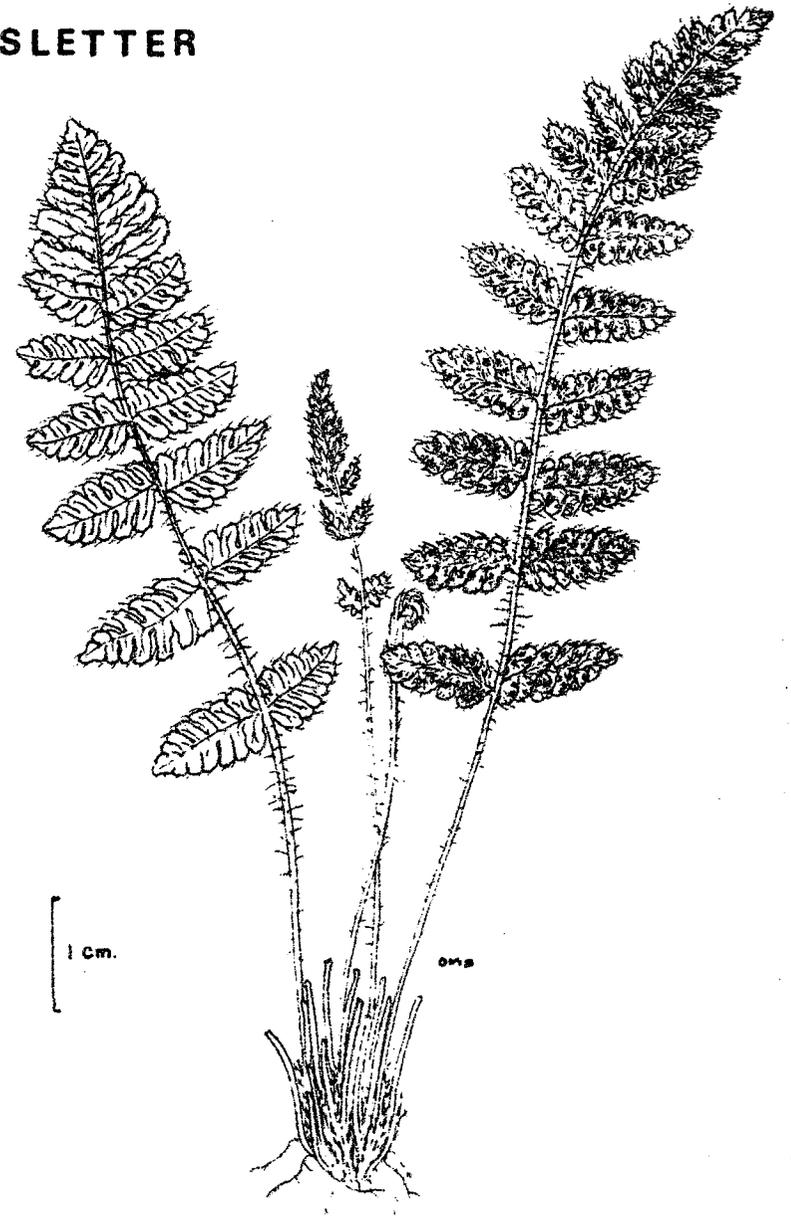


**B.S.B.I.**  
**SCOTTISH**  
**NEWSLETTER**



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## EDITORIAL

We hope that this, the second number of the Newsletter, meets with the approval of our readers, but its success can only be judged by our receiving your comments and constructive criticism, so please let us know what you think of our efforts.

Our cover illustration, for which we are once again indebted to Mrs Olga Stewart, has been chosen as an accompaniment to the item on Woodsia ilvensis. The sort of in-depth study described could well be a model for other amateur botanists who wish to make a really worthwhile contribution to the knowledge of the status, distribution and ecology of our rarer Scottish species.

Two of the current contributions provide excellent evidence that our knowledge of the distribution of the Scottish flora is far from complete. Who would have suspected that, many years after its former site at Loch Tummel had been destroyed, Schoenus ferrugineus would be discovered in two new and apparently native stations in some quantity; or that Ulex gallii, popularly regarded as a species restricted to western Britain, would prove to be of frequent occurrence in parts of Caithness and Sutherland?

A word on the subject of contributions - please send us more unsolicited notes, articles etc for the Newsletter. If these are not forthcoming the Editors must perforce seek them from a relatively small number of potential contributors, and we would prefer that the contents should reflect a wider circle of members.

