of seed.

It does seem to be a grass which, when in flower at least, can be identified on sight. However, a look at the species keys for various genera at the back of *Alien Grasses of the British Isles* (Ryves, Clement & Foster (1996)) reminds us just how challenging grass identification can be. There is no key for *Pennisetum* there, mind you, nor is *P. villosum* included in the catalogue section of that excellent work. Let us assume for the purposes of this column that *P. villosum* can be identified more or less on jizz! There is a further complication which need not concern us overmuch. While I have been referring to the plant as *P. villosum*, and it is still commercially available under that name, it seems that the entirety of *Pennisetum* has been sunk into *Cenchrus* and the new accepted combination for this species now is *Cenchrus longisetus*.

For a number of years, *P. villosum*/*C. longisetus* has been prominent in a garden that stands at the intersection of two streets a road or two back from Royal Parade in Eastbourne. Surrounded by an abundance of pavement cracks and road gutters, this seemed a promising place to look for escapees. For several years there was nothing and then in 2021, I found a self-sown clump. Then others appeared at different spots in the same street and in neighbouring ones. I've noticed this before and can't really explain it. I have a few ideas but nothing very scientific. It's as if some secret threshold is

passed, a barrier comes down and a brief period of prosperity as a street weed follows. This process might have been repeated several times before I started searching.

(Just around the corner, there is a garden on Royal Parade overlooking the seafront, where there has long been an impressive stand of Umbrella Sedge *Cyperus involucratus*. I searched the street for seedlings in that case too for a number of years and in 2016, a particularly long hot summer if I

recall, I found several...but so far not again.)

Of course, Feathertop would not be such a suitable garden plant in other parts of the country. Nevertheless, as I'm not sure that it is at all well-known to botanists in general and since my own experience indicates that it is escaping more often (besides the occurrences mentioned here, I have found it recently in two other locations), it seemed a worthwhile subject for this column.

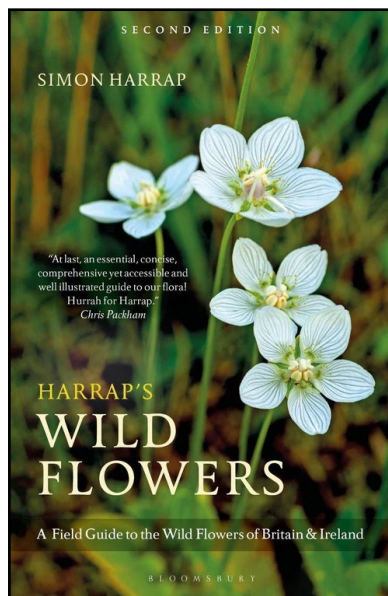
MATTHEW BERRY

BOOK REVIEWS

Harrap's Wild Flowers (Second Edition): Simon Harrap: Bloomsbury Publishing (2025): ISBN (PB) 978-1-3994-1890-4: Publisher's price £20.00 and listed online; E copies available.

This is more of an announcement than a review because I'm sure that many of us already have and value the First Edition. Mine sits closest to my desk with that long-term standard, Francis Rose's Wild Flower Key. 'Harrap' is usually first to hand and only on the few occasions when it fails to help me make an identification do I retreat to 'Francis' and then to 'Stace' (New Flora of the British Isles, 4th Edition 2019) and the BSBI handbooks. This habit developed soon after I first had a copy of Harrap because the author's style is so approachable and his earlier passion for birding makes him an expert at picking out the small but essential details which you need to

know when a wilting bag of plant scraps is your evening 'homework'. Harrap is sometimes joined by the recent British and Irish Wild Flowers and Plants (Hamilton, Gibson & Still,



2024) because this often has very useful additional photos of these kinds of small details. For field botanists at all levels of experience the new Harrap should be a game-changer because it really does do what a second edition should. Vaunted updates often just seem concerned with correcting errors and adding name changes or new references, but this book has been truly enriched and enlarged. The format is the same - a sturdy A5 soft-cover with easy-to-use thumb-nail photos inside the covers which give clear clues about where to start looking if you don't already know. Accounts include one or more photos (of excellent quality) and a BSBI national distribution map, which is tiny but clear enough. I don't carry the first edition in the field because of the weight; they are quite solid little books - the new one nearly 500 pages - but for stronger load-bearers than I am they are constructed to withstand exposure.

