



PERTHSHIRE SOCIETY OF NATURAL SCIENCE  
BOTANICAL SECTION  
BULLETIN No. 31 – 2008

Reports from 2008 Field Meetings

1. Birnam River Tay Banks

Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> March

Six of us took to the Banks of the River Tay on a rather cool, but thankfully dry morning. We started looking at some of the casuals that have established themselves over the years on the Banks of the Tay by deliberate introduction, or resulting from the offspring of such introductions, or escapees from cultivation. Our first encounters were two species of *Pulmonaria*; *P. officinalis* (Lungwort) and *P. rubra* (Red Lungwort). These two species grow together under trees at the end of the path by the park leading from Oak Road. Flowering had been delayed, but the paler, less-spotted leaves of the Red Lungwort were evident among the leaves of the commoner species. A third form was encountered later on the west side of the Inchewan Burn: *Pulmonaria* 'Mawson's Blue'; whose deep blue flowers were quite striking, and whose few leaves are broadly lanceolate, and attached to low, slender shoots.

Heading westwards we passed by an impressive carpet of *Gagea lutea* (Yellow Star of Bethlehem) with a few flowers, and then on to a few leaves of *Arum italicum* ssp. *italicum* (Italian Lords and Ladies). The surface of the leaves appears as if embossed from the underside and the veins are highlighted by white lines as if they had been painted; the auricles of the leaves are more sharply pointed than the commoner *A. maculatum*. I wonder if the translation of *A. maculatum* from the Italian is 'British Lords and Ladies'?

*Scilla siberica* (Siberian Squill) with its deep-blue flowers was making a show, and the odd flowering plant of *Chionodoxa forbesii* (Glory-of-the-snow) was seen, but *Chionodoxa sardensis* (Lesser Glory-of-the-snow), which grows by the Inchewan Burn was not seen, however the unravelling shoots of *Euphorbia dulcis* (Sweet Spurge) were seen there. A surprise came in the shape of *Erythronium dens-canis* (Dog's-tooth-violet), which was found by Euan Cameron; its beautiful red-brown marking on the leaves and lavender-coloured flowers were immaculate. A second small clump was found close by, it was hidden under grass, and the clump had four flowers that would burst into full flower in the next few days. Euan remarked on the difficulty he had in growing this species in his garden, and I suggested the secret of cultivation might be buying a house in Birnam.

We stopped short of Telford's Bridge to look at *Anemone apennina* (Blue Anemone), whose overall appearance apart from flower colour is like our native *A. nemorosa* (Wood Anemone), only a little taller. On the other side of Birnam, downstream near Erigmore, we saw clumps of *Poa chaixii* (Broad-leaved Meadow-grass) beside the path under some of the avenue trees. These clumps looked superficially like *Deschampsia cespitosa* (Tufted Hair-grass), because the ends of the leaves had withered and remained *in situ*, but the *Poa* has much broader leaves with hooded tips, and the remains of the very broad, flat flowering stems were seen within the clumps. At this point we were treated to a rousing chorus of drumming great spotted woodpeckers from the other bank. Lamentably, there were no spring arrivals like sand martin to be seen, which were probably held up by the colder weather.

Some time was spent identifying plants by foliage alone. *Lilium martagon* (Martagon Lily) had already produced robust shoots, which made the unfolding leaves and flowers of *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel) look puny by comparison. By water, the shoots of *Veronica beccabunga* (Brooklime) could be identified by their broad, opposite leaves, which were erect and clustered on the stem. In time, the internodes expand and the leaves fold back to provide

its more customary appearance. Close to, but not in water, were the shoots of *Campanula latifolia* (Giant Bellflower), in some cases accompanied by last year's withered flowering stems, and this year's shoots for all intents and purposes were miniatures of the summer foliage. On our return from the fishing bothy, the cotyledons of germinating seeds caught our eyes. With a closer inspection of the true leaves, that resembled the leaves of other members of the same family, but with many reduced teeth, we were able to identify *Veronica hederifolia* (Ivy-leaved Speedwell).

Alistair Godfrey

## 2. Den of Alyth

Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> April

Five of us enjoyed a warm spring day with bright sunshine that brought colour and life to the whole Den. We started off from the main car park and headed south, then we followed the floodplain of the burn towards Alyth. There were a number of interesting habitats here, including the damp remains of an old lade that ran down to what used to be a sawmill. There were a number of garden cast-outs and refugees closer to the town, including a lily that was more vigorous looking than *Lilium pyrenaicum* (Pyrenean Lily), that we decided not to name until it flowers.

*Alchemilla xanthochlora* (Intermediate Lady's-mantle) was coming into flower on the meadow beside the burn and we were able to identify *Alchemilla glabra* (Smooth Lady's-mantle) nearby; the glabrous underside of the leaves being quite distinct. The leaves of both species were small, but there were sufficient features showing to identify.

As we returned to follow the burn upstream, Les Tucker produced some leaves, about the size of a five pence piece, which were hairy and had crimped edges. We found a flower-head of this plant among *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* (Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage), and the flowerhead was that of its larger cousin *C. alternifolium* (Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage). We found greater quantities of the two species growing together a little farther upstream, and by the remains of the old swimming pool where we stopped for lunch.

