



PERTHSHIRE SOCIETY OF NATURAL SCIENCE  
BOTANICAL SECTION  
BULLETIN No. 34 – 2011

Reports from 2011 Field Meetings

1. Fowlis: Bryophytes

Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> March

*'Beautiful Den o' Fowlis, most charming to be seen  
In the summer season, when your trees are green...'*  
McGonagall.

It was a small but enthusiastic group that met in Fowlis *'apparently at the wrong season, but it was for a very good reason'* – Robinson. As has been our custom we wanted to extend our botanical season at the front end by looking at some bryophytes and ferns, and the Den of Fowlis SSSI was our venue this year. The deep wooded ravine, cut through Old Red Sandstone, was not the easiest of places to get around in as the few rock-faces that there were occurred at the top of the slope under the lip of the ravine and the irregularities of the ground below were concealed by a developing carpet of *Allium ursinum* (Wild Garlic), *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell), *Mercurialis perennis* (Dog's Mercury) and junk. A small crag on the east side had some *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum* (Black Spleenwort) and on the same side we found a single plant of *Asplenium scolopendrium* (Hart's-tongue Fern), which is not common in the vice-county. But the best of the evergreen ferns were on the west side, where there were banks of the magnificent drooping fronds of *Polystichum aculeatum* (Hard Shield-fern). A slightly more base-rich crag was covered in *Neckera complanata*, distinctive with its thread-like shoots scattered among the normal ones.

Ash and Elder branches were studded with little tufts of *Orthotrichum affine* and *O. pulchellum*, and, as expected, the ground was carpeted with common species such as *Kindbergia praelonga*, *Brachythecium rutabulum*, *B. velutinum*, *Atrichum undulatum* and *Plagiomnium undulatum*, and the tree bases and soil by the burn were covered with the dark green *Thamnobryum alopecuroides*. The flat-shooted *Plagiothecium succulentum* and the liverwort *Porella cordaeana* were also found.

Fowlis churchyard proved to be an interesting lunch spot, as some of the horizontal rock slabs marking graves had the mosses *Hedwigia stellata* and *Orthotrichum rupestre* among the abundant *Racomitrium heterostichum* and *Schistidium apocarpum*. Alistair found the leaves of a colony of *Saxifraga granulata* (Meadow Saxifrage) in the turf in a corner of the mown lawn. Probably these would never have the opportunity to reach their full potential. The outside of the churchyard wall had *Encalypta streptocarpa* on the mortar, and various species of *Didymodon* along with *Barbula unguiculata*, but mostly it was covered in the beautiful glossy moss *Homalothecium sericeum*, as were all the walls in the quiet little village. The attractive old mill at the top of the Den had once been a site for the locally very rare *Ceterach officinarum* (= *Asplenium ceterach*, Rustyback Fern), but renovation work involving re-pointing had cleared it away and now our only hope for it lay in the old part of the tower-house of the farm at the south-west corner of the village. The fronds drooping from damp recesses on the tower proved to all be *Polypodium*, however. We finished the day off with two more churchyards: Benvie and Liff, but Fowlis had proved to be the most interesting.

Martin Robinson

## 2. Riverbanks at Isla – Tay confluence

Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> April

Alison (keeping notes) declared this the best day's botanising of the season (well, so far!). Despite a poor weather forecast, seven lucky people enjoyed a companionable saunter in beautiful, warm sunshine, with plenty spring flowers to get the taxonomic parts of our brains working again after the winter stupor.

We started at the bridge over the Isla and walked a short distance along both banks of the river downstream, toward the Tay junction. Birdlife was evident: Sand Martins visiting nest-holes in the stonework; Herons, Mallard and Sandpipers along the banks, Buzzards overhead. A few large Salmon jumped. Colin even tempted us with the possibility (unrealised) of spotting some escaped European Beavers. Other highlights of the day were butterflies brought out by the bright sun and the chance of a sip of nectar: we saw several Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshell, and Small White around the Willow (*Salix* spp.) catkins; and Orange Tip on their larval food-plant *Cardamine pratensis* (Cuckooflower).

Les came up with the first noteworthy 'target' for the day, *S. triandra* (Almond Willow); giving us all a lesson on how to distinguish it from the other, commoner ones thriving along the riverside here: As well as drawing our attention to the eponymous three anther filaments per catkin floret, we were shown other typical features such as leaf serration, stipules, pedicel glands, absence of damage-blackening and under-bark striae; Bill Hay chipped in: flaking mature bark. Newcomer Bert Baird turned out to be a promising pupil!

After checking out a good range of common ruderals along the field edge, Les was also first to spot another local speciality: *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel). Although a fascinating 'first' for Bert, he admitted to some disappointment at its diminutive stature – its folksy descriptive name of Town-Hall Clock having led him to expect a more imposing edifice. Once the rest of us had admired and photographed it close up, we got our eye in and all found quite a lot more.