### WOODSIA ILVENSIS IN THE MOFFAT AREA

The fern Woodsia ilvensis is one of the British rarities specially protected under the terms of the Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act 1975. It is therefore surprising that, until recently, accurate information was lacking as to its present status and ecology, particularly in the more southerly of its two Scottish localities, the Dumfriesshire hills near Moffat. This situation has now been rectified by Mr John Mitchell of the NCC South West Scotland Region

staff, who is the author of a recent report on the subject. \*

The report is divided into four parts - Geographical distribution; Ecological aspects; Past and Present Status in the Moffat Hills; and Conservation in Britain. The world, European and British distribution is discussed in general terms, with appropriate maps. These show W. ilvensis to be a fern of the North Temperate zone, confined to the Arctic and mountainous regions, extending as far south as the Carpathians in Europe and the Appalachians in North America. In Britain the fern has been reliably reported from seven vice-counties, but from only four of these, Caernarvon, Cumberland, Dumfries and Angus, has it been confirmed as still extant in 1977.

There is ample well-documented evidence testifying to the fact that Moffatdale was the headquarters of this rare fern in Britain. It occurred in a number of separate stations, in some apparently in considerable numbers. Mr Mitchell has meticulously researched and documented the considerable volume of published information in the history of Woodsia in the Moffat Hills. In 1848 W. Stevens described 'dense tufts' in 'considerable abundance' and 'many of the fronds measuring nearly six inches in length'. By the end of the nineteenth century however, due to the deprivations of collectors fired with enthusiasm for the Victorian 'fern craze' and the acquisition of specimens of the rarity, this, the most famous plant of the Moffat Hills, had been reduced to the verge of extinction. At least two collectors, in 1802 and 1909, believed their preserved specimens had been taken from the sole remaining plant!

The years 1910 to 1954 appear to be devoid of information regarding the status of the Moffat Woodsia, but in the latter year Dr D.A. Ratcliffe while exploring the local hills found 'about 25 separate tufts' growing 'at a moderate elevation', and in 1972, during an excursion of the British Pterological Society, Mr M. Rickard found a

\* 'A report<sup>†</sup> on the past and present status of Woodsia ilvensis in the Moffat Hills (with ecological notes)' For the NCC S.W. Scotland Region. 1979.

further six plants in two tufts at another locality. At the present time these remain the only two sites.

In 1977 and 1978 Mr Mitchell undertook very detailed investigations into the Woodsia colonies in the Moffat Hills. Among the data recorded were - total number of tufts and estimated number of separate plants, total number of fronds, length of largest frond, altitude and aspect of site, rock type, and list of the most frequently associated species. At the site reported by Ratcliffe only 13 tufts were counted. The number of fronds per tuft ranged from 2 to 29, and frond lengths were from  $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 4". The second site held only three plants in two tufts with a total of 13 fronds the length of which ranged from 1" to  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ". Neither of the sites, one a cliff of particularly treacherous, friable shales, and the other an area of hard Silurian Grit, was at all basic in nature, unlike the habitats favoured by the other British Woodsia, W. alpina. This feature was emphasised by the associated plant species, mostly mosses of the genera Polytrichum, Andreaea and Racomitrium. The small size of the plants (fronds of 6" or even 7" in length have been reported by some observers) is attributed to the effect of prolonged spells of dry weather, either during the preceding summer or the current growing season. Such adverse conditions, the writer suggests, may be an important factor in bringing about serious reduction or even local extinction of such small and isolated remnant populations.

The section on the history of Woodsia- hunting in Moffat-dale makes interesting if rather depressing reading. The opening up of Moffat as a popular spa resort was accelerated by the coming of the railway (to Beattock) in 1848. It was the height of the era of Victorian 'fossil-ferns fever', and the prospect of obtaining specimens of one of our rarest ferns from a locality in which it apparently occurred in relative abundance proved such an attraction to private collectors and nurserymen alike that, by the end of the century, the Woodsia was reduced to the very brink of extinction in the district. Indeed, in one well-known locality, the Devil's Beef Tub just north of the town, the fern was entirely rooted out by

collectors. The assertion in G. Scott Elliot's 'Flora of Dumfriesshire' that the visits of the Innerleithan Alpine Club were in the main responsible for the depredation is probably unjustified. There is no doubt that it was over-publicity of the occurrence of the Woodsia at Moffat that led to its near demise.

Also of considerable interest are some of the techniques found valuable, and indeed necessary, by the author in the accurate documenting of the Moffat Woodsia sites. At one site, due to the unstable and dangerous state of the rock, the only safe method of examination of the plants was by use of a rope anchored at the cliff top, and the enlisting of the help of an experienced rock-climbing friend. For record purposes it was found useful to use a Polaroid-type camera, the precise location of each Woodsia tuft being marked on the prints produced while still at the site.