The damp Old Red Sandstone walls of the burn provide an extremely good habitat for ferns. Les said there is an old record for *Hymenophyllum wilsonii* (Wilson's Filmy-fern) for this locality, but we did not find this small fern, which needs a more thorough search. Ferns we did find were *Asplenium trichomanes* (Maidenhair Spleenwort), *A. adiantum-nigrum* (Black Spleenwort), *Cystopteris fragilis* (Brittle Bladder-fern) and *Phyllitis scolopendrium* (Hart's-tongue). We found five other kinds of fern elsewhere.

The Den is notified as an SSSI because of its wooded gorge, and is thought to have been wooded for at least 200 years. The woodland flora is characterised in places by species that indicate the Den has been wooded for a long time: *Galium odoratum* (Woodruff) and *Veronica montana* (Wood Speedwell) among others are to be found. We found three colonies of *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen), including an extensive patch that Jeff Banks found near the Upper Den, which Martin Robinson said was the largest colony he had seen in the vice county. The Den narrows in its upper reaches, and the woodland is confined to a strip between the road to the east and the fields to the west with the burn running beside the edge of the wood. There were large patches of *Anemone nemorosa* (Wood Anemone) in flower here and the sunshine lit up the white flowers among the fresh greenery.

By the end of the day we were all quite tired, and we had recorded almost 200 taxa, which was a very good list for so early in the season, although wooded sites like this are at their best in the spring. We returned to the main car park where we were serenaded by a blackcap that obligingly sang from the top of a tree. In many ways, this had been a memorable visit.

Alistair Godfrey

**3. East Mill, Rattray****Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> May**

Three of us set off on a fine, sunny evening from the end of the track at West Grange of Aberbothrie on the banks of the River Erich. The excursion was advertised for “willows, water marginals and crucifers”, so we shall start with willows. The commonest tall willow on our Perthshire riverbanks is Crack-willow, a species that is subdivided into a number of varieties. We saw two: *Salix fragilis* var. *decipiens* and *S. fragilis* var. *furcata*; both these taxa are male clones. The differences between them are quite evident from a distance, the first has narrower, parallel-sided catkins and the second has paler, wider catkins that taper abruptly at the end like the point of a tail. The leaves of the second variety are wider, and in both varieties the contrast between the yellow catkins and shiny leaves are gloriously resplendent in bright sunshine.

I came upon a tall willow with narrow leaves that appeared to be hairless on the underside, and I thought I might have found a hybrid between *S. fragilis* and *S. viminalis* (Osier). This would have been an exciting find, as the hybrid is not currently recorded, although Les Tucker might correct me on that. When I got a close look at the undersides of the leaves when I got home I found them to be thinly hairy, and I concluded that this specimen was just *S. viminalis*. There is an interesting article in the April 2008 *BSBI News* on descriptions for different degrees of hairiness, although this omits the technical term for hirsute botanists! The only other willow we saw was *S. cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*, which we call ‘Grey Willow’, but some call it ‘Rusty Willow’ due to the brown hairs among the grey hairs on the undersides of the leaves, and others call *S. cinerea* subsp. *cinerea* ‘Grey Willow’ which has only grey hairs on the underside. There’s that hairiness thing again!

Barbara Hogarth identified *Ranunculus penicillatus* subsp. *pseudofluitans* (Stream Water-crowfoot) at the water’s edge, which is a tentative identification as the plant needs to be in flower and fruit to make certain. I sent off Water-crowfoot to a referee a few years ago and some of it was indeterminate due to hybridisation, which is a common feature of this group. What we saw may include much of the material we see in Perthshire in great rafts on some of our rivers such as the Erich and the Earn, which I never saw when I came to live in Perthshire almost 20 years ago. Is the appearance of these plants a reflection of warmer water due to climate change?

Of the crucifers we saw *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Thale Cress), *Barbarea vulgaris* (Winter-cress), *Cardamine amara* (Large Bitter-cress), *C. flexuosa* (Wavy Bitter-cress), *C. hirsuta* (Hairy Bitter-cress), *C. pratensis* (Cuckooflower), *Hesperis matronalis* (Dame’s-violet) and *Lepidium heterophyllum* (Smith’s Pepperwort).

Our evening haul was very fruitful and interesting. The tops of the banks were dominated by grass and gave an impression that not much variety would be found, but we found several plants characteristic of woodlands on the shady banks, although they were restricted in numbers and I found only one plant of *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel). The marginals were yet to show signs of flowering, but Barbara was pleased to see *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Wood Club-rush) which is fairly rare in Angus.

Alistair Godfrey

**4. Drummond Wood, Crieff****Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> May**

Drummond Wood is in a spectacular setting, lying between igneous dykes forming parallel crags next to Drummond Loch. The woodland is mature, presumably having had long associations with the castle, and provides one of the three interesting botanical areas, the other two being the crags and the loch. The woodland is included in the Drummond Lochs SSSI for its oak woodland and lichens.

A large number of tree and shrub species was encountered during the day and they are listed below; the Silver Fir was a single specimen of good age surrounded by younger trees of other species. Oaks yielded an unexpected species: a bird's song was determined for us by Ron Youngman as nuthatch. He said this species had been recorded in the Crieff area before and it is one to keep an eye open for as this is a species that is slowly spreading northwards.