For our lunch picnic, we moved a little way down the Tay and settled on a lovely sunny spot on the south bank near the fishermen's bothy at Cargill.

Here, it was hard to ignore some ranks of uniformly garish and grotesque Daffodils (*Narcissus* hybrid clones) planted in a misguided attempt at genteel improvement of the bucolic scene. These things are, luckily, sterile so can not spread by seed, but are designed to be vegetatively very persistent and invariable. How much more in keeping would be some dainty wild varieties of *N. pseudonarcissus* (Lent Lily) or *N. poeticus* (Pheasant's Eye), their ancestral prototypes.

Happily, we also found a few other nice wild plants in flower. *Primula vulgaris* (Primrose) and *P. veris* (Cowslip) grew close together on the bank under the trees, but no False Oxlip (*P. x polyanthus*) was evident. *Gagea lutea* (Yellow Star of Bethlehem) was also locally abundant near the river, in sandy patches deposited by occasional floods, although (understandably in mid-April) the flowers were already past their full glory.

Alison Wilson & Leslie Tucker

## 3. Devilla Forest, Fife

Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> May

There was a change of venue from Longannet spoil heaps, as Liz was unable to obtain permission to enter the power station grounds in time for this excursion. Instead an intrepid three braved very changeable weather and explored the network of numerous forest roads, tracks and winding paths criss-crossing Devilla Forest, mainly planted with Scots Pine, belonging to the Forestry Commission. The name Devilla is said to come from the Gaelic 'dubh' and 'eilean' meaning 'black island'. Much of the forest is planted on lowland peat. The forest is notable for its archaeology; prehistoric coffins, stone circles and Roman urns have been found in different parts of the forest.

During our ramblings through the forest we were greeted by walkers, runners and many friendly dogs. In the damp to torrential morning we wandered from the car park lay-by on the A985 along forest roads, to a small path around the edge of Keir Loch. Here we found some nice fringe plants; *Eleocharis palustris* (Common Spike-rush), *Carex rostrata* (Bottle Sedge), *Potentilla palustris* (Marsh Cinquefoil) and *Persicaria amphibia* (Amphibious Bistort), *Equisetum fluviatile* (Water Horsetail) and *Glyceria maxima* (Reed Sweet-grass) in a ditch. We noted the spotted leaves of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) just appearing on track verges in a few places. Identification was often challenging so early in the season but thanks to keen observations made by Pam and Joanna even the most puzzling specimens were named. In a small peat moss bog we found a lovely show of *Eriophorum vaginatum* (Hare's-tail Cottongrass) just coming into flower quite different from the white, fluffy cotton seed heads seen in June; the cotton grass was growing in deep, soft *Polytrichum commune* moss with one or two clumps of *Carex canescens* (White Sedge) just coming into flower.

We walked on as far as Peppermill Dam. On our way back along a different route we made our most unusual finds; *Vicia tetrasperma* (Smooth Tare) in a strange enclosed area with small artificial pools and dumped soil, has turned up a few times near the Forth, and nearby *Ornithogalum angustifolium* (Star-of-Bethlehem) in rough grass beside a deserted bothy. *Aconitum napellus* (Monk's-hood) was naturalised beside the car park, and salt-tolerant *Cochlearia danica* (Danish Scurvygrass) was growing along the edge of the main road. The sun appeared in the late afternoon drying us out and warming us up before we got back to the cars. All together we recorded a total of 168 species in 3 tetrads.

Liz Lavery

#### 4. Glen Beag – Cairnwell limestone

Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> June

It is worth acknowledging (if only to oneself) that one sometimes needs appropriate prompting to go out and scour the hills for interesting plants and, later of course, to compose a suitably immodest saga of the endeavour. The reasons for this excursion could be summarised by a quote from Michael Usher's Note in [BSBI News 112](#) of September 2009, describing his discovery on Ben Vrackie of a new and extreme southerly disjunct locality for *Taraxacum cymbifolium* (Boat-leaved Dandelion), which is more typically found today in northern Scandinavia; he finished with: "There would also be merit in searching for this species in other base-rich communities in the Scottish Highlands and at a variety of altitudes. It... could be found on other mountains with such habitats and collections of arctic-alpine plants." Dudman & Richards' authoritative BSBI handbook on *Taraxacum* informs us that there are no alpine species in Britain, so a better term would probably be 'arctic – north-western atlantic'.

There are many remote places in the Highlands where such discoveries might be made, if only they could be visited at the right time with the right expertise to hand. Bearing in mind the unreliability of long-range weather forecasting, though, we (the by-lined Bulletin Reporters) considered that an easily accessible locality would be more suitable for sporadic visits, in the hope of sometime learning how to identify such species at an appropriate state of development. So, whilst the assigned day itself turned out to be quite a fair one, the report of this excursion draws on experiences garnered during several other recent visits.

