

P.S.N.S. BOTANICAL SECTION

BULLETIN No.1

October, 1978.

Note from the Secretary

Members will by now be aware of the sudden illness of the Chairman of the Botanical Section, Allan Robson, shortly after the Sow of Atholl excursion in June. Happily, he is well on the way to recovery and we wish him a speedy return to his former pursuits. He tells me he must accept his recent set-back as a warning not to overdo things and I am anxious, therefore (and with Allan's agreement), to suggest a streamlining of the Section's activities for this winter at least. With my home and work now in Fort William and taking into account the disappointingly low average number of persons attending past winter meetings, Allan and I feel that this winter there should be only two fixtures: viz. the open meeting on 27th October, 1978 -- Mr Kemp from Dundee University Botanic Garden and the A.G.M. in March, 1979.

Another factor contributing to this decision and which may remain a problem in future years is the distance members have to travel to meet in Perth; nearly all the active members live outwith Perth! For these reasons and in order to compensate somewhat for the reduced winter programme, Allan has suggested that members contribute to a regular Botanical Bulletin (of which this is the first) with perhaps one or more before the A.G.M. This is intended to go some way to binding the Section closer together by circulating news items, records, information, etc

With regard to future Summer Syllabuses, we believe it is generally agreed that joint excursions with other bodies have proved the most popular and have been invariably successful. As for the other summer excursions, attendances have been very low -- usually 2 or 3 on Wednesday evenings and 3 or 4 on Sundays out of a membership of approximately 28. Anyone who has any suggestions for the Summer Programme, identification questions, items of botanical interest, or brief accounts of their own botanical forays, do please contact Allan or me so that information can be circulated or answers given as the case may be, along with new material, in the next Bulletin.

Marion Hope who has been very active as a new Committee member, particularly in S.W.T. site recording, has gone to Durham University to pursue a Science course. We wish her every success.

David Blair

Excursion Reports

Binn Hill, (37/12SE) 31.5.78

Although only two members (Pauline & Barbara) turned up at this meeting, it proved quite interesting. The **Doronicum plantagineum*** almost dominates the ground flora under the mainly Ash/Beech/Elm wood. 70 Flowering plants and Ferns were recorded for a site card, not a poor total for May and 1½ hours in a restricted habitat. The most exciting discovery came on an outcrop of rock on the lightly grazed hillside immediately to the east of the woods. Two patches of **Purple Milk-Vetch** (*Astragalus danicus*) occurred along with **Aremonia agrimonoides**, recorded for the Braes of the Carse generally but not here before.

*This relative of the Common Leopards-bane is quite distinct with its larger flower-heads, more numerous ray florets, and quite different foliage and is much rarer in Perthshire

A.W. Robson

Balnaguard Glen, (27/95SW) 17.6.78

The joint meeting with S.W.T., Perth Branch was led by Mrs Meg Dunn and during the afternoon participants listed plant species on the Balnaguard Reserve (adding to the list compiled on 8.5.77). It is an extremely interesting streamside habitat with a high waterfall upstream. The area to the west above the valley has one of the largest concentrations of **Juniper** scrub in Perthshire. Mrs. Dunn, who is the Chairwoman of the Reserve Committee has drawn a map of the reserve with a route marked thereon. A plant list is also available. Anyone wishing to visit the Reserve should contact Mrs. Dunn, Blaircroisk, Ballinluig for a permit.

Rhoda Fothergill

Bishop Hill, Kinross-shire, 1.7.78

A party of members of the Edinburgh Natural History Society met the members of the Botanical Section P.S.N.S. to explore the hill lying to the east of Loch Leven. The party met at Scotlandwell and walked up the hill, following the path from the village. Unfortunately weather was not favourable. Some went to explore the rocky cliff-face to the east of the path led by Dr. Rosalind Smith where they found plants of **Bloody Cranesbill** (*Geranium sanguineum*). The remainder continued on to Bishop Hill but mist prevented re-finding the quarry where, on a reconnaissance/

reconnaissance a week before, the **Mossy Saxifrage** (*Saxifraga hypnoides*) had been seen, also a pond whose surface was covered with a species of **Water-Crowfoot** (*Ranunculus* sp.) On the summit the **Wild Mountain Pansy** (*Viola lutea*) was seen. The plan was to continue to Carlin Maggie, the rock formation on the western slope. It had been hoped to find the fern, **Green Spleenwort** (*Asplenium viride*) previously recorded here. -----The search, however, was not crowned with success. The party descended by a steep gully where **Saxifraga hypnoides** was seen along with **Purging Flax** (*Linum catharticum*). The mist cleared and so ended an extremely pleasant outing.

Rhoda Fothergill

Sow of Atholl, (27/67SW), 25.6 78

The party of 22 members and friends of the B.S.B.I. and P.S.N.S. met at Dalnaspidal Lodge. After briefing as to the objects of the meeting the main party set off to climb the shoulder leading to the NE boulder-strewn face of the Sow. They had been invited to assist in completing record cards for the quadrant (i.e. that quarter of the 10 kilo square), having been informed of the numerous species unrecorded on previous visits in 1961 and 1967.

The morainic heaps near the base, naturally acidic, produced three sedges of interest --- **Carex pauciflora**, **C. curta** and **Eriophorum angustifolium** along with **Narthecium ossifragum**, **Saxifraga stellaris**, **Drosera rotundifolium** etc. Quite suddenly some calcareous species made their appearance as outcrops of native rocks were reached. Confusing associations of **Thyme**, **Purging Flax**, **Bridsfoot Trefoil** (*calcicoles*) and **Blaeberry**, **Cowberry**, **Dwarf Cornel** (*calcifuges*) occurred. **Wood Cranesbill**, **Wood Anemone**, **Yellow Pimpernel** and others seemed to indicate former woodland conditions (at 2500 ft?). On the higher slopes there was a wonderful display of the rare 'Blue Heath' (**Phyllodoce caerulea**) in flower and fruit along with **Bog Whortleberry** (**Vaccinium uliginosum**) and **Mountain Azalea** (**Loiseleuria procumbens**). An unusual sedge turned up several times, **Carex vaginata**.

Alan Stirling took on the tougher task of searching the cloud-capped Sgairneach Mhor to the west. They returned with additions to the list including the **Small Cranberry** (**Vaccinium microcarpum**) and two unrecorded forms of **Taraxaca** (**Dandelions**). The total list of Flowering plants and Ferns was 161, about a quarter of these being new records for the Society, In spite of the overcast conditions, it was a very pleasant meeting

A.W. Robson

A9 Dunkeld Bypass
Single Island SSSI Rehabilitation

In connection with this work, an excellent example of co-operation with the Nature Conservancy Council and the Scottish Development Department, and which was more or less completed in 1977, the sum of £50 which was our fee for the work involved has been passed on to our Treasurer, Mr. French. For members who were not present at the meeting when this project was outlined, it is hoped to publish a brief account in a later bulletin.

A.W. Robson

Printed by: **DANSCOT PRINT LIMITED, 2 Charlotte Street, Perth.**