By chance, when the book arrived, I had had a recent struggle with a scrap of a fumitory in very wintry

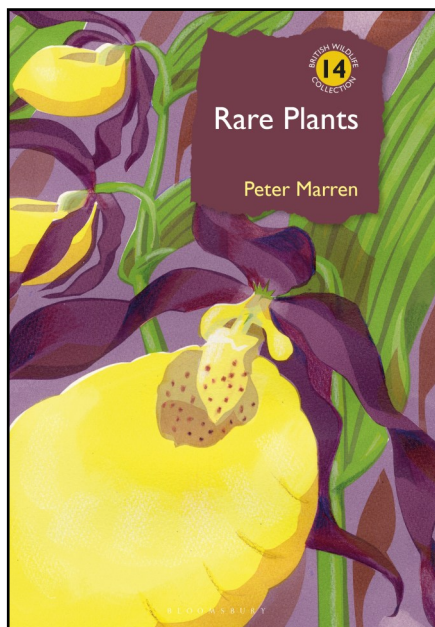
condition found during the Spring Week Hunt, so I used this relic as a trial and found that the new edition was most excellently improved; not only have the entries gone from 2 to 10, helpfully presented in sections for the two main habitats as 'Ramping' and 'Arable', but the section begins with close-up photos of single flowers, showing the colours of the upper petals and the shape and size of the sepals (the character I most rely on). This extension is typical of the new edition, adding more leaf shapes, more pods and fruits as well as more species to difficult groups such as docks, persicarias and mustards. Sections such as Asteraceae include useful pointers on what to look for as well as photos of individual achenes with their 'fluffs'. Indeed, the book focuses on the most important characters of each plant in a way which helps train good botanists - however experienced you are this should help keep everybody's education alive. I'm extremely pleased to have it!

RO FITZGERALD

**Rare Plants: Peter Marren:
Bloomsbury Wildlife (2024): ISBN:
HB: 978-1-3994-0732-8: Publisher's
price £36.00 and listed online**

Many of us will already have great admiration and liking for Peter Marren's writing. *Britain's Rare Flowers* (1999) and the delightful account of his search for the flowers which he'd never managed to see, *Chasing the Ghost* (2018), will be on many members' shelves. Readers of *British Wildlife* magazine will

remember his delightful regular column 'Twitcher in the Swamp', in which he commented on the absurdities and pomposities found in conservation life, writing in a way which made serious good sense as well as making me laugh aloud. This new book is a wonderful and important culmination of his wide experience of the British and Irish flora and his ability to put this into words. The book includes some very serious, even frightening subjects,



and discussions of the science supporting serious conclusions, but Peter's language is always clear and immediate, and he manages to bring touches of humour to lighten what could be grim reading. I don't usually find a page-turner element in writing about things like threat statistics, but I couldn't put *Rare Plants* down – and it's over 370 pages! It expands on the material of *Britain's Rare Plants* enormously, not just by including Ireland, but by covering the whole concept of rarity and all it entails.

Anyone familiar with other British Wildlife books such as *Woodland Flowers*, by Keith Kirby, or *Mountain Flowers*, by Michael Scott, or Clive Chatters' fine examinations of habitats such as *Saltmarsh* and *Heathland*, will know how well produced they are, with masses of good illustrations (often photographs

by the late Bob Gibbons). So the richness of *Rare Plants* is no surprise, but a book being *beautiful* as well as well-written is a distinct advantage, especially when, like this one, its purchase is a serious investment. I'll never regret my outlay though, as it's a book to return to again and again.

There is too much in it to review in detail, but just the examination of the concept of rarity goes into fascinating corners, such as the rather embarrassing fact that dim, unattractive species are more difficult to get conservation support for than commoner but prettier flowers! The book follows the history of botany in our islands and looks at the significance of rarity as species were first discovered. The first chapter 'Modes of Rarity: history, competition and replacements' touches on many of the problems faced by our declining flora, but the very next chapter is 'The continuing story: new flowers', and all through the toll of losses is balanced by discussion of the new discoveries being made (even of native plants) and the broadening of our lists by the to-and-fro as garden plants cross the fence. I love the chapters on 'Plants and people: subjects, symbols and icons' and on 'The condition of rarity: problems, opportunities and imaginings'. There is discussion of the special problems concerning hybrids and apomictic species such as hawkweeds and whitebeams, and there are explanations of (and a keen look at) 'The conservation labyrinth: legislation, argument and action' – an area where I definitely need my hand held by a guide with humour and

common sense as well as knowledge!