<i>Abies alba</i>	European Silver-fir	<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild Cherry
<i>Abies procera</i>	Noble Fir	<i>Prunus padus</i>	Bird Cherry
<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Norway Maple	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>	Douglas Fir
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore	<i>Quercus petraea</i>	Sessile Oak
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Horse-chestnut	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Hornbeam	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	Rhododendron
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet Chestnut	<i>Rosa</i> sp.	Rose
<i>Chamaecyparis lawsoniana</i>	Lawson's Cypress	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood	<i>Salix caprea</i>	Goat Willow
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	<i>Salix cinerea</i> subsp. <i>oleifolia</i>	Rusty Willow
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	<i>Salix fragilis</i> var. <i>decipiens</i>	Crack-willow
<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Broom	<i>Salix purpurea</i>	Purple Willow
<i>Humulus lupulus</i>	Hop	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly	<i>Sequoia sempervirens</i>	Coastal Redwood
<i>Larix decidua</i>	European Larch	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet
<i>Larix kaempferi</i>	Japanese Larch	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Snowberry
<i>Larix x marschlinii</i>	Hybrid Larch ( <i>L.</i> <i>decidua x kaempferi</i> )	<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew
<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Honeysuckle	<i>Thuja plicata</i>	Western Red-cedar
<i>Picea abies</i>	Norway Spruce	<i>Tilia x europaea</i>	Lime
<i>Picea sitchensis</i>	Sitka Spruce	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	Wych Elm
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scots Pine		

Alistair Godfrey

## 5. Cairnleith Moss, Bankfoot

Wednesday, June 4th

We were blessed with a fine sunny evening, and from memory this may have been one of the better days of the year before the summer turned wet. If we lose botanising days to wet weather, we can take comfort from the fact that the plants are benefitting from the precipitation!

Cairnleith Moss is a SSSI for its wetland communities, most notably spring fen and lagg fen, and one said not to be in a favourable condition. However, we had much pleasure in what we found, and on our excursion and on a previous visit I made with Jim McIntosh, all or nearly all of the species of the site were found. The site is not particularly large, nor does it contain a large number of uncommon species, but it is an interesting marshy habitat that must have been fairly common in the area before industrial farming drainage radically altered the landscape, and unfortunately this marshy habitat is now quite rare in the area.

On the evening we were greeted at the entry to the site by the glaucous, bent-kneed stems of *Alopecurus geniculatus* (Marsh Foxtail), a charming little grass with bushy heads, characteristic of impeded drainage. A plant of similar habitat was *Ranunculus hederaceus* (Ivy-leaved Crowfoot).

Quite soon after the start we were in orchid country and our list included; *Dactylorhiza maculata* (Heath Spotted-orchid), *D. purpurella* (Northern Marsh-orchid), *D. fuchsii*

(Common Spotted-orchid), *D. x formosa* (*D. maculata x purpurella*), *Listera ovata* (Common Twayblade), and much to Liz Lavery's delight there was *Platanthera bifolia* (Lesser Butterfly-orchid) coming into flower. Under the birch trees to the north-west of the site we found a few plants of *Corallorhiza trifida* (Coralroot Orchid) in flower.

Sedges were well represented by 15 species including *Carex curta* (White Sedge), *C. diandra* (Lesser Tussock-sedge), *C. dioica* (Dioecious Sedge), *C. lasiocarpa* (Slender Sedge) and *C. vesicaria* (Bladder Sedge). Willows did not abound, but there was one, the hybrid between Grey and Dark-leaved Willow *Salix cinerea x myrsinifolia*.

There was a wide range of other plants of marshy habitats that included *Lychnis flos-cuculi* (Ragged Robin), *Pedicularis palustris* (Marsh Lousewort), *Menyanthes trifoliata* (Bogbean), *Pinguicula vulgaris* (Common Butterwort), *Veronica scutellata* (Marsh Speedwell), *Senecio aquaticus* (Marsh Ragwort), *Scutellaria galericulata* (Skullcap), *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort) and *Lythrum portula* (Water-purslane). Plants of the marshy woodland floor included *Dryopteris carthusiana* (Narrow Buckler-fern), *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen) and *Trientalis europaea* (Chickweed-wintergreen).

As we were leaving with a full list of plant names we were treated to the fleeting glimpse of a water rail as it flew towards us just below the tops of the tall, marshy vegetation. Although not as expensively designed, this species evades detection better than a stealth fighter or bomber. We were also treated to the chattering of water rail as the evening sky reddened as we headed off home.

Alistair Godfrey

## 6. Sauchie Tower and Alloa Railway Cycle Path

Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> June

On a brightening Sunday morning 12 of us met in the car park beside the Equestrian Centre near Sauchie Tower to do some serious recording in VC87, West Perth. Paul Stanley, Liz's co-recorder for VC87, with his son Dabioc and sister Gretel had travelled up from the Isle of Wight for a long weekend based near Crianlarich and drove over to meet us for the day. A good turnout of six PSNS members was joined by enthusiastic botanists Roy and Sue Sexton from Bridge of Allan and John Snodin from Callander.

