

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF THE

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Annual General Meeting, Swansea, 1967

Autumn Meeting, Swansea, 1967

Field-meeting Reports, 1967

Annual General Meeting, Gregynog, 1968

Welsh Region Photographic Competition, 1969

Aberystwyth, September, 1969

Minutes of the fifth Annual General Meeting held in the Department

of Botany, University College, Swansea, on 23rd September, 1967.

1. The Minutes of the fourth Annual General Meeting held at U.C.W., Aberystwyth on 24th September, 1966, and circulated to members, were approved.
2. There were no matters arising from these Minutes.
3. Correspondence. Apologies for absence had been received from J.W. Donovan, S.G. Harrison, B.Sc., F.L.S., Dr. W.S. Lacey, and Miss V.J. Macnair. A letter had been received from A.E. Smith of the S.P.N.R. concerning the Welsh Region's suggestion of the formation of a Welsh Conservation Committee which would act as a Watchdog Committee. The suggestion had not been put to the County Naturalists' Trusts Committee, but members would be circulated before the next meeting of the C.N.T.C.
4. Secretary's Report for 1966 - 7. The year had been marked by an intensification of field work due mainly to the urgency of recording botanical interests in Common Land and in sites threatened by reservoirs and other developments. Partly in consequence of these matters and partly because of the increasing significance of County Naturalists' Trusts, there had been more intercommunication and cooperation between the B.S.B.I. and the Trusts.

The Public Inquiry into the Llyn Brienne reservoir proposal dragged on from 13th December until 9th February with two prorogations. The decision of the Minister, expected in April, is still awaited in mid-September.

In Montgomeryshire ten areas, marked down as potential reservoirs, included several of considerable botanical interest. A field meeting, conjoint with the Montgomeryshire Naturalists, was arranged to assess one of these sites threatened with submergence and/or development as a caravan site.

In all, there have been nine field meetings, seven of which were in conjunction with Naturalists' Trusts or local Naturalists' Societies. When conjoint, attendances were roughly in the proportion of one-third B.S.B.I. members to two-thirds Trusts members. Considering relative membership numbers, this is satisfactory.

The overall membership position, however, remains unsatisfactory. Over the year there have been eight gains and five losses, but gains and losses may both be fictional, reflecting nothing more than migration either way across Offa's Dyke. There is no evidence of increasing Welsh membership.

At the first Annual Conference of the C.P.R.W. at Aberystwyth in April a small exhibit was staged.

There have been three issues of the Bulletin. For this, the whole burden of editorship has fallen upon Dr. Savidge, to whom, in these days when leisure and spare time have ceased to exist, we are deeply grateful.

Since the urgencies of registration and conservation have been pressing, work on the 'OO' Survey and the Flora of Wales has, very regrettably, been slowed down temporarily.

5. Chairman's remarks. Dr. J.P.Savidge stated that his four-year term of Office as Chairman of the Regional Committee had come to an end. In its five years of existence the Welsh Region of the B.S.B.I. had achieved a number of things, but there were some projects which had not been proceeded with because of lack of members. The Region should now consider its order of priorities; it was evident that much attention should be devoted to Common Land. The first years had been full of interest; it had also been stimulating to meet members at field meetings and to discuss such matters as critical groups. The support given by Committee members, especially that of the General Secretary and the Field Secretary, had been much appreciated. Dr. Savidge felt sure that the same support would be given to his successor, Mr. T.A.W.Davis.

6. Election of Officers and Committee for 1967 - 8. The following elections were made:

Chairman: T.A.W.Davis, F.L.S.

Vice-Chairman: Dr. W.S.Lacey, F.G.S.

General Secretary: Mrs. I.M.Vaughan, M.B.E., F.L.S.

Field Secretary: Dr. J.P.Savidge

Minutes Secretary: D.Davies

Junior Committee Members: W.Condry, Miss V.J.Macnair, Mrs. D.E.M.Paish, Dr. A.J.E.Smith.

Senior Committee Members: F.C.Best, O.B.E., B.A., D.Davies, J.W.Donovan, S.G.Harrison, B.Sc., F.L.S.

The Regional Representative, Mr. T.A.W.Davis, had another three years to serve.

7. Mrs. Vaughan thanked Dr. Savidge for his unremitting toil during his four years as Chairman.

8. Field Meetings for 1968. The following venues were suggested:

Cwm Sere and Pen y Fan in the Brecon Beacons,

Stackpole Rocks in Pembrokeshire,

Hundred House in Radnorshire, and

Llyn y Fan Fach in Carmarthenshire.

Detailed arrangements of field meetings would be made in the October Committee meeting.