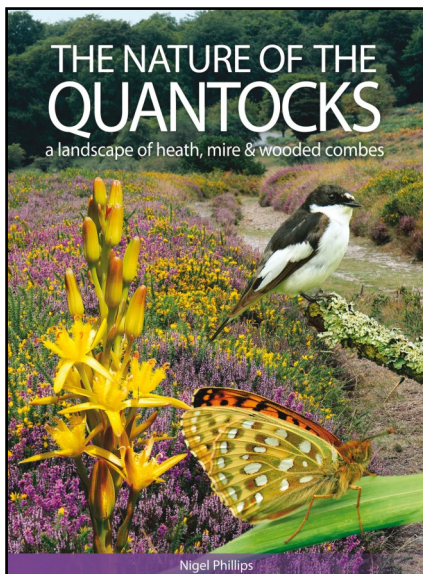
There is even a chapter on 'The other world: bryophytes, stoneworts, seaweeds and desmids' because, however little most of us know about these groups, they include many top rarities and need highly specialised knowledge for the conservation of their sometimes obscure habitats. It's easier to get support for the pretty Pasqueflower *Pulsatilla vulgaris* than for minute mosses such as Flamingo Moss *Tortula cernua*, which grows only on the waste of limestone kilns, or Lead Moss, which grows on the rubble of old mines. The book demonstrates the huge panorama of difficulties involved in the conservation of rarities and even in

tiny Ireland and the UK the spread is altogether breathtaking. I love this book especially because the author always finds threads of good and hope and suggests ways of valuing *change* rather than just bemoaning *loss*. Every time I pick it up, I find some unknown detail about the history or special needs of some favourite plant, and how and whether it is managing in our changing world. Reading it during a dark January, I find it touching on my whole botanical life, inspiring me to experience and learn yet more of plants.

I can only ask other members to read it, PLEASE. It's a book which will go on, and on, giving.

RO FITZGERALD

The Nature of the Quantocks:
Nigel Phillips: Pisces
Publications (2025): ISBN 978-1-
913994-15-0: Publisher's
price (hardback): £36.50.



It is turning out to be an extremely fortunate year for members planning to come to the AGM near Taunton in September as two important Somerset books will have come out by then. One is still on its way - the 150th volume of the great New Naturalist series will feature Exmoor - but already to hand is this beautiful Quantock nature guide.

Nigel Phillips is a respected local naturalist, well-known in the Somerset wildlife-oriented community, so he is perfectly placed to write a panoramic account of the Quantock area. Of course, as well as wild flowers, it covers birds and animals as well as fungi, mosses, liverworts, lichens and a wide range of invertebrates. The botany section has only 19 pages out of more than 200 but they are properly informative and well worth reading - ferns are

especially well shown - and the photographs (as in the whole book) are really lovely, showing habitats perfectly, including the precious Quantock mires, as well as individual species. I'm sure many visitors (and locals) have wondered at the strange shapes of some trees in the Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea* woodlands - well, the explanation is here! It's a book which gives context to every aspect of these hills. Landscape history and geology are explained

and the wide range of life forms covered make it a perfect go-to holiday book as well as an invaluable resource to Quantock residents.

The style is clear and concise and the photographs are inspiring throughout. I really recommend it for anyone visiting West Somerset; it's an investment which would guarantee great enjoyment as well as sound information.

RO FITZGERALD

The following is a contribution from a Branch W member..

COMING BACK TO KEBLE MARTIN **By Janet Clapton, Rothesay, Isle of Bute**

What do CND marches, velodrome racing, Reading Natural History Society and William Keble Martin's Concise British Flora have in common? All were great influences on me in my early teens. I filled in my first Wild Flower Diary in 1980 or 1981, and Keble Martin helped me get to know the many wild flowers I saw in a large area of southern England centred on Reading. About the same time, I joined the local cycling club, which meant being able to cover considerable mileages every week with an eye on every verge. I also did daily long walks to school through the pleasant open grounds of Reading University. I loved thumbing through the pages of Keble Martin's beautiful botanical paintings and very scientific sounding descriptions. My teenage brain soaked up all those Latin names like a sponge. I didn't have access to a large network of botanists, but I did go on Reading Natural History Society field trips, and

I met fellow WFS members, the Haigs of Eversley (then in their nineties – great users of Clapham, Tutin and Warburg) and the lovely Joan Swanborough, out in Wiltshire.

The rest of my life sadly got in the way of any sustained botanising for many years, but I did look up anything new I saw, through moves to Winchester, Leicester, Tunbridge Wells and Mid Sussex. I attempted to fill in my diary in 2018, but was too busy with work and cycle racing over the summer to keep it up. In 2020, we moved to the Isle of Bute, in the Firth of Clyde – a very different environment to Mid Sussex, which had become extreme with regard to summer heat, drought and winter floods. On the day we left Sussex, it was 38°, in contrast to 11° standing next to the A74M near Gretna after a breakdown. A few more very full years followed, with major building work, parental bereavement and

relocating another infirm parent. Feeling very battered by life, I decided that what I wanted to do for 2025 was fill in my Wild Flower Diary. So I started on 1 January, with Keble Martin to hand in case of any ID difficulties.

