

PERTSHIRE SOCIETY OF NATURAL SCIENCE

BOTANICAL SECTION

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Editorial

This past year has been very busy for the three Perthshire BSBI recorders as they finalised their plant lists for each 10 km square and proof-read the Atlas 2000 records. For myself this was an appalling experience. Despite my having submitted all records by electronic transfer as files using the Microsoft database package Excel (and having done a small-scale test run with the BSBI's Atlas organiser to verify the scheme would work), the results when returned to me for proof-reading showed an error rate that averaged about one in twelve! The usual errors were that post-1986 records became pre-1970 but there were also a huge number of records simply omitted. Can someone have transcribed all those computerised records into the Biological Records Centre database *by hand* I ask myself, and shudder..... (I did subsequently receive an apology from BRC for all the errors - one file at least seems to have got mislaid along the BSBI/BRC communication channel). I hope we shall see the Atlas 2000 no later than early 2002 and with all errors corrected. [Late news 11th March - today I was informed that the list I proof-read in early January at great expense of time was **not** the final list and that most of the errors I noted were not errors on the draft maps!!!]

My long 1999 editorial elicited zero comment. But I know one person read it, because that person kindly surveyed the one (mountain-top) 10 km square in VC88 I mentioned in it as having had no records at all - so thank you, Alison, though I think from a floristic point of view it was a question of virtue having been its own reward!

Thanks to all those who provided Field Meeting reports.

Richard Thomas (Editor)

Reports from 2000 Field meetings:-

1. Gairney Burn, Powmill near Kinross, 21st May 2000

After a week of cold wintry showers the first meeting of the season was on a day of clearing skies and warm sunshine. A good show of eight prominent botanists gathered in the car park of Powmill Milkbar to explore the delights of the precipitous banks of the Gairney Burn as it winds its way down to meet the River Devon just below the fascinating Cauldron Linn. Despite the earliness in the botanising season it proved the perfect time of year to visit this narrow band of mixed deciduous woodland. Walking, scrambling and squelching, as carefully as possible, through an amazing fairyland of brilliant new green growth we zigzagged our way up and down the sides of the burn. The upper reaches of the

burn proved to be just as rich botanically as the part below the old railway bridge which is part of the Devon Gorge SSSI.

Amongst a total of 170 species, to which could be made several additions with more hunting time, were large patches of *Equisetum pratense* (Shady Horsetail) growing with *E. sylvaticum* (Wood Horsetail); both *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and *C. alternifolium* (Opposite-leaved and Alternate-leaved Golden Saxifrage); abundant *Galium odoratum* (Sweet Woodruff); *Aconitum napellus* (Monkshood); *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel); *Sanicula europaea* (Sanicle); *Stellaria nemorum* (Wood Stitchwort); one spot with *Listera ovata* (Twayblade) growing abundantly; and some interesting sedges and grasses including *Carex remota* (Remote Sedge) and *Carex sylvatica* (Wood Sedge), both in flower, *Festuca gigantea* (Giant Fescue) and *Brachypodium sylvaticum* (False Brome).

At Cauldron Linn diligent searching revealed *Vicia sylvatica* (Wood Vetch), not yet in flower, and *Milium effusum* (Wood Millet). A few of us ventured further downstream along the Devon and were rewarded with a wonderful display of Bluebells and, in a very boggy patch, a single mysterious clump of what is probably *Carex pendula* (Pendulous Sedge), a remnant from the days of estate managed woodland.

Liz Lavery

2. **Kinnaber Links, Montrose** meeting of 27th May 2000 did not take place

3. **Methven Loch**

On the evening of Wednesday 7th June 2000, with the kind permission of the owner Miss Anne Kidd, we had an excursion to Methven Loch. We had a good turnout with a total of 12 members and friends, and Miss Kidd also came with us which meant that she could give us the benefit of her knowledge of the history of the area.

The first find was of a large colony of *Paris quadrifolia* (Herb Paris), a total of c.700 shoots were counted in a moist area adjacent to the loch. We then proceeded clockwise around the loch as Miss Kidd regularly does. The edges of the loch were largely occupied by *Iris pseudacorus* (Yellow Flag) which was in full flower, as was *Nymphaea alba* (White Water Lily). There were also a few plants of *Nuphar pumila* (Least Yellow Water Lily).

We then found a new record for the 10 km square - *Amsinckia micrantha* (Tarweed) which was completely dominant on a mound just outside the fence surrounding the loch and Miss Kidd's land. The mound apparently was an excavation in connection with the quarry soon to come to the area. Fortunately we soon spotted a couple of plants of *Amsinckia* adjacent to the loch and within the fence.

We eventually reached Miss Kidd's house and her lovely garden which she tends herself. She very kindly gave us all a welcome cup of tea and biscuits, thus giving a pleasant end to a most enjoyable and interesting excursion.

