

DERBYSHIRE FLORA PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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Number 15 – Winter 2005/Spring 2006

1. EDITORIAL (AW)

Welcome to this newsletter of the Derbyshire Flora Group. We include here details of where we are currently with the project to publish a new flora for the county, of our planned meetings for the year, both indoor and outdoor, and of some new plant records. More details of plant recording in the county can be obtained from our website, and of the project from either of us. Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

2. NEW PLANT RECORDS FOR vc57(AW)

Despite trying to concentrate on drafting the new flora this last year there seems to have been quite a few new records of note. Some in fact are from previous years as I had quite a backlog of records to get through during the year. I include here all new vice-county records I have processed since the last newsletter. I also include some other notable records but have had to be selective with these. Please therefore accept my apologies if I have omitted your favourite record.

New County Records

***Vaccinium uliginosum* (Bog Bilberry)** Two plants of this were discovered in blanket bog near Swain's Head (SK1398) by Derek Yalden in August 2004. This was a most interesting and significant find of a plant which until its recent discovery on Exmoor was only known from northern England and Scotland. We are assuming it is native with us but overlooked.

***Asplenium trichomanes ssp. pachyrachis* (A subspecies of Maidenhair Spleenwort)** This was discovered in Lathkill Dale (SK1865) and Cales Dale (SK1765) in 2004 by Paul Ruston. This is recorded sporadically on limestone rocks and walls in western Britain. It is no doubt another native plant that has been overlooked, probable because few botanists separate the subspecies here.

Apart from these two plants all the remaining new county records are introduced plants, mostly escapes from cultivation though one or two may have spread into our area spontaneously. Ken Balkow's most remarkable site at Heeley on the outskirts of Sheffield yielded six new county records. These are given below under a separate heading here I include only isolated new county records.

***Berberis gagnepainii* (Gagnepain's Barberry)** was recorded for a pavement near Monyash (SK1566) under a garden bush by Rodney Burton in August 2005.

***Centaurea solstitialis* (Yellow Star-thistle)** was recorded by Ken Balkow on the bank of a newly-excavated pond at Barlow (SK3475) in March 2003 where aviary sweepings had been deliberately spread. It occurred with a range of other casual aliens.

***Euphorbia platyphyllos* (Broad-leaved Spurge)** was noted as casual in disturbed ground near Junction 25 of the M1 (SK4735) by Gareth Hirons in June 2004. This is native to southern England and may have spread here spontaneously.

***Scutellaria altissima* (Somerset Skullcap)** is now established on derelict railway land at Ilkeston (SK4642) where it has been known by Brian Gough since 2002. This has been known for some time as an established plant in southern England but this is the first time it has been recorded for the Midlands.

***Sidalcea malviflora* (Greek Mallow)** one plant was recorded as a casual on old railway sidings at Pleasley (SK4963) in July 2003 by Ken Balkow.

***Sisyrinchium montanum* (American Blue-eyed-grass)** One clump of this was noted by Andrew Beck on disturbed ground near Bradwell (SK1680) in July 2005. This is very similar to Blue-eyed-grass (*S. bermudiana*) and all records of Blue-eyed-grasses should be carefully checked to ensure the correct plant is recorded.

Other Notable Recent Records

***Agrimonia procera* (Fragrant Agrimony)** This is a very rare native perennial with us. It was recorded for Cales Dale (SK1765) by Rodney Burton in August 2005, which is only our third post-1986 record.

***Ambrosia artemisiifolia* (Ragweed)** was recorded as a casual in his garden in Allestree (SK3339) by Roy Branson in September 2005, probably from bird seed. This is our first record since 1989.

***Chenopodium ficifolium* (Fig-leaved Goosefoot)** was recorded by myself as a weed in a newly-planted shrubbery in Allestree Derby (SK3337) in August 2005. This was a new record for the Derby area but was rapidly weeded out as the bed become established.

***Juncus subnodulosus* (Blunt-flowered Rush)** was seen by Peter Hoy next to a ditch on land adjacent to the Rolls Royce factory in Derby (SK3531) in 2005. This is the first record since 1980.

***Persicaria minor* (Small Water-pepper)** was noted by Rhodri Thomas on the bed of the now-drained Ramsley Reservoir (SK2874) in August 2005. This is our first record since 1978.