9. The meeting closed at 1745h.

Report of the Welsh Region Autumn Meeting, 1967.

The Autumn Meeting was held in the Department of Botany at the University College of Wales, Swansea, on the 23rd and 24th September. Attendances were 16 at the morning session, 17 in the afternoon, and 12 on the excursion to the Gower.

The theme of the meeting was 'The Plant and its Environment'. Our guest speaker was Dr. Mary Gilham, Staff Tutor in Biological Sciences at the Department of Extra Mural Studies of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, and her subject was the behaviour of maritime plants in different latitudes. She dealt mainly with the differences in plants of southern and northern Britain and showed with splendid slides how at Loch Sunart in the Western Highlands fresh-water species, such as Iris pseudacorus, grow abundantly in the upper-salt marsh and deciduous woodland. Further north arctic alpine species can be found right down to sea-level. The effect of the cooler climate and greater rainfall in high latitudes is also shown in seabird colonies where the vegetation does not differ from that of similar ground not subjected to guano, whereas on the west coast of England and Wales the seabird colonies have a distinct nitrophilous and salt tolerant flora. She spoke briefly on coastal communities in more southern and arid conditions and pointed out that in the southern hemisphere evergreen woodland reaches the seaboard in both tropical and cold temperate regions.

Mr. G.T. Goodman spoke of the plant and its environment under the extremely adverse conditions of land rendered sterile by industrial waste. His talk was an introduction to the excursion which he led in the afternoon to the Lower Swansea Valley where he is involved in the research project which the University College is undertaking to find out how the area can be restored. The waste tips which cover the valley floor are mainly of steel, copper, and zinc wastes. Among them are pools and marshes where drainage water has been ponded by the tips. Other features are derelict works, ruins, tips from which hardcore is extracted, and scrap yards. The Project recommends the use of the area partly for housing, partly for industry, and partly for parkland. Experiments are being carried out by the Project's biological section to find an inexpensive method of neutralising the poisoning effect of wastes of which zinc waste is the most toxic. Various grasses are sown in plots treated with organic matter such as sewage sludge, domestic refuse, and lime. The use of varieties of grass found wild on old mining spoils which have developed inherited tolerance to normally lethal levels of poisonous metals is likely to be the least expensive procedure. A hillock of boulder clay, which had been polluted by former smelter smoke before treatment, now carries a plantation of Japanese Larch and Lodgepole Pine planted in 1962/3 and 1963/4 which is well established. The marshy areas carry flourishing Iris pseudacorus, Equisetum fluviatile and other marsh plants in spite of the fact that the level of toxicity of the water is such that in cultivation the same species would completely fail to grow. On the undisturbed parts of old waste tips a patch of Linaria x sepium was found near colonies of Linaria vulgaris and L. repens.

The evening was spent in judging the photographic competition. There were 98 colour transparencies showing close-ups of plants (Class 1). The first prize was awarded to Dr. W.W. Mapleson for an outstanding study of Ranunculus omiophyllus growing in a roadside ditch at Little Haven, Pembrokeshire. The second prize went to Dr. C.L. Perry for a beautiful picture of

Llanstephen; 3rd June; Leader Mrs. H.R.H. Vaughan

Five members attended the meeting, but there would have been another two but these were unfortunately frustrated by a misunderstanding owing to traffic congestion in Carmarthen which led to a discussion to concentrate on the Llanstephan area and to omit the visit to Dynevor Park. The morning was spent visiting Lacques Farm. Passing down a wooded cwm, which was full of Carex pendula, we came out onto a rock bound shore lying beneath a limestone cliff with an incipient patch of salt-marsh intersected by water from the Cwm.

The steep sides of the cliff carry a more or less calciphilous association of such plants as Rubia perigrina, Picris echioides, Dipsacus fullonum, Ligustrum vulgare, Crithmum maritimum, Rosa rubiginosa, etc. A veil of the moss Cratoneuron commutatum descends the cliff face where it has been petrified above by a spring of calcareous water. Near the gate of Lacques Farm is Rosa pimpinellifolia growing tall in a farm hedge.

From Lacques we passed to the Black Scar area of salt-marsh in the Taf estuary. Here Artemisia graveolens and A. podosum grow in close proximity with Ranunculus sceleratus. Athaea officinalis is occasional in the upper zone but in the lower zone Spartina x townsendii is tending to smother all the small species like thrift and Spergularia spp.

On close turf above the salt-marsh an area of Trifolium micranthum with Trifolium subterraneum was found and at the point of the Scar Limonium binervosum comes in with much Eleocharis uniglumis and Carex distans.

The zone just above the salt-marsh at