We set off down a narrow lane to a field beside the River Devon to see a very unusual sedge, *Carex spicata* (Spiked Sedge), discovered growing in a marshy area near the river in September 2007 by Paul and Liz and confirmed later by Bill Hay. There was only one earlier (unpublished) record of *Carex spicata* from Perthshire – in 10 km square NO01 – and two Fife records, in 1870 and 1980. In September we had found around 100 clumps, and speculated it may have been introduced when the reclaimed bing which now forms most of the field by the river was landscaped. More *C. spicata* was present in the field beside the river to the east. A tussock was found on the next PSNS excursion to [Flatfield and Myreside](#), and later in the summer it was found at a derelict industrial site in Alloa, while an unconfirmed plant was found beside the A9 near Birnam during our fungal foray in October 2007. *C. spicata* may have been overlooked in the past, or is spreading rapidly northwards.

Other plants of interest noted during the morning were many *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) and *D. purpurella* (Northern Marsh-orchid) and the vigorous hybrid between the two, *D. x venusta* (Hybrid Marsh-orchid), a single plant of *Platanthera chlorantha* (Greater Butterfly-orchid), a few clumps of *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Wood Club-rush) and *Glyceria maxima* (Reed Sweet-grass) along the river bank, *Carex otrubae* (False Fox-sedge), more usually found in tidal parts of the Forth and Tay estuaries, and several plants of *Juncus inflexus* (Hard Rush), a rare plant in most of Scotland. Paul spotted the hybrids *Epilobium ciliatum x montanum* (Hybrid Willowherb), the dock *Rumex crispus x obtusifolius*

(= *R. x pratensis*) and *Hypericum perforatum x maculatum* (= *H. x desetangsii*) (des Etangs' St John's-wort). Gretel recorded a total of 126 species for us in NS8996 and 106 in NS8995.

After lunch, six of us explored the cycle path along the old railway near Clackmannan village as far as a fascinating old brickworks near Tullygarth where we made some very interesting finds. Bill identified the hybrid willow *Salix x reichardtii* (*S. caprea x cinerea*) for us; Paul found *Pilosella flagellaris* ssp. *flagellaris* (Mouse-ear Hawkweed) beside the cycle path and *Leontodon saxatilis* (Lesser Hawkbit) in loose tarmac at the brickworks. Beside a derelict chimney on top of a brick wall were 1000s of plants of *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen) in flower; a second smaller colony was growing nearby, close to about 10 spikes of *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine) and Paul identified a few leaves of *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (Adder's Tongue), perhaps the only surviving station for this species in Perthshire (see [photos](#)); *Centaureum erythraea* (Common Centaury) was scattered over a vast bing beside the brick chimney; beside a disgustingly smelly area covered in evil-looking white scum we found a few plants of *Listera ovata* (Common Twayblade) with two garden throw-outs, *Geranium endressii x versicolor* (= *G. x oxonianum*) (Druce's Crane's-bill) and *Crocsmia paniculata* (Aunt-Eliza). We even saw a green woodpecker – the moral of this afternoon's botanising is never judge a place by its looks. A total of 110 species were recorded in NS9292.

Liz Lavery

## 7. Flatfield and Myreside

Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2008

After a rainy day, most members appear to have been deterred, and only MR & LT turned up.

We first investigated the ruderals springing up around and inside the recently-constructed Glendoick traffic circle. One of the first plants we noted, *Anagallis arvensis* (Scarlet Pimpernel) – 'the Poor man's Weather-glass' – had its flowers open, indicating the sunny evening which ensued. Around the roadworks, other notable items were: *Filago vulgaris* (Common Cudweed), a single specimen in flower; *Valeriana pyrenaica* (Pyrenean Valerian), a thick patch on the north bank of the circle; *Sparganium erectum* (Branched Bur-reed) in a small pool; and a range of grasses, including *Agrostis gigantea* (Black Bent).

We then moved along the minor roads to the fields east and west of Myreside, around the burn flowing down from Pitroddie Den. This area appears to have been fenland formerly; it is now mostly drained by a network of deep-cut 'pows', and the flat loamy soils are intensively cultivated. However, typical wild plants still persist in odd corners, from where they are able to recolonise arable headlands and set-aside.

A good list was compiled, including the orchids *Dactylorhiza incarnata* subsp. *pulchella* (3 spikes), *D. purpurella*, *D. fuchsii* and hybrids – 100+ population; masses of *Persicaria lapathifolia* (Pale Persicaria); *Fumaria muralis* ssp. *boraei* (Common Ramping-fumitory) and *F. officinalis* (Common Fumitory); *Veronica anagallis-aquatica* (Blue Water-speedwell) and *Ranunculus sceleratus* (Celery-leaved Buttercup) in the ditches and main field-mire; *Poa palustris* (Swamp Meadow-grass), two clumps; and a single tussock of *Carex spicata* (Spiked Sedge) found late on – a new vice county record. Several plants merit further investigation, including *Camelina sativa* (Gold-of-pleasure)(?) on a spoil-heap and a Galingale *Cyperus* sp.; doubtless others remain to be found.

The mixture of habitats hereabouts – flat fen carr; deep bush-filled dens, and steep craigs of the Sidlaws – also make this area attractive for wild animals and birds; e.g. without any particular effort I have observed brown hares, stoats, deer, otters, swans, geese, ducks, grasshopper and sedge warblers, buzzards, peregrines, sparrowhawks and, now, sea eagles!