New County Records from Heeley (SK3484)

This site on the outskirts of Sheffield, just east of the River Sheaf, was found by Ken Balkow in the late summer of 2003. It was an area of derelict land that was being tidied prior to redevelopment. When Ken came across the site, imported soil had been spread over much of it but little, if any, planting had taken place. From this imported soil and the disturbed ground a most amazing collection of weeds and aliens had sprung up. These included 6 new county records and added about 50 new plants to the list for the hectad. There were also a number of first records since 1987. Unfortunately further tidying up the site by a strimmer in September meant that most of the interesting plants were lost almost as soon as they were found. The new county records were:

***Cucumis melo* (Melon)**

***Echium plantagineum* (Purple Viper's-bugloss)**

***Panicum capillare* (Witch-grass)**

***Reseda odorata* (Garden Mignonette)**

***Petunia x hybrida* (Petunia)**

***Erodium moschatum* (Musk Stork's-bill)**

3. FLORA PROGRESS (AW)

I have managed to complete draft accounts for the Daisy Family (Asteraceae), the Dandelions (*Taraxacum* spp.) and the Brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) since last year. This brings the number of drafted flora entries to over 1800, and leaves only accounts for Hawkweeds (*Hieracium* spp.) plus extinct and doubtful/erroneous taxa to be drafted. I have also managed to clear over the year the backlog of record cards for processing. The cleared cards have been passed to Nick for entry onto the database at the museum but this will still take a little time to complete. These new cards have continued to add records to our totals for hectads so the average number of plants per hectad is now around 540.

FLORA PROGRESS (NM)

A total of 662,000 vascular plant records are now on computer. Of these, half a million are modern, post-1987 data. Some 35,000 were imported electronically over Christmas from sources as various as P Precey and N Law (DWT), Liverpool Herbarium, the Peak Park and BSBI Threatened Plants Database. We had intended to close off data capture around Christmas 2005, but DBRC received another 55,000 unexpected records recently, so it's now likely to be around May 2006. We shall not then stop asking for records, but please understand from then on that only new VC records, or other significant data are likely to be captured for the Flora. Thus: SEND IN ANY DATA AS SOON AS YOU'VE COLLECTED IT! And From Spring 2006 you MUST draw to our attention clearly to any important individual records you wish to see being incorporated in the book. The Museum volunteer team have worked hard to help catch up with

outstanding data noted above. However, we know that there will still be records we fail to capture, and trust you'll forgive us the omissions that will inevitably occur.

Last year Alan managed to complete the mammoth task of drafting the first rough accounts for all species except critical taxa. He's since worked on some of these, too, and I've managed to edit about 1/3 of his draft accounts so far. As in recent years, my family commitments have inevitably meant somewhat less progress than hoped for. Not all the edited accounts are yet back onto our Flora Database for printing out. Nevertheless we can still print out all any rough drafts of any genus or family range anyone would like to see.

During the year we have made progress with finding authors to write preliminary chapters for our Flora. We've already received one draft back on Derbyshire Climate, and have received agreement from others to write on the History of Peak District Vegetation, Botanical Conservation in Derbyshire, and Natural Areas, and on Geology. The section on Derbyshire Botanists may have to be abandoned if it seems we can't do them all equal justice. We might use the Derbyshire Flora email group for seeking help with this.

4. FLORA – THE WAY FORWARD

The way ahead now is editing the draft entries, finding a publisher/printer, sorting the illustrations and continuing to prepare the introductory text. We did get a reply from the one printer we approached last year but this only confirmed how expensive book printing is currently. Illustrations have been helped by various contributions of images, some specifically produced for the flora particularly by Jill and Peter Dishart.

5. INDOOR SPRING MEETING (AW & NM)

We are planning to have another indoor meeting at the museum this year. General arrangements will be as in previous years with doors open at 11.00 am for those wanting to meet up and chat beforehand. The formal meeting will commence at 12 noon and end around 4.00 pm with a break for lunch at 1.00 pm. Please bring your own food but tea and coffee will be provided as before. Please feel to bring along to the meeting any pictures you have of interest, and any ideas for the meeting would be welcomed by either of us. Date of the meeting will be Saturday 1st April. It would be helpful if you could let us know if you are intending to come, and if you have any pictures or specimens you would like to show.