Well, 4 months in, it's like being reacquainted with old friends. I remain very good at spotting plants on verges, but less good at the patience and eyesight needed for detailed ID. My friends are probably bored of me spouting Latin names from memory, but put up with having a walking companion who is not too fast. Bute has quite a varied flora, as described in the wonderful Flora of Bute by Angus Hannah, who I met at a Bute Natural History Society meeting. In fact, I confess to cheating – if I'm not sure of an ID, I look to see what Angus wrote about where the likely species is found.

Here is the shock though: the advancement of first flowering dates over the decades. Even though I no longer have my early 80's WFS diaries, I remember vividly where I was and what I was doing, because of events which acted as calendar

markers in those impressionable years. For example, on 14 February 1983, I saw my first Lesser Celandine of the year near Cole Henley, in North Hampshire, while cycling to Winchester for an inter-club ride. My first sighting this year was 8 days earlier – in Oban. I also have those few 2018 records. From trips to Durness in the 2010s, I estimated that flowering dates then were 3 weeks later in the North of Scotland relative to Sussex.

This year, however, I am astounded by the earliness of flowering in general on Bute. We've had quite a few frosts, unusually for Bute, but very cold weather is quite rare in our maritime situation. I suspect within a generally quite favourable climate, there are lots of sheltered niches, such as at the base of walls (generally lime mortar filled or covered), or on sunny corners of wooded paths or next to beech hedges planted by the Bute Estate.

Anyway, I am enjoying my year of getting back to botanising, which I think will be good preparation for a 2026 of Bute records only.

THE BEST £10 I EVER SPENT

In springtime 2011, I came across a reference to The Wild Flower Society in a Reader's Digest book called 'Wild Flowers' and decided to apply to become a member. In no time at all I was accepted, and so commenced a wonderful journey for me which has – quite literally changed my life. Having always had

a casual interest in British wild flowers, it wasn't until I became a member that I really became hooked! Being a member of what was then known as the 'Y' Group (now East Anglia), I attended pretty well every field meeting locally along with other meetings, including all the AGM's.

As fellow members who know me will confirm, I admit to struggling quite hard remembering all those difficult Latin names and nomenclature. My own preferred method of learning about the huge diversity of our flora is by taking photographs of nearly every different flower I have seen. Many of these photographs are then printed on A4 photographic paper and filed within cellophane presentation folders. The pages are numbered and reference to them made on an Excel database. "How on earth can I afford to do this on a very expensive-to-run inkjet printer?", I hear you ask. Well, for those of you who would wish to know, I purchased on-line what is called a 'Continuous Ink Supply System', which replaces those extremely expensive individual cartridges. The ink I use for this system is compatible ink, but be assured, in my opinion the quality of print is equally as good as the expensive generic inks. I also purchase A4 size good quality photo inkjet paper in bulk (usually 100 sheets at a time), which works out at a very competitive price. Thus, the printing cost is reduced dramatically. To those fellow flower photographers amongst us, I urge you to at least print your better images rather than merely keep them hidden on your computer hard drives etc! I guarantee you will be constantly referring to them more this way than viewing them on your computer screen. You will, I'm sure, consider entering some of them in the Society's annual Photographic Competition. Believe me, it is rewarding indeed to see your own photographs displayed and being admired by other members. I am often asked by fellow members if

I'm a professional photographer. The answer is definitely '**no**' - just an enthusiastic hobbyist. Since joining, another big bonus for me has been learning (self-taught) much more about photography and working with the computer and printing etc. I still have a lot to learn though!

That initial 'investment' of £10 has led to a great deal more expenditure; purchasing lots of photographic and printing equipment, costs of visiting WFS meetings, flower ID books etc, etc. I dare not work out the total cost – only to say that *every £ spent has been totally worth it!* Aside from this expenditure, and importantly, that £10 (now £15p.a.) has "changed my life" where I have met many fellow like-minded members who most willingly share their expertise and friendship. Not to mention all those wonderful and special places where the less common flowers are to be seen.

This is my ninth issue of our magazine and, apart from a few niggles and problems, I have thoroughly enjoyed doing the work and I hope to continue.

Thank you to everyone, and to those holding positions in office and administration.

What a great and friendly Society we are - if only I had joined decades ago!

PS, I look forward to receiving your entries to this year's Photographic Competition!

KEN SOUTHALL



Getting ready for lunch under the huge
Wild Service Tree, Maulden Wood,
Bedfordshire



Keeping an eye on us at
Minchinhampton,
Gloucestershire



Red Lungwort by Hilary Blyth
Nethy Bridge, Scotland



Fly Orchid
by William Howard



Pictures by Lyn Jones at the Glencoe meeting 2024.



Sheltering in the rain.