The busy A93 highway, linking Spittal of Glenshee to Braemar in Aberdeenshire, gives access to the mountainous north-east corner of East Perth (v.c. 89). It rises about a thousand feet over the last mile from Gleann Beag to the county border pass at Cairnwell Ski School, cutting through a variety of rocks such as limestone, sandstone and quartzite. The slopes here have a generally southerly aspect, and are well-flushed with springs. Apart from (or possibly even because of) the scars of civil and military engineering and leisure sports developments,

all these factors make the area a considerable botanical hot-spot. In addition, the local Invercauld estate has also greatly reduced the intensity of sheep-grazing in recent years, so plants are increasingly luxuriant now.

The best map for the locality is OS Pathfinder 202 Devil's Elbow 1:25,000 scale. That name must puzzle newcomers and younger readers, but older motorists will never forget the devilishly tricky old zig-zag bends. Now, where the modern highway carries straight on up the slope, there is still a slip-road off to the abandoned part, and that is where we parked to start botanising.

Calcicolous 'indicator' species such as *Saxifraga aizoides* (Yellow Saxifrage), *Helianthemum nummularium* (Rockrose), *Potentilla crantzii* (Alpine Cinquefoil) and *Carex capillaris* (Hair Sedge) abounded. But, after briefly enjoying this facile prettiness, we soon succumbed to more diabolical temptations: discovering and identifying the 'difficult' northern species of *Alchemilla* (Lady's Mantle), *Taraxacum* (Dandelion) and *Salix* (Willow).

Alistair and Martin had been inspired by a previous visit in the company of Margaret Bradshaw, the *Alchemilla* (Lady's-mantle) enthusiast. They hardly paused at the common and barely remarkable *A. alpina* (Alpine Lady's-mantle), before moving on to inspect the subspecies of *A. filicaulis* (Slender Lady's-mantle): finding the Hairy *A. filicaulis* ssp. *vestita* to be locally frequent in the flushes here; whereas the glabrous *A. filicaulis* ssp. *filicaulis* favoured the rockier parts. However, the main delight was discovery of a few *A. glomerulans* (Clustered Lady's-mantle) in the broader flushes farther up past the old tank-traps. The discovery of *A. wichurae* (Rock Lady's-mantle) hereabouts still remains an unrealised possibility; though it has been recorded not far away, in Caenlochan.

Finding and identifying any of the native montane microspecies of Dandelions was a tougher challenge. As well as *T. cymbifolium*, there are half-a-dozen others in Dudman & Richards' Section 6 *Taraxacum* for a start. Martin had previously received an encouraging but very tentative response to a specimen from here that he sent to John Richards last year. Richards suggested that it could be another one, *T. xiphoides* (Parallel- or Sword-leaved Dandelion). Apart from arctic regions, this latter still persists on Creag Meagaidh. Disappointingly though, they are generally described as rather obviously robust plants with plain green leaves, midribs and petioles, and none like this could be discerned on our visit, though we looked hard in the area that the specimen had come from.

Searching the internet with the aid of Google to learn if any other Sections contain microspecies which may be considered as ecologically worthy primordial relics in the Scottish Highlands, indicates *T. limbatum* (Bordered Dandelion) from Section 1 Erythrosperma and *T. palustre* (Marsh Dandelion) from Section 3 Palustria as possibilities to look out for in calcareous habitats. It has to be admitted, though, that even many botanists are likely to consider Dandelions as just perniciously miscegenating nuisances.

Back on solid earth, some different Dandelions growing in the Devil's Elbow tufa flushes were assigned to Sect. 8 Hamata (Hook-leaved Dandelions); mainly on the distinction of having purple-red veining on petiole and midrib uppersides. About a dozen such microspecies are recorded in Scotland, but we made no further distinction at the time.

More widespread Dandelion types characterised by blotched leaves, appressed bracts, and dark-red striped ligules were thought to be *T. faeroense*, the commonest representative of Sect. 4 Spectabilia.

Over-stressed by scrutinising apomictic microspecies, a breakaway group of 'scrubbers' followed Les away from the more calcareous flushes, down into the rocky gully of Allt a'Choire Sheiridh. The Gaelic name probably refers to some withering and shrivelling aspect of the area. In cold and windy weather this can be uncomfortably evident; but on this visit the *Calluna vulgaris* (Ling Heather), *Juniperus communis* (Juniper) and *Salix* (Willow) scrub was clearly thriving. The target was a previously-glimpsed *S. arbuscula* (Mountain Willow);

hoping it would have catkins to confirm its distinction from the widespread *S. repens* (Creeping Willow), and their confounding hybrids. The sprawling shrub was re-found near the top of a flushed gully on the opposite, north-facing, rim of the little gorge. Though only one female catkin was present, that was sufficient to confirm its status.