Ros Smith

4. Gartmorn Dam Local Nature Reserve, 17th June 2000

The weather provided the high point of the visit on a sultry June day. Five senior members of the Section and two very junior members (the leader's noisy and non-botanically inclined children) strolled round the loch examining the terrestrial plants. Gartmorn is well-known for its aquatic plants and marginal vegetation so the purpose of the trip was look at the less well recorded areas to assist the local council with the revision of the site's management plan.

There are several old coal bings and other relicts of industry which would have possessed a varied flora consisting largely of 'weedy' ruderal species. Over the years with little grazing or other disturbance these habitats have been lost to restoration schemes, scrub, woodland and tall grassland. As a consequence few species of interest were found.

Milium effusum (Wood millet) was found in woodland near the large water tank in the south west part of the site; *Centaurea montana* (Perennial Cornflower) (an attractive introduced species which is not mentioned in the Checklist and appears to be on the increase), *Dactylorhiza majalis ssp. purpurella* (Northern Marsh Orchid) and *Salix myrsinifolia* (Dark-leaved Willow) were also found.

Our thanks are due to Clackmannanshire Council for access permission, and to Elaine Baxter, Countryside Ranger, for assisting us with the visit.

Neale Taylor

5. Creag Spardain & Meall Breac, Glen Gairnaig (NN96, VC89)

Four of us met on Sunday 2nd July 2000 at the end of the public road by Loch Moraig on a warm sunny day and drove along the very rocky track to Shinagag. Ros renewed her acquaintance with the area and then returned to botanise nearer L.Moraig. Meanwhile the remaining three of us set off up the glen, turned southward onto the higher ground of Creag Spardain and returned along the hill crest back to Shinagag.

We first passed some lime-rich flushes where we noted *Eriophorum latifolium* (Broad-leaved Cottongrass), *Briza media* (Quaking Grass), *Tofieldia pusilla* (Scottish Asphodel) and many sedges and orchids but no *Kobresia* (despite its being well-known only shortly to the north). Our route then passed some lochs, partially at least artificial, with species such as *Hippuris vulgaris* (Marestail) and *Sparganium erectum* (Branched Bur Reed). Some low-altitude cliffs nearby had calcicolous species as *Carex capillaris* (Hair Sedge), *Juncus triglumis* (Three-flowered Rush), *Polystichum lonchitis* (Holly Fern) and *Saxifraga oppositifolia* (Purple Saxifrage).

Higher up the vegetation was dominated by grasses (*Agrostis* and *Festuca* spp) with occasional *Cornus suecica* (Dwarf Cornel) and *Trientalis europaea*

(Chickweed Wintergreen). Our most interesting find was a small colony of the rare *Equisetum pratense* (Shady Horsetail).

Our final locality was a limestone hill immediately overlooking Shinagag. This had abundant *Helianthemum nummularium* (Common Rockrose), *Koeleria macrantha* agg. (Crested Hair Grass) and both *Helictotrichon* spp (Oat Grasses), also several plants of *Arabis hirsuta* (Hairy Rock Cress). And the well-grazed pasture below had *Gentianella campestris* (Field Gentian).

Apart from sheep there was not much animal life. - one red deer and one blue hare, and one osprey flew south-east up the glen.

We thank the Estate for permission to visit and to use the Shinagag track.

Richard Thomas

6. Loch Essan, Glen Dochart, 16th July

A preliminary visit four days previously earned us the right to park at Lochdochart House and a welcome invitation to tea at the "big hoose" when we came down, for which very many thanks to John Christie and his wife.

The target for the expedition was to confirm or otherwise the presence of *Pinguicula lusitanica* (Pale Butterwort) at an altitude of 2000ft on the southern slopes of Beinn Imirean. David who had recently returned from Skye briefed the party with comparative photographs of this plant, which in Skye grows at or near sea level, and its common relative *P. vulgaris* (Common Butterwort).

The day itself was blue throughout, a lovely day for Peter and Margaret Cramb to make their last Scottish excursion before flitting to darkest Dorset. Bill Hay and Alastair Godfrey made up the party.

We did not find the Pale Butterwort, nor did the terrain look suitable for it, though Common Butterwort was profuse, but a good day was had with 126 plants identified. The open hillside was not quite calcareous enough for a rich flora, and was well mown by sheep and deer, though we did find a few alpines. Perhaps of more interest were two small lochans where we found *Nuphar pumila* (Least Yellow Water Lily), *Utricularia intermedia* (agg) (Intermediate Bladderwort) and a clump of *Glyceria fluitans* (Floating Sweet Grass).

The warm weather brought out the butterflies: Dark Green Fritillaries common lower down, Small Heaths at all altitudes, Mountain Ringlets higher up, and on the plateau two Large Heaths. The steep ridge below Loch Essan and above Loch Iubhair also gave us good views of Raven, Kestrel and Peregrine. The cliffs where these birds are domiciled look, from a distance, as though they might be interesting botanically, and may be a suitable venue for a future expedition for those not vertically challenged.

David Merrie

7. Moncreiffe (Friarton) Island, 29th July

10 or so members met up and had a very pleasant excursion, including a sociable, relaxing picnic lunch sitting on the pebble beach at the northern end of the island enjoying the views of Perth and the Tay. Even lunching did not stop us pottering around and accumulating records while munching on our sandwiches and dodging the incoming tide!