Les Tucker

## Kippenrait Glen

Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> June

Rain overnight and overcast skies did not bode well for the nine of us who set off to explore the paths and tracks up the steep, stream-cut sides of Kippenrait Glen. But we were lucky and the rain kept away for most of the day. Roy Sexton led the party along the Darn Path towards the concrete bridge which spans the River Allan. It was wonderful for me to be out with a group of keen amateur naturalists from near Stirling and the west of the county. Thanks to Roy and Sue Sexton's encouragement they are all keen to record plants in VC87. Their activities during 2008 have been recounted in the excellent first edition of *PLANT, Plant Local Area NeTwork* produced by Roy in December. PLANT represents a loose group of organisations and individuals interested in the collection and collation of biological records in the Stirlingshire area for use by the general public, local authorities, planners and developers.

Kippenrait Glen SSSI consists mainly of base-rich mixed valley woodland of ancient/long-established origin and is the largest of this type in Stirling District. It is an SAC for the European priority habitat *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines. It also has an outstanding assemblage of insects including 4 Red Data Book (rare) beetles, 31 nationally scarce and 21 regionally scarce species of beetle, two of which are grade 1 ancient woodland indicators.

A particular aim of this excursion was to relocate *Paris quadrifolia* (Herb Paris) at two locations, NS788 985 and NS799 996, given in [SNH Commissioned Report No. 046 \(NVC survey of Kippenrait Glen\)](#). You can read it all online! It was found during the NVC survey by Alan Booth in 2002. Sue and Roy had looked for Herb Paris many times recently and sadly, despite diligent searching by all of us, only abundant *Mercurialis perennis* (Dog's Mercury) was found in the herb-layer under the tree canopy.

In Ben Gunn's Cave (echoing Robert Louis Stevenson's close connections to Bridge of Allan) we found the first few plants of *Polystichum aculeatum* (Hard Shield Fern); it is quite common throughout the length of the Glen. In a very boggy area on the west side of the concrete bridge we unexpectedly found a large patch of *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* (Alternate-leaved Golden Saxifrage) growing with *Cardamine amara* (Large Bitter-cress) near a stand of *Phalaris arundinacea* (Reed Canary-grass) with a few plants of the impressive *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Wood Club-rush). The much commoner *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* (Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage) was frequent in wet shady places in the Glen. Near the railway on the west side of the River Allan we checked out a new site for *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine) reported to me by Tim Jacobs. We found 3 plants (see [photos](#)) growing with the lovely woodland grass *Brachypodium sylvaticum* (False Brome). This orchid is rare in Scotland but fairly common in Kippenrait Glen and we found it at two other sites.

Three problem invasive non-native species were seen growing along the River Allan: the poisonous *Heracleum mantegazzianum* (Giant Hogweed), *Lysichiton americanus* (Skunk Cabbage) and *Fallopia japonica* (Japanese Knotweed). A Woodland Grant Scheme over part of the woodland has included removal of *Acer pseudoplatanus* (Sycamore) and *Rhododendron* in some areas.

Roy pointed out about 5 *Neottia nidus-avis* (Bird's-nest Orchid) near the junction where the Cocksburn path meets the Glen road. He has been monitoring this species on the SSSI for some time and recorded about 30 beside the road farther up the Glen in 2008. We later saw 3 of these strange orchids on the soft banking beside the glen road, growing with 23 *Epipactis helleborine*, *Listera ovata* (Common Twayblade), and nearby were 6 flowering spikes of *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen). In the rich mixed woodland beside the Glen road were two more sites with *Pyrola minor*, several clumps of *Carex remota* (Remote Sedge), a few plants of *Festuca gigantea* (Giant Fescue), a single *Prunus domestica* ssp. *domestica* (Wild

Plum), very rare in VC87, and a few plants of *Viburnum opulus* (Guelder-rose) near two or three huge horseshoe-shaped landslips above the burn. The very elegant *Bromopsis ramosa* (Hairy Brome) was frequent in places under the trees.

During a second visit to the Glen in October to look for ferns we found at least 9 species including *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum* (Black Spleenwort) and *Cystopteris fragilis* (Brittle Bladder-fern). In total we recorded 127 species in the Glen.

Liz Lavery

## 8. Milton Wood

Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> July

Six of us met at Bridge of Cally and transferred to Milton of Drimmie, with the objective of seeing the small *Polygonatum verticillatum* (Whorled Solomon's-seal) population in Milton Wood and of doing some tetrad recording at the same time. Milton Wood was formerly a National Nature Reserve but has now been de-declared, though it remains an SSSI. In the event we did not spend much time in the wood itself but cut down through it to the haugh and riverside below, passing some *Juncus tenuis* (Slender Rush) in a muddy gateway and some *Carex remota* (Remote Sedge), *C. sylvatica* (Wood Sedge) and *Clinopodium vulgare* (Wild Basil) on the woodland path. Along the riverside we recorded some *Arabis hirsuta* (Hairy Rock-cress), *Galium boreale* (Northern Bedstraw), lots of *Hypericum maculatum* (Imperforate St John's-wort) and *H. tetrapterum* (Square-stemmed St John's-wort), the grasses *Festuca gigantea* (Giant Fescue) and *F. arundinacea* (Tall Fescue), occasional *Trollius europaeus* (Globeflower) and the odd spike of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) and some *Salix fragilis* var. *decipiens* (White Welsh Willow) – common in our region despite its name. A single plant of a particularly large-flowered *Viola cornuta* (Horned Pansy) was very striking.