Note The above report is not available for general distribution, but a copy has been deposited in the library of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, and may be consulted there.

#### ULEX GALLII IN THE FAR NORTH OF SCOTLAND E.R. BULLARD

It has been suggested that Ulex was deliberately introduced in the past into the north of Scotland. Stone crushers for rendering it suitable for cattle feeding have been known. On the other hand, there are records of several introductions, for ornamental or agricultural use, of plants which were almost certainly native. Ulex europaeus is common in Caithness, less so in the north of Sutherland and in Orkney. It seems to flower always in late winter and in spring.

The first published record of Ulex gallii for Caithness was of a colony found by myself at the Hill of Mid Clyth in October 1974. Mr J.K. Butler found further plants the same year near Rangag, and during the following year I found very small colonies by roadsides at Syre and Hope in West Sutherland. The only previous record from the latter vice-county appears to be from Lochinver on the west coast (Wilmott & Campbell, 1944). At the time,

correspondence between myself and colleagues in Caithness shows that I had a distinct feeling of having seen U. gallii elsewhere in Caithness, perhaps many years earlier, and that it had not 'registered'.

Ulex gallii has also been reported from East Sutherland. In 1963 Miss M. McCallum Webster recorded it from the roadside between Forsinard and Kinbrace, and Allan Stirling informs me that there is a specimen, apparently from the same locality, in the herbarium of the late J.H. Penson of Glasgow, collected in October 1967.

On my way south to the BSBI meeting in Edinburgh in late October 1979 I spent two days in Caithness with the MCC Assistant Regional Officer, Dr T. Keatinge. Visiting a hill near Thurso we discovered another small colony of U. gallii in full bloom, and on the second day, driving on the A9, we saw large areas between Latheron and Thrumster on either side of the road, also flowering profusely. With binoculars we could make out further bright splashes of colour on the Ulbster and Yarrow hills. All the plants which we examined closely, with one exception, were undoubtedly U. gallii. The exception, just coming into flower, although the rest were fading, was a possible hybrid with U. europaeus. Dr Keatinge has since found further sites in Caithness and East Sutherland. My subsequent journey to Edinburgh took me by a roundabout route through Inverness, Fort William, Arisaig and Glasgow, but I did not see any further Ulex gallii.

The point of the story is the ease with which large areas of a very conspicuous plant can be overlooked. I had in fact walked over almost all the sites in previous years. The original discovery at Mid Clyth had actually been sparked off by an attempt to confirm an old Caithness record for Ulex minor.

#### CIRSIUM X WANKELII IN ARGYLL, V.C.98

A.G. KENNEDY

Plants apparently referable to this hybrid occur on the roadside between Tyndrum and Bridge of Orchy. These grow in large colonies and are distinguishable from C. heterophyllum by their narrow leaves and many flower heads.

All the plants have leaves with the pure white lower surface of C. heterophyllum, and about half have the foliage acutely lobed or even lacerate.

The total hybrid population is about 600 plants. They seem divisible into two forms - with lobed leaves, and with entire leaves. Could the latter represent back-crossing with C. heterophyllum? Or indeed is C. x wankelii fertile and in part regressing to C. heterophyllum?

Typical C. heterophyllum and C. palustre both occur in the area in which the putative hybrid populations have been noted. There are at least three hybrid colonies, the stems of which can form a very dense stand. Presumably each stem represents a separate plant. Further observation on these plants is desirable.

(A fine population of this hybrid thistle can be seen near the east entrance to Kindrogan Field Centre, East Perthshire. In 'Hybridisation and the Flora of the British Isles' C.A. Stace cites six Scottish vice-counties from which this hybrid has been reported. Argyll is not among these, and Mr Kenneth's record may therefore be new for v.c.98. Eds.)

#### DISCOVERY OF SCHOENUS FERRUGINEUS AS A NATIVE BRITISH PLANT

Two, presumably native, localities of this species, believed extinct in Britain, were discovered in summer 1979 in Perthshire by Dr R.A.H. Smith MCC, who has prepared a fuller account to appear in Watsonia.

#### ROSA ARVENSIS IN SCOTLAND

Mrs O.M. Stewart, 14 Church Hill, Edinburgh, EH10 4BQ, would like to hear from members with experience of Rosa arvensis in Scotland. As its distribution map shows, the species is rare here, and it is doubtfully native in some if not all cases. Mrs Stewart's own experience has been that some material thought to be R. arvensis has proved to be hybrid in origin with R. canina as the other parent. It may be that all Scottish records should be reappraised in the light of this experience.