The whole party reconvened to show off their finds and have lunch. In the afternoon we re-parked up at the pass to examine the outcrops and flushes above and below the road; continuing the morning's themes. By the little quarry above the Old Military Road, another dandelion was found, having well-blotched leaves with short end-lobes and short, broad, spreading, pruinose bracts. Photos were taken and sent to the expert, John Richards, who identified it as *T. euryphyllum* from Sect. 5 Naevosa. In the higher flushes, Les tried, but failed, to re-find some very low shoots he had seen before; hoping for some definitive proof that it was *S. myrsinites* (Whortle-leafed Willow). It was seen on a later visit, but without catkins.

Evidently, there's still much to discover.

Les Tucker & Martin Robinson

## 5. Craighead Quarry, Carse of Gowrie

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

In 2010 we paid an evening visit to Kingoodie Quarry at the same time, and this year we chose another disused quarry some 10 km to the west. The main purpose was to update some records of species that are scarce in VC89, which we did very successfully, and in the process we found that it was a fascinating site with some good discoveries still to be made. The hard volcanic rock of the quarry, with its sheer faces, is rather too unyielding for plants, but the blackish gravelly material that formed the tracks was very productive: *Lactuca virosa* (Great Lettuce), *Centaureum erythraea* (Common Centaury), *Anagallis arvensis* (Scarlet Pimpernel), *Dipsacus fullonum* (Teasel) and *Sherardia arvensis* (Field Madder) all occurred in good quantity, but one of the most flourishing species there was *Acaena ovalifolia* (Two-spined Acaena). There were grassy terraces, where *Agrimonia eupatoria* (Common Agrimony) was found in several places, as was a single spike of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid) and its hybrid with *D. purpurella* (Northern Marsh-orchid), known as *D. x venusta*, whilst in damper places *Carex otrubae* (False Fox Sedge) was quite common. *Carex muricata* subsp. *pairei* was found in some damp grassland at the foot of a quarry face.

Much of the site is densely wooded and there were a lot of planted and naturalised species of shrubs, not all of which we recorded. *Prunus lusitanica* (Portugal Laurel) grew alongside *P. laurocerasus* (Cherry Laurel), making us wonder whether a lot of things had been planted at some time as pheasant cover. The roses seemed to be natural enough. Alistair said they were basically *Rosa canina* (Dog-rose), sometimes crossed with *R. caesia* (Hairy Dog-rose) and sometimes with *R. rubiginosa* (Sweet-briar).

The interest of this site was not confined to the quarry itself, as the verge of the road that runs along the bottom also held our attention. *Carduus crispus* (Wetted Thistle), another locally scarce species, grew along the upper side of the road, whilst the grass verge on the opposite side boasted a huge colony of *Galium album* (Hedge Bedstraw), some of which were a good 5 feet in height. There was a patch of *Viola odorata* (Sweet Violet) and single plants of *Malva sylvestris* (Common Mallow) and *M. moschata* (Musk Mallow). The presence of the latter anywhere in Scotland always casts at least some doubt on the origins of other species growing nearby, in this writer's opinion anyway, so we could never be certain whether the single plant of *Salvia verbenaca* (Wild Clary) that Les found for us was a genuine northern extension of its native range or not. Either way, it was a new vice-county record.

Martin Robinson

## 6. Kirkton Glen

Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> June

A large party left Ledcharrie Farm under the able guidance of John Holland, on a dampish, but otherwise seasonal (!) summer morning. The excursion was joint between the Botanical Society of Scotland, of which John is the Alpine Secretary, and the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) with the PSNS thrown in for good measure. The excursion was booked out at an early date, with participants coming from all parts of the UK.

Of most interest around the farm are flushes and a burn, the presence of water adding significantly to the diversity of the grazed pasture. Of interest were *Dactylorhiza fuchsia* (Common Spotted-orchid) – the name derived from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century German botanist, Leonard Fuchs, from whom the name ‘Fuchsia’ is also derived – *Ranunculus hederaceus* (Ivy-leaved Crowfoot) and *Potentilla palustris* (Marsh Cinquefoil). Other records of orchids were *D. maculata* subsp. *ericetorum* (Heath Spotted-orchid), *Gymnadenia borealis* (Heath-fragrant Orchid) and four *Neottia (Listera) cordata* (Lesser Twayblade).

Little green jobs in the flushes posed several questions, sedges, rushes, grasses and the like; *Glyceria declinata* (Small Sweet-grass) provided the opportunity to demonstrate its smaller flowers, more erect habit and glaucous colouration, a species less demanding of open water than its larger cousin, *G. fluitans* (Floating Sweet-grass), which was found nearby.