Approaching the mouth of the Drimmie Burn we found a single plant of the white-flowered *Thalictrum aquilegifolium* (French Meadow-rue), probably little more than a casual here, and a non-flowering plant of *Darmera peltata* (Indian-rhubarb), which does seem to be established in one or two places along the River Ericht. There was *Mycelis muralis* (Wall-lettuce) there too. We then cut up through the wood to the edge of the gorge in the bottom of which *Polygonatum* is known to grow and were surprised to find a fine new colony right at the woodland-open field interface. It was under the edge of the hazel canopy though open to daylight from the north-west. There were 52 plants, of which at least 3 had flowered. In contrast the two known colonies down in the dark gorge, cowering under the dense hazel/birch canopy, amounted to 19 plants, none of which had flowered and most of which had only a single whorl of leaves. The only other plant of note in this corner of the wood was *Melica uniflora* (Wood Melick).

Returning along the top of the wood back towards Milton of Drimmie we found a huge stand of *Carex vesicaria* (Bladder Sedge). We did not measure it, but there must have been a solid acre of it. *Glyceria declinata* (Small Sweet-grass) was nearby where a small burn entered the wood. We ended up walking back along the road, adding to our list *Rosa rubiginosa* (Sweet-briar) among other things, and generally pleased with our day.

Martin Robinson

## 9. Kirkton Glen, Balquhidder

Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> July

A recce for this excursion with Sarah Longrigg and Pam Murdoch the previous week had emphasised the mantra 'always go into the Scottish hills prepared for all weathers': we had sweltered in the heat on the long walk in along forest tracks, been hit by an icy wind as we reached the base-rich crags at the top of the pass, then been hailed on, forcing us to don all

our bad weather gear, and finally stunned by the mountain views in warm evening sunshine as we walked back down the Glen.

On a very misty Sunday morning Sarah and I were joined by Roy Sexton and, to my complete surprise, Jim McIntosh who had hot-footed it from a BSBI meeting in Caithness to be with us. On the way up we found several interesting plants on and beside the track: the alien invader *Acaena novae-zelandiae* (Pirri-pirri-bur) was worryingly frequent in two or three places, the tiny *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush), *Carex remota* (Remote Sedge), *Carex pallescens* (Pale sedge); farther up the track, Jim pointed out the sterile hybrid *Carex x fulva* (*C. hostiana* x *C. viridula*), *Juncus tenuis* (Slender Rush) in several places on the track, and a large, sprawling patch of *Lycopodium clavatum* (Stag's-horn Clubmoss).

We only started recording in earnest in the square NN5124, which begins just outside the forestry fence and includes the botanically-rich crags above and below Lochan an Eireannaich at the top of the pass at 598 m. The boundary between VC87 and VC88 runs along the top of the ridge here. One of our goals was to re-find records for *Gentianella campestris* (Field Gentian) for the BSBI Threatened Plants Project. We found it on crags in both VC87 and VC88, growing on ledges in natural rock gardens. Growing with the gentians on the crags were *Thymus polytrichus* (Wild Thyme), *Saxifraga oppositifolia* (Purple Saxifrage), abundant in places, *Alchemilla alpina* (Alpine Lady's Mantle), *Prunella vulgaris* (Self-Heal), *Bellis perennis* (Daisy), *Linum catharticum* (Fairy Flax), *Persicaria vivipara* (Alpine bistort) often very frequent, *Carex panicea* (Carnation Sedge), *C. caryophyllea* (Spring Sedge), *Festuca vivipara* (Viviparous Fescue) and *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath Grass). Many tall waving fronds of *Helictotrichon pratense* (Meadow Oat-grass) grew on some south-facing ledges. High above the main path Sarah showed the more agile of us *Botrychium lunaria* (Moonwort). On the same crags we found several plants of *Potentilla crantzii* (Alpine Cinquefoil), *Silene acaulis* (Moss Champion), bright blue flowers of *Polygala vulgaris* (Common Milkwort) and on flatter ground in acid grassland, *Cornus suecica* (Dwarf Cornel).

In bogs and stony flushes with the help of Jim's expertise we found many gems: two sites for *Equisetum variegatum* (Variegated Horsetail), the lovely *Tofieldia pusilla* (Scottish Asphodel) which Pam and Sarah had seen here in its full glory in June but now sadly over, the very beautiful *Juncus triglumis* (Three-flowered Rush), *Juncus alpinoarticulatus* (Alpine Rush) and *Saxifraga stellaris* (Starry Saxifrage). *Littorella uniflora* (Shoreweed) and *Potamogeton natans* (Broad-leaved Pondweed) were growing in the Lochan, where ravens and a golden plover were calling in the mist during our lunch stop.

The star of the show, much to Liz's chagrin, was a small craggy outcrop in VC88, on the north side of the watershed looking down into Glen Dochart. Here we found more gentians but also several plants of the very rare *Veronica fruticans* (Rock Speedwell), 2 or 3 plants of *Draba incana* (Hoary Whitlowgrass) and a very odd-looking plant that might be *Draba norvegica* (Rock Whitlowgrass) (see [photos](#)). Tim Rich was unable to confirm this from a photograph and it will need another visit in 2009 to be sure. In total we recorded 130 species in this high-level 1 kilometre square. There are many more crags to explore which looked promising from a distance.