6. OUTDOOR MEETINGS 2006 (AW)

I intend to plan a series of Saturday meetings as in previous years, starting with a trip to Pleasley Vale woods on Saturday May 6th. I hope to have the full programme organised by the indoor meeting and will then distribute it by e-mail and snail mail to those who cannot get to the spring meeting. In the mean time any suggestions for venues would be gratefully received.

7. FLORA QUIZ III (AW)

If you missed the first two, you now have a chance at the third botanical quiz dreamt up by John and published with the help of Sue. It is just as fiendish as the others with proceeds again going to the flora funds. Thanks for another injection of cash to Sue and John, at this rate they will soon raise enough to publish the flora on their own.

The new quiz sheet features cryptic clues, botanical puzzles and general knowledge questions with a floral theme. The closing date for entries is Saturday 15th April 2006.

If you would like to obtain a copy send s.a.e. and cheque for £1 payable to "Derbyshire Flora Committee" to, "Flora Quiz" 12 Chertsey Road, Mickleover, Derby DE3 0RA.

7. BSBI PROJECTS

Our part of the **Local Change** project was successfully completed last year, so thanks to all those who contributed records. Contributions from all counties are being processed and we are promised an analysis of the results soon. The current project is an up date of Clive Stace's hybrid book that was first published in 1975. This will include the distribution of all hybrids growing wild in the country at the vice county level, using the format employed in the recent Vice-county Census Catalogue (Stace et al. 2003). All that is needed for this is a single current record of each hybrid from each county. If you know therefore of any hybrids growing locally for which you have not submitted a recent record please let me have it. It is planned to complete the recording over the coming field season so please send in your records as soon as possible.

Towards the end of last year the BSBI asked us to send a summary of all records collected since we submitted our data to the Atlas 2000 Project in 1999. Over 150,000 records were sent in, and these can now be seen online at the Atlas Update Page of the BSBI's website. (www.bsbi.org.uk) The maps are bang up to date, and are a valuable tool for anyone working on plant distribution data.

8. COUNTY CHECKLIST UPDATE (NM)

It has been 4 years since our Checklist was published. We've worked hard in recent months to update the list of corrections, new additions and status changes. This list should be finished by the time of the Indoor Meeting on 1st April, and will be posted or emailed free to anyone who wants one.

9. HERBARIUM (NM)

Roy and Anne Branson are currently computerising the data from Derby Museum's herbarium, and are over 1/3 the way through the 6,000 specimens. Some useful data has come already out of it. Of greatest value so far has been the large collection of expertly determined Rubi. Once the collection is catalogued it will be imported into the Museums object database, as well as Derbyshire specimens going into our own Flora database. The whole lot will also be offered to an internet database of small British herbarium collections, run by Hull University.

10. USURPED! (NM)

Poor old *Urtica dioica*, for the last 10 years it has held its position as the most commonly recorded plant in the county. That position has been taken by *Crataegus monogyna*. At the time of writing we hold 6,703 records of Nettle, and 6,804 records of Hawthorn on the database.

11. LADY'S SLIPPER (NM)

Amongst recently imported data from the BSBI was a surprise record of Lady's Slipper Orchid, planted in woodland near the Heights of Abraham, close to the original site of the Derbyshire record which was "long since extirpated from the county", as reported by Joseph Whittaker around 1860. It was planted by CS Garnett in 1933 from continental stock. The lack of other records suggests it never survived. Surprisingly, no specimens from the 1800s has ever come to light in any UK herbarium. It's very hard to check the smaller museum herbaria, but we're trying to get it done.

12. ENQUIRIES (AW & NM)

Any enquiry concerning the Flora scheme in general or requests for recording cards can be directed to either of us. Ideally, questions about either plant determinations or areas to record should be directed to Alan Willmot. To enquire about computerisation of records and to request particular up-to-date species maps contact Nick Moyes. Details of how we can be contacted are:

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Information on the current state of recording plus detailed monad and tetrad counts can be found on our website:

www.dbrf.freeserve.co.uk click on plants.