As an aside to say something more meaningful at this point, I have been digitising a number of record cards recently, and I noticed that there is a species with one of its subspecies that divides its presence between upper and lower ground. In the lower part of Ledcharrie Glen we recorded both subspecies of *Luzula multiflora* (Heath Wood-rush), subspecies *multiflora* with its open panicle and subspecies *congesta* with its compact panicle, but the latter only on the higher ground. This separation in relation to elevation is repeated across Mid-Perthshire, but also as Clive Stace notes in his Flora, the two subspecies occur together in Scotland, which they also often do in Perthshire.

Ledcharrie Glen is not wildly exciting, the underlying soils are fairly acidic and grazing levels are high. However, there is an exceptional area, which is the outcrop of limestone that can be traced up to where Ledcharrie Glen and Kirkton Glen meet. *Veronica fruticans* (Rock Speedwell) occurs along the whole length of its outcrop, and in the shattered rock lower down, it shares its refuge with *Draba incana* (Hoary Whitlowgrass).

On the limestone higher up were *Antennaria dioica* (Mountain Everlasting), *Botrychium lunaria* (Moonwort), *Gentianella campestris* (Field Gentian), *Helictotrichon pratense* (Meadow Oat-grass), *Potentilla crantzii* (Alpine Cinquefoil), *Rubus saxatilis* (Stone Bramble), *Saxifraga aizoides* (Yellow saxifrage), *S. oppositifolia* (Purple saxifrage), *S. stellaris* (Starry Saxifrage), *Sedum roseum* (Roseroot), *Selaginella selaginoides* (Lesser Clubmoss) and *Silene acaulis* (Moss Campion).

I separated from the party when John Holland took the party to see *Cornus suecica* (Dwarf Cornel); he had made a recce of the area before our visit, which was very commendable, to be able to show the party what was in flower. I had excused myself by saying I wasn't getting enough time to record populations properly, which was true, but naturally I prefer a speed somewhere between neutral and first gear.

Among the plants added to our list from the neighbouring Vice-county of West Perthshire were *Juncus triglumis* (Three-flowered Rush) *Thalictrum alpinum* (Alpine Meadow-rue) and in Lochan an Eireannaich, *Littorella uniflora* (Shoreweed), *Potamogeton natans* (Broad-leaved Pondweed) and *P. praelongus* (Long-stalked Pondweed), not bad for an altitude of 590 m.

Alistair Godfrey

**6b. Birks of Aberfeldy****Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> June**

This was an educational meeting organised by the BSBI, which some of our members attended in addition to several who had been on the excursion the day before. I manage the Birks with other Council employees, but rarely get a chance to botanise it, therefore I welcomed the opportunity to rectify the shortcoming, even although the weather went from light rain to constant downpour. The gathering was subdivided into groups ranging from little botanical knowledge to considerable, and the excursion leaders each took a group. I admired the volunteers in each group who continued making records on a recording card, despite the soggy nature of the paperwork.

From the car park, *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel), *Circaea x intermedia* (*Circaea alpinum x lutetiana*, Upland Enchanter's-nightshade), *Carex sylvatica* (Wood-sedge) and *Geranium sylvaticum* (Wood Cranesbill) were in the assemblage of the broadleaved woodland flora. The Hybrid Avens *Geum x intermedium* (*Geum rivale x urbanum*) was also seen, which is fairly widespread across Perthshire. In the upper Birks, *Circaea lutetiana* (Enchanter's-nightshade) was recorded, which has a more luxuriant habit than the hybrid, which tends to be the commoner in Highland Perthshire, and can be recognised by its stoloniferous, more open growth. The liaison between the two species took place in our botanical past, and the hybrid has spread in the absence of either parent in places.

In the narrower part of the gorge, *Equisetum pratense* (Shady Horsetail) put on a good display beside the burn. In other damper parts *Neottia nidus-avis* (Bird's-nest Orchid), *N. (Listera) ovata* (Common Twayblade), *Festuca altissima* (Wood Fescue), *Milium effusum* (Wood Millet) and *Melica uniflora* (Wood Melick) were present, with *M. nutans* (Mountain Melick) above the top falls where *Helictotrichon pubescens* (Downy Oat-grass) spreads from the meadow above into the wood around the falls, passing by *Trollius europaeus* (Globeflower), which provided a wonderful floral display.

Perhaps the highlight, although there was much to see, was *Melampyrum sylvaticum* (Small Cow-wheat) an endangered species which has disappeared from many sites in the UK. This grows with *M. pratense* (Common Cow-wheat) at the upper falls, and why the two grow together there and nowhere else in the Birks remains a mystery. Nearby oaks, which have been planted beside the path, are *Quercus x rosacea* (*Q. petraea x robur*), which have more spreading branches than *Q. robur* (Pedunculate Oak), but a little less so than the *Q. petraea* (Sessile Oak) parent. This cross appears to have been the favoured form for planting in Perthshire about 100 years ago.