Liz Lavery

## 10. River Earn Meanders, Kirkton of Mailer

Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> August

Bill Hay and I enjoyed an interesting excursion on a beautiful, late summer's day. The main reason for this excursion was to explore some of the fascinating old courses of the River Earn, where its past course is now marked by disconnected bodies of water called oxbow

lakes. Part of the edge of the River Earn was also explored. I wrote a note of our excursion for the farmer, which forms the basis of this report.

*Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort) was found in two areas. This plant is superficially similar to *Myriophyllum alterniflorum* (Alternate Water-milfoil), except the leaves are much less divided and the plant is much rarer in Mid-Perthshire. Only recorded from the Crieff area in the *Flora of Perthshire* (1898), the plant has been found in the Highland area of Mid-Perthshire since, and it was found on a PSNS excursion to Dupplin Loch in August 2006.

*Sparganium emersum* (Unbranched Bur-reed) was found, a plant that was first recorded from this location in the *Flora of Perthshire*, as observed by Meldrum, who also observed *Lemna trisulca*, (Ivy-leaved Duckweed) here, and it is also recorded in the *Flora*. The latter has an unusual structure where leaves are joined by a stalk between a folded lamina at the mid-rib that articulates like a joint. The range of both these species is much restricted beyond this part of Scotland.

*Potamogeton berchtoldii* (Small Pondweed) was observed at this locality by Meldrum in 1886. We found this and an immature *Potamogeton crispus* (Curled Pondweed), but no other pondweeds. *Callitriche hermaphroditica* (Autumnal Water-starwort) had been recorded from the Bridge of Earn area in 1886 by Buchanan-White and was found in a small oxbow. One of the oxbows was dominated by *Glyceria maxima* (Reed Sweet-grass), which is an extremely vigorous grass and is said to be “readily eaten by cattle”, although I have seen little evidence of it being eaten by cattle or horses. There was an opening at the end of this oxbow where *Nuphar lutea* (Yellow water-lily) was dominant in the open, deeper water.

Two North American aquatics were found; the familiar *Elodea canadensis* (Canadian Waterweed), and the less familiar *E. nuttallii*, which is differentiated by its straighter, more flaccid leaves that are sharply-pointed. These species were first recorded in the British Isles in 1836 and 1966 respectively. There is an interesting note in the *Flora of Perthshire* in relation to the former, “an introduction from America, now abounds in many places, often to the detriment of the indigenous flora of our fresh waters”.

Despite the abundance of water, sedges were not in abundance. *Carex hirta* (Hairy Sedge) was common on the marshes of the banks of the River Earn and a clump of *C. remota* (Remote Sedge) had established itself on a floating log on one of the oxbows. *C. muricata* (Prickly Sedge), which is a plant of dry, calcareous soils, was found on the roadside bank opposite the farm.

*Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* (Grey Club-rush), which can be distinguished from its close relative by its glaucous stem, has an interesting distribution in Scotland where it is confined largely to coasts and estuaries. This species is recorded in the *Flora of Perthshire*, but not on the Earn and not farther inland than Sleepless Inch. The exquisite specific epithet for this plant is taken from the name of the German botanist, Tabernaemontanus.

Seven different kinds of willow were recorded, including two hybrids, one of which was *Salix x smithiana* growing beside one of its parents *S. viminalis* (Osier); its other parent *S. cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia* was growing farther away. Two Crack-willows were recorded; one specimen of *S. fragilis* var. *decipiens* appeared to have established itself naturally on the banks of the Earn from a broken-off twig that had floated downstream, but there were several tall, handsome specimens at the end of one of the oxbows whose golden-yellow shoots shone brilliantly in the sunshine. These had been planted, but another variety which was more widespread had also been planted several years ago. *S. fragilis* var. *furcata* has dark shoots and much wider and longer leaves, which were quite distinct.

An interesting find was *Carduus crispus* (Wetted Thistle), which had not been recorded from this locality for some 50 years. It has an unusual distribution in Scotland, being absent in the north-west, coastal in the south-west, widely distributed in the south-east, but decreasing

northwards to the Angus coastline where it has an extremely patchy distribution northwards until reaching the Black Isle where it is more widespread, but it has not recorded north of the Dornoch Firth. This enterprising thistle has, however, found its way along the A9 to Inverness, or perhaps from Inverness.

5% of the flora we encountered was of archaeophyte origin, that is originating in Britain before AD1500, but assisted by human intervention, deliberately or not. The presence of *Anisantha sterilis* (Barren Brome) is unlikely to have been a welcome companion in the fields. It was present in Britain in the Bronze Age, but it is likely to have been a cereal seed contaminant that spread from the Mediterranean area. *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax) is even farther travelled than our enterprising thistle, being distributed on ballast along railway lines, as it was found here, and where it can be persistent in such habitats, such as on the abandoned railway line in Glen Dochart, where this species was seen on a PSNS excursion a few years ago. Beeching may have taken the lines and all but the echoes of a steam whistle, but this plucky little plant remains in spite of that.

Almost 200 species were recorded from a wide range of habitats. Two species of note that typify the richness of the soils are *Agrimonia eupatoria* (Agrimony) and *Clinopodium vulgare* (Wild Basil).