Not surprisingly, owing to its location, we amassed a good number of records - 181 in all, and including those that doubled up, this was split between 104 records for VC88 and 141 records for VC89.

We recorded 30 locally occasional or rare native species: *Allium oleraceum* (Field Garlic), *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Thale Cress), *Campanula latifolia* (Giant Bellflower), *Cymbalaria muralis* (Ivy-leaved Toadflax), *Elymus caninus* (Bearded Couch), *Epilobium hirsutum* (Great Willowherb), *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine), *Festuca gigantea* (Giant Fescue), *Geranium pratense* (Meadow Cranesbill), *Hypericum hirsutum* (Hairy St. John's Wort), *H. perforatum* (Perforate St. John's Wort) and *H. tetrapterum* (Square-stalked St. John's Wort), *Lythrum salicaria* (Purple Loosestrife), *Mentha arvensis* (Corn Mint), *Mycelis muralis* (Wall Lettuce), *Oenanthe crocata* (Hemlock Water Dropwort), *Ononis repens* (Rest Harrow), *Origanum vulgare* (Wild Marjoram), *Papaver dubium* (Long-headed Poppy), *Rorippa sylvestris* (Creeping Yellow Cress), *Salix purpurea* (Purple Willow), *Salix viminalis* (Osier), *Senecio aquaticus* (Marsh Ragwort), *Solanum dulcamara* (Bittersweet), *Stachys palustris* (Marsh Woundwort), *Stellaria nemorum* (Wood Stitchwort), *Tragopogon pratensis* (Goat'sbeard), *Vicia hirsuta* (Hairy Tare) and *Viola arvensis* (Field Pansy). However, the best find of the day was *Lamium amplexicaule* (Henbit) found by Ros Smith on an allotment which she had been invited to look round. Inevitably, in addition, over 20 introductions were recorded, some of them locally rare, such as *Allium carinatum* (Keeled Garlic) and *Amsinckia micrantha* (Tarweed).

We managed to cover the northern end of the island and skirt along the western edge towards the south but, unfortunately, we didn't get all the way round. Maybe next time! Meanwhile, if you are in Perth with time on your hands, it is well worth a wee visit - just remember to duck if someone shouts "fore"!

Harriet Lindsay

8. Ledcharrie, Glen Dochart, Sunday 6th August 2000

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley", and thankfully so did the weather forecast, but to our advantage. David Merrie, Bill Hay, Richard and Joanna Thomas and myself enjoyed a lovely sunny day in Glen Dochart.

Richard provided us all with four pages of records, which made our botanising much easier. List ticking was not on our agenda as all the records on Richard's list were recent. Our botanising was more relaxed than usual and we

concentrated more on detail, but such was the richness of the ground that we managed to add more than 40 new records to the list for the tetrad.

We were not able to confirm a recent record of *Pinguicula lusitanica* (Pale Butterwort). This species is found in the milder and wetter climate of the west of Scotland, and also on Orkney. The record was based on leaf alone, and we checked many plants for their leaves, but they all belonged to *Pinguicula vulgaris* (Common Butterwort). *P. lusitanica* is found in VC87 in Glen Falloch not far away, and may yet be found in VC88. The presence of the paler flower would provide an indisputable record.

An energetic David Merrie - I hereby apologise for referring to him as "Dave" in the Excursion programme - discovered a number of botanical delights in a ravine where a band of limestone runs through the surrounding schist. *Polystichum lonchitis* (Holly Fern) and *Gentianella campestris* (Field Gentian) were added to our list. *Saxifraga aizoides* (Yellow Mountain Saxifrage), *S. oppositifolia* (Purple Saxifrage) and *S. stellaris* (Starry Saxifrage) were also present. David found *Cornus suecica* (Dwarf Cornel) - not easy to spot when its leaves blend in so perfectly with its surroundings - on the heathery edge of the ravine. Part of the ravine was dry, elsewhere the rocky bottom held cool pools of water. On turning around after looking at some plants I saw the mountains lying across Glen Dochart framed by the edges of the ravine under a sunny sky.

Under the impressive crags of Meall an Fhiodhain overlooking Kirkton Glen we came across another exposure of limestone at the farthest extent of our excursion. The effort of getting there was rewarding as what awaited us was nothing short of a botanist's paradise, including *Potentilla crantzii* (Alpine Cinquefoil), *Veronica fruticans* (Rock Speedwell) - living up to its fruity epithet - and the white flowered form of *Gentianella campestris* (Field Gentian). On a limestone crag, far from the reach of sheep and almost our own, I found *Botrychium lunaria* (Moonwort). I passed over some other leaves thinking that they were *Filipendula ulmaria* (Meadowsweet), but Joanna Thomas retrieved some leaves from a neighbouring plant, and my Meadowsweet turned out to be *Rubus saxatilis* (Stone Bramble), another addition to our list.

Alistair Godfrey