An unexpected find on the return route was *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen) in flower at a site where I had not seen it before. Obviously, I need to get out more.

Alistair Godfrey

**7. Menteith Hills****Saturday/Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> July**

On a drizzly morning which later brightened to a sunny warm afternoon, seven of us set off from the Forestry Commission car park at Braeval. We walked up along forest tracks following the footpath to Callander until we crossed a style onto the open hill, where we left the track and crossed an area of bog to the beginnings of the Glenny Burn before heading down back to the A81 via the west side of the burn and along the main road back to the car park. The object of the trip was to record the BSBI 2011 threatened plant species, *Sedum villosum* (Hairy Stonecrop). On a previous visit to this area Jane Jones, vice-county recorder for VC87 West Perth, had discovered it growing in a mossy flush at the head of Glenny Burn. Following Jane's good directions we easily found her population flowering profusely, and found two other populations close by, also in lush, bright green mossy flushes dominated by

the moss *Cratoneuron filicinum*. We counted over 500 beautiful delicate pink flowering spikes in the three small flushes; there may well be more in this general area.

During our walk we recorded several other very interesting plants. On our way up through the forest Paul Stanley spotted an odd-looking willow which was later confirmed as a very unusual hybrid willow *Salix x pontederiana* (*S. cinerea x purpurea*); this may be the first record for Scotland. Two muddy ponds on either side of the forest track held some interesting finds; a small patch of *Persicaria campanulata* (Lesser Knotweed) naturalised on the left-hand side of the track, *Lythrum portula* (Water-purslane) and *Persicaria hydropiper* (Water-pepper). Growing beside the track were several shuttlecock clumps of the pretty fern *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern). On our return to the car park we found a small patch of *Moehringia trinervia* (Three-nerved Sandwort). Ominously, Sarah Longrigg also found at least two patches of the insidious invader *Acaena novae-zelandiae* (Pirri-pirri bur); this species spreads along forest racks on vehicle wheels, the sticky burrs are easily transported by animals including humans.

We notched up over 220 species in four tetrads. Of particular note were several plants *Carex x fulva* (*C. hostiana x viridula*) in rush flushes west of the Glenny, *Carex viridula* subsp. *viridula* (Small-fruited Yellow-sedge) in wet gravel – a first record for VC87, *Equisetum x litorale* (Shore Horsetail (*E. arvense x fluviatile*)) beside the forest track, *Juniperus communis* (Juniper) a few bushes at the top of the Glenny and *Vaccinium oxycoccos* (Cranberry) in the boggy marsh. Creamy white *Galium sternerii* (Limestone Bedstraw) was found in hill grassland. *Cotula dioica* (Hairless Leptinella) formed a short lawn opposite a house on the walk down to the main road. On our way back on the verge beside the A81 Paul found a small patch of *Sedum telephium* (Orpine), *Stachys x ambigua* (Hybrid Woundwort (*S. palustris x sylvatica*)) and the import *Ceratochloa carinata* (California Brome) which has persisted beside the A81 since it was first recorded here in 1993.

Liz Lavery

## 8. Glen Devon

Saturday/Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> August

Nine of us met at the layby beside Castlehill reservoir. We were very pleased to be joined by four newcomers to PSNS excursions who know the Ochils well and were keen to find out more about the botany of this area. We crossed the main road and walked up the semi-private road that leads to Glenquey Reservoir noting and discussing the species we saw. We made a detour through Geordie's Wood, purchased and planted with native trees by the Woodland Trust early in 2000. Liz knows this area very well and was very eager to show everyone one of her proudest discoveries.

Since fencing and removing grazing, many thousands of plants of *Meum athamanticum* (Spignel), probably at least 50,000, have appeared on two little hillocks at the entrance to Geordie's Wood, an amazing sight when in full flower in June. Although this nationally scarce species is not uncommon in this part of the Ochils, it is usually suppressed by grazing. It explodes as masses of umbels of creamy white flowers in newly-fenced woodland when grazing is first removed. This has happened at Glendevon Lodge House and beside the B934 at the head of Glen Queich as well as at Geordie's Wood. The flowers were over in mid-August but the feathery green leaves of *Meum* were still very evident in the soft long grass. Long term it is uncertain how *Meum* will survive in this situation as the young trees grow up shading more of the area and the grass continues to be ungrazed and becomes an ever thicker thatch over the ground stifling the germination of any new seeds.