THE YEAR OF THE DANDELION (WITH CRITICAL COMMENTS ON  
CRITICAL GROUPS G.H. BALLANTYNE

The main title is not an original definition but that of the writer of Nature Notes in The Guardian of 22nd June 1979. I had to concur - dandelions had been a very fine show during the spring and early summer, by roads and railways, on waste ground, almost everywhere. Of course I was somewhat biased in my agreement. Although I had done a little dandelion-ing in the mid-1970's, I knew them little; so off I went on 6th May to attend John Richards' one day Taraxacum outing at Eyemouth. Because of the late season, not to mention the day's weather which had a touch of almost everything possible, we didn't see much variety, but I did come across one specimen which was declared T. piceatum, new to Scotland.

This sent me off on a hunt at home in Fife during the rest of May, and I was delighted to find piceatum in at least two localities, while I was also pleased to learn, when Dr Richards returned my specimens, that he considered that there might be a species new to the British Isles among them. My success rate in identifying however was only moderate - some species are so alike, with only small differences, that it is not easy to decide from written descriptions (Richard Pankhurst's polyclave arrived too late to try it out). In particular, the hamatum group proved difficult, not helped by recent revision which has added several new taxa; in fact the polyclave has a total of 180 species - 50 or so more than the first list of 1972 (Watsonia Supplement). I did manage to put up the total for v.c.85 to about 40, although this is probably only about half the possible number.

Of course this raises the old question of whether it is worth splitting the critical genera into hundreds of species. My own feeling is that it would be better to reduce them to groups, the taxa within each having the same general characteristics. In the case of Taraxacum it is usually easy to tell if a plant belongs to Section Erythrosperma, Spectabilia or Vulgaria, and it should be possible to divide the last, large Section into a few sub-groups which, with a bit of practice, could be differentiated. The same applies to Rubus and Hieracium,

both of which could profitably be decreased in Britain to less than a tenth of the described species. A start of sorts has been made in Flora Europaea, which reduces the number by employing 'circle species' or series of groups. In time, when current important research has been completed, we may see something along these lines adopted in both standard and local floras. It would certainly benefit v.c. recorders!

This is not to say I do not enjoy discovering 'new' taxa on my own patch - I do, but really, is the time and effort worth it? Think of how much more recording of the normal flora could be carried out if dandelions, brambles and hawkweeds had only behaved themselves in their reproduction habits!

THE FLORA OF KINTYRE. M.H. CUNNINGHAM & A.G. KENNETH.  
Pp 89. E.P. Publishing Ltd, Wakefield, West Yorkshire.  
Price £10.50.

A short introduction describes the topography, geology, soils and climate. The vice-county is in reality a peninsular with west coast lochs and islands extending south from the Crinan Canal. The area is essentially acidic and hilly, but there are limestone cliffs near the Mull of Kintyre, and in the north-west of the vice-county there is hill limestone and some lowland outcrops.

Localities are given for the less common species while for the common ones the 10 km square has been adopted as the basic unit. The vast majority of plants reported have been seen in situ by one or other of the authors.

44 pages are devoted to flowering plants including the hybrids which have been identified. Hieracium and Taraxacum have been dealt with extensively, Rubus satisfactorily, and Rosa in a limited degree. In addition to the plants which might have been anticipated a number of Arctic-alpine species occur. Eight species of Charophytes have been reported and the section on Bryophytes runs to 22 pages.

There is a page on bibliography and an appendix of just over a page listing doubtful taxa. An index of place names and a map are useful additions.

As the publication is aimed at the serious botanist rather than the casual visitor, English names have not been included.

The authors of this check list are enthusiastic field workers who are to be congratulated on the quality of both the content and the production of this hardback volume.

P. MACPHERSON

LIAISON BETWEEN THE BSBI AND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL

A liaison meeting of the Records Committee of the BSBI with the NCC was held in February 1979. Among other items it was decided that the NCC Regional Officers would notify the BSBI of all changes in Assistant Regional Officers and send SSSI schedules direct to BSBI vice-county recorders. In return, the BSBI undertook to give NCC a list of v.c. recorders, areas and up to date changes. It was agreed that NCC observers could be appointed to sit on the Scottish and Welsh Committees.

The aim is to improve liaison and establish confidence between AROs and BSBI Recorders. In particular there should be co-operation for surveys planned, and before survey results were published, to avoid inaccuracies. The v.c. recorders would be asked to take SSSI boundaries into account in their recording and to notify to AROs records from within SSSIs, and rare species from any part of the vice-county.

Dr R.A.H. Smith has been appointed as NCC observer to the Committee for Scotland. A list giving the names and addresses of the Scottish AROs has been received, and rather than send details to individual v.c. recorders, it has been decided to publish the information in the Newsletter.