Alistair Godfrey

## 11. Kinnoull Hill

Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> November

Bill Hay, Colin McLeod and MR met at Corsiehill on a morning when rain loomed constantly, intent on a bryological exploration of the quarry. The quarry, which was worked for kerb stones and road-metal until at least 1932, exploited a dyke of igneous dolerite intruded into the Lower Devonian Ochil volcanic formation, and it has been designated as one of Tayside's four Local Geodiversity Sites. It was immediately apparent that the shady dampness of the atmosphere in there encouraged the growth of mosses on the lower rock-faces, and the wet weather we had been having most of the summer and autumn had favoured them. For anyone wanting to learn the commoner mosses it was good to be able to see them in bulk. Most of the commoner ground-living pleurocarps were there, apart from *Pleurozium schreberi*, and particularly abundant were the familiar moss we are now meant to call *Kindbergia praelonga* and the more robust *Brachythecium rutabulum*. *Plagiomnium undulatum* occurred in huge quantity, and cushions and tufts of the strange but common *Fissidens adianthoides* were actually dominant on some rock faces – a most unusual situation. We came upon a mass of the base-loving *Ctenidium molluscum*, with all its tiny, tight, shiny little curls, but the promise of better things that it held out to us proved somewhat hollow, although another basicole pleurocarp, *Cratoneuron filicinum*, also became common around the base of the volcanic andesite cliff-face. In truth, for all the luxuriant volume of healthy-looking mosses, there were very few species involved. The only leafy liverwort was the abundant little *Lophocolea bidentata*, but as we arrived at the inner end of the quarry, where the cliffs are mostly damp, we were amazed by the frilly masses of the thalloid liverwort *Pellia endiviifolia*. A rotten log on the ground was covered with the attractive little liverwort *Riccardia palmata*.

It was a story of quantity rather than quality, but we had plenty of good material to look at in the afternoon under microscopes as we retired to the Forestry Commission hut by the Jubilee car-park, kindly organised for us by Alistair Godfrey. We had hardly set foot in it when the rain started hammering on the roof, which it continued for the rest of the afternoon.

Extras during the day were a party of 20 waxwings flying around Corsiehill and a woodcock disturbed from the quarry.

Martin Robinson

## Report from 2007 Field Meetings

### Pitroddie Den

Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> May 2007

After meeting at Glendoick, nine of us condensed into three carloads and drove up to Glendruid Cottages, parking at the entrance gateway to Pitroddie Den, where botanising commenced.

We followed the most accessible footpath, wending through the rubble of the abandoned quarry workings, alongside a small stream. There is clearly sufficient mineral release from the basalt and more friable volcanic rocks to support a good range of plants, many calcicolous. Along the bottom it was congested with shrubs and trees: Bramble, Raspberry, Gorse, Broom, Buddleia, Ash, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Elder, Wych Elm, Hazel, Gean, Sycamore, and Goat Willow. Much of this has been cut down over the 2007-08 winter, presumably to avoid contact with the power lines running through the bottom of the den. Apart from this, the only other visible signs of wildlife management are a range of bird boxes mounted on trees.

Members from inland parts remarked how much further on and luxuriant the ground herbs were here, in a moist and sheltered valley near the coast: *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple Orchid); *Origanum vulgare* (Wild Marjoram); *Primula veris* (Cowslip), *P. vulgaris* (Primrose) and their hybrid *P. x polyantha* (False Oxlip) were coming out. Of the specialities, *Viola hirta* (Hairy Violet) was fairly easily found by the path. However, others grow on the steep cliffs and fenced-off fields above the old quarry faces, on the north side. This puts them safely beyond reach of the rabbits, but also any but the most determined botanists. Nevertheless, *Lactuca virosa* (Great Lettuce) was visible in several places, even reachable.

At the north-west end of the den, a small gate gives access onto open grassland rising up to Pole Hill. At this point, a few more reckless members of the group elected to return over the top of the quarry-edge, recording some interesting plants on the edge of the arable fields along the way: *Sherardia arvensis* (Field Madder), *Cerastium arvense* (Field Mouse-ear), *Clinopodium vulgare* (Wild Basil), *Echium vulgare* (Viper's Bugloss), *Fallopia convolvulus* (Black Bindweed), *Chenopodium bonus-henricus* (Good-King-Henry) and *Saxifraga granulata* (Meadow Saxifrage).

The final craggy outcrop is probably the jewel in the crown of this site, showing *Ceterach officinarum* (= *Asplenium ceterach*) (Rustyback Fern); with *Filago minima* (Small Cudweed) and *F. vulgaris* ("Un"-Common Cudweed) in the loose soil below. The differences between the latter two were much clearer when MR & I returned in good daylight about a month later; on that visit we also found *Trifolium striatum* in sheep 'rubs' just below the rim of Pole Hill.

From the *Ceterach* Crag it was all downhill: a steep scramble through scratchy thickets in gathering darkness, to join the rest of the group.

It seems likely that *Astragalus glycyphyllos* (Wild Liquorice), though previously recorded here, no longer survives; but there are probably still other plants worth searching for later in the growing season.

Les Tucker

**Photos**



*Pyrola minor*, Tullygarth brickworks, 15 June 2008  
© Liz Lavery.



Leaves of *Ophioglossum vulgatum* spotted at Tullygarth brickworks by Paul Stanley, 15 June 2008  
© Liz Lavery.



*Epipactis helleborine*, Kippenrait Glen, June 2008  
© Liz Lavery.



*Draba norvegica* perhaps? on crags to the north of Lochan an Eireannaich, Kirkton Glen, July 2008  
© Liz Lavery.