On our way to the end of road by the dam we looked at some areas of wet heath. Liz pointed out Glenquey Moss, an area of raised peat bog with a good population of *Vaccinium*

*oxycoccus* (Cranberry). It grows straggling across tussocks of *Eriophorum vaginatum* (Hare's-tail Cottongrass) in a mosaic of hummocks and hollows with wet *Sphagnum* pools on the moss. This is a very special place; the NVC plant community, M18 (*Erica tetralix*–*Sphagnum papillosum* raised and blanket mire) is rare in the Ochil Hills; although somewhat degraded in the past, the area appears to be recovering and in a peat-building phase now, with abundant *Sphagnum* species. However, this lovely peat moss is under serious threat of complete destruction from a proposed massive quarrying development. The application to renew planning permission extant since the early 1980s is still being considered by Perth & Kinross Council.

We wandered on, recording as we went, ate our lunch on the edge of the stream below the dam, and then climbed up beside the dam and walked a little way along the northern shore of the reservoir. David Merry led a breakaway group farther along the hillside and discovered the beautiful *Parnassia palustris* (Grass-of-Parnassus), rare in the Ochils, but despite directions the rest of us failed to find it. But walking back along the path, Bill Hay, the Society's sedge expert, spied the miniscule *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush) growing in wet runnels along the path. The sun shone on the velvet green hills, billowing grey-white clouds cast deep shadows across the water and we all enjoyed the tranquil scenery on a lovely summer's afternoon. In total we recorded 143 species in 2 tetrads.

Liz Lavery

## 9. St. Magdalene's Hill, Perth

Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> October

I thought that having a look at the site beforehand to see where fungi could be found was a worthwhile precaution, because I hadn't seen many in travelling around. My initial foray was disappointing, and I feared the worst for the excursion, however thanks to the ever-resourceful knowledge of Keith Cohen and several pairs of keen eyes, we found over 90 species of fungi. The excursion started with a treat that Les Tucker had prepared, jam from the fruit of *Amelanchier*, a tree not unlike a much-spreading gean, but the flower has longer, wider-spaced petals, and fruit superficially like *Vaccinium* in appearance; most representatives of this genus belong to North America. The jam was served with an accompaniment and tasted delicious, something like a cross between a plum and a cranberry.

In the grassland above the car park we found species of the genus *Panaeolus*, small, neat-capped fungi that go by the name of 'Mottlegill' for that reason. The small, yellow, glutinous capped *Bolbitius vitellinus* (Yellow Fieldcap) was found in the same habitat; this species is a saprophyte on plant litter. Two species of the fingered variety, *Clavulinopsis*, were also found in this area *C. fusiformis* (Golden Spindles), which is yellow and *C. helvola* (Yellow Club), which is orange. Another fingered kind we found later was *Clavulina rugosa* (Wrinkled Club).

There is a place on the hill I regard as special, where *Helianthemum nummularium* (Rockrose) grows, which is sometimes a companion to the anthills there. This raised area has shorter turf than most other areas on the hill, and we found a number of waxcaps (*Hygrocybe*) near the Rockrose and in two other places, numbering in all: *H. calyptriformis* (Pink), *H. ceracea* (Butter), *H. coccinea* (Scarlet), *H. conica* (Blackening), *H. pratensis* (Meadow), *H. reidii* (Honey), and *H. virginea* (Snowy).

In the conifer plantation on the east side of the hill, we found some bracket fungi, and a large-capped ground fungus that goes by the endearing name of Plums and Custard (*Tricholomopsis rutilans*); the plummy colour is on the cap, and the custard underneath, but despite its name the fungus is said to be inedible. Nearby was Hare's Ear (*Otidea onotica*) not a mammalian remain, but a thin, flesh-coloured cup-shaped fungus with nicks on its rim, which is presumably a comment on its warring behaviour.

While we were looking at these curiosities we heard a shout from Les, who was beyond the edge of the wood, and he was calling us to see something he had found. I could see nothing unusual on the ground, but then he drew our attention to an Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and some way up its considerable height we saw *Pleurotus ostreatus* (Oyster Mushroom). This would have been a tasty treat, but the parlous condition of the tree left us only admiring the ambition of our dining table from afar.

In the afternoon, on the other side of the car park, we visited the community woodland, which had not so long ago had been owned by Perth Mart, where beasts were kept before the sales, but alas all is no more. We found few fungi in the new woodland that had been planted on improved grassland, which was a salutary lesson on how long the association between host and fungus takes to develop.

St. Magdalene's Hill was home to a farm, and I imagine its pastures were similar to those at Blairbell on Dupplin Estate where we had a very successful fungal foray in 2006. The grass on St. Magdalene's Hill was later kept short for recreational use, and parts of its woodland have been present for at least 100 years, therefore the difference in the number of fungi only a few hundred metres between the sites at St. Magdalene's should not be surprising. But how many Blairbells have we lost through changes in agriculture and the species of fungi associated with them?

Near the start of the old road opposite Craigie Knowes, we saw what appeared at first to be a bleeding mushroom, which turned out to be *Agaricus haemorrhoidarius*, and does not appear to have a common name, its colouration arising from bruised flesh. On the wooded edges of Craigie Hill Golf Course we found two associates of Oak; *Macrolepiota procera* (Parasol) which has a scaly cap and large stem ring and *Collybia dryophila* (Russet Toughshank) which is very common species.

I thought that we would find a good number of fungi in the quarry of Buckie Braes, which has base-rich soils, and the woodland cover is Ash. Keith told me that the smaller fungi which are more difficult to identify tend to grow in such woods, and that the larger-capped fungi are found in oakwoods, as well as birch and beech woodland. I am indebted to Keith for his comments made about the species and habitats during the foray, which I copied in my notebook and have used here. One species we did see in the quarry was *Macrocyttidia cucumis* (Cucumber Cap), which has a dark stem that is almost black at the base and a fleshy cap that smells of...

Alistair Godfrey

## News and updates

The winter talks have passed successfully, and have been well attended, despite the Society being 'homeless' for half the season once again, due to work being undertaken in the Museum & Art Gallery. Those who heard Professor Michael Usher's talk on 'Biodiversity and the Caribbean island of Barbados' in February may like to know that Biodiversity Action Plans for Barbados and other Caribbean islands can be downloaded from the UNDP website [www.bb.undp.org/index.php?page=biodiversity](http://www.bb.undp.org/index.php?page=biodiversity).

The Section's usual meeting room in the Museum is the Library, where we are surrounded by glass-fronted mahogany cabinets full of valuable tomes acquired by the Society over the last 145 years. These titles are included in Perth & Kinross Council Libraries [online catalogue](#), listed as a special collection. Although PSNS members are entitled to consult these books and journals, the need to balance access and security means that the procedure is not straightforward. Many members may not be aware that the Botanical Section has also acquired, by purchase or donation, botanical books published in recent years – these

are held separately, in the A.K. Bell Library, and are available for members to borrow from the Local Studies Section. A list of these titles can be obtained from Joanna Thomas.

Our 34 Botanical Section Bulletins are a fascinating record of the Section's activities over as many years – the first appeared in October 1978. From the start, reports of excursions have made up the major part of the Bulletin. The reports have always been more than records of notable species, usually describing the terrain encountered, the weather and the events of the day, sometimes with notes on plant ecology and identification thrown in. Joint meetings with BSBI and other bodies have remained a consistent feature of the excursion programme down the years. Several individuals have stayed active with the Society over the three decades – Rhoda Fothergill contributed excursion reports to the very first Bulletin, and Ros Smith to the second issue. Although outings have always been the main focus, a few early Bulletins revived the Victorian tradition of including detailed accounts of some of the Section's winter lectures. Some Bulletins reflect issues of conservation concern, such as the Shingle Island rehabilitation following construction of the A9 Dunkeld bypass – to which the PSNS contributed time and expertise. Perhaps we will be called on again when the road is dualled? The Bulletins also show changing recording priorities, with interests in the local distribution of single species such as Hops *Humulus lupulus* and Snowdrops *Galanthus nivalis* giving way to arable weed surveys, atlasing and now recording towards a new county flora. The Bulletins record the changing membership and fortunes of the Section, including obituaries of deceased members. They show how technology has changed, too: the earliest issues (all of four A5 pages!) were actually professionally printed; later, Perth Museum & Art Gallery duplicated them for us; and by the mid-1980s the word-processor and photocopier enabled the Bulletin to begin evolving into the one you are reading today.

Who knows what changes the next third-of-a-century will bring? Increasingly, people expect to be able to find anything and everything online, and the Section has taken a major step forward by scanning copies of all the Bulletin back issues. These will appear shortly on the Section's webpage <http://psns.tsohost.co.uk/botanical/botanical.htm>, alongside those for the last few years that are already there. The PDF scans preserve the appearance of the originals as far as possible, and are text-searchable (apart from a few sections where the print was unclear and difficult for the software to interpret). Thanks are due to Katrina Rogers for helping to scan the archive of Bulletins, and to Landel Johnston, the PSNS webmaster, for uploading the Section's materials for us.

Bulletin Editor: Colin R. McLeod

**Photos**



*Veronica fruticans* (Rock Speedwell), Kirkton Glen, 25 June 2011  
© Alistair Godfrey.



*Botrychium lunaria* (Moonwort), Kirkton Glen, 25 June 2011  
© Alistair Godfrey.



*Draba incana* (Hoary Whitlowgrass), Kirkton Glen, 25 June 2011  
© Alistair Godfrey.



*Sedum villosum* (Hairy Stonecrop), Menteith Hills, 9 July 2011  
© Liz Lavery.



*Sedum villosum* (Hairy Stonecrop), Menteith Hills, 9 July 2011  
© Liz Lavery.