NORTH REGION

ARO	Area of Responsibility	Office Base
Mr I.S. Angus	Sutherland	Oldbank Road, Golspie, Sutherland Tel. 040 83 (Golspie) 602

Dr T.H. Keatinge	Caithness	Oldbank Road, Golspie, Sutherland Tel. 040 83 (Golspie) 602
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Dr N.E. Buxton	Western Isles	* Tighgeal 42 Aird Tong Stornoway Isle of Lewis Tel. 0851 (Stornoway)5308
Miss R.O. Scott	Lochaber	* 8 Glenfern Fassfern Kinlocheil Fort William No telephone at present. Contact through Inverness Office.
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Dr R.J. Keymer Central " " "

Dr R.A.E. Smith Perth & Kinross " " "

Mr C.O. Badenoch Borders " " "

Mr J.M. Nelson Special Duties " " "

\* Works from home address

CALAMAGROSTIS Mrs O.M. Stewart would like to receive material of Calamagrostis thought to be C. canescens from Scottish localities. Examination of such material suggests that plants from some sites may not be canescens but purpurea, a north European species. Specimens, which should include any basal shoots, should be sent to Mrs Stewart at 14 Church Hill, Edinburgh EH10 4BQ.

SPIRAEA SALICIFOLIA GROUP

Several species and hybrids of this group occur more or less naturalised, especially in roadside hedges. Although they are usually referred to as S. salicifolia, this species is apparently rare other than in North Wales. I hope to produce a key to the spicate Spiraea taxa in due course but in the meantime I would be most grateful to received pressed material of any pink or white flowered plant of this aggregate. I shall of course refund postage. Specimens ideally consist of both flowering and immature fruiting spikes plus vegetative shoots in the

leaf shape is variable. Notes on the colour of the fresh flowers is also helpful.

Dr Alan J. Silverside, Department of Biology, Paisley  
College of Technology, Paisley, Renfrewshire PA1 2BE

#### CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

The first issue of this Newsletter, launched last year, was well received and we have been encouraged to the extent of publishing a second number. This gives me the opportunity to remind you that the Society continues to be very active in Scotland. The production of the new Census Catalogue of Vascular Plants is well under way, and the mapping of records from the CSSF Inverness-shire Survey is nearly complete. But these are indoor tasks, and, as another field season arrives, our thoughts turn to outdoor activities. The Society relies on its own members for the arrangement of all its activities, not least the many excursions which are organised each year, and we owe a special gratitude to those members who act as leaders of our field excursions. I sometimes wonder whether members who have never acted as a leader fully realise what work is involved, especially if the meeting is for more than a day. Having agreed to lead an excursion, much time has to be devoted to arranging transport, access, meeting places and times, to the overall planning of the daily programme and whatever research into records etc may be required. The leading of the excursion in the field is never as simple in practice as it might appear, particularly if the party is large, in difficult terrain or poor weather, and when the interests, physical capabilities and botanical expertise of the party are disparate, or when responsibility for safety and conservation are a particular worry. The collection and collation of records, verification of some identifications and the writing of the report are demanding tasks to be done even when the excursion has ended. Other than postage, leaders receive no expenses, need to pay their own transport and accommodation costs and receive no fee. We are indeed much indebted to all those who, notwithstanding, have led our excursions in the past and leaders of future meetings. I believe that all of us who attend these

meetings should be aware of the special duties and responsibilities the leader has voluntarily assumed, and that each of us, as participants, is responsible for the success of field meetings.

As we look forward to the pleasure of the coming summer may I wish everyone, on BSBI meetings and otherwise, many enjoyable days botanising.

Brian S. Brookes

We apologise for the late appearance of this number. We aim to produce No 3 for distribution in the spring of 1981 and would welcome suitable contributions, preferably before the end of December 1980. These may be sent to one of the Editors:-

Dr P. Macpherson  
15 Lubnaig Road  
GLASGOW G43 2RY

A. McG. Stirling  
17 Austen Road  
Jordanhill  
GLASGOW G13 1SJ

FLORA OF UIG (LEWIS). Miss M.S. Campbell.

Copies of this flora (published 1945) have recently been recovered from an Edinburgh saleroom, where they were part of T. Buncle and Co. stock which was being disposed of following the financial collapse of this publishing firm.

The flora is now being offered for sale through the BSBI Committee for Scotland at only £2.50 each (plus 50p postage and packing) on behalf of the author. Please send orders to Dr R. Smith, 84 West Saville Terrace, Edinburgh 9; cheques to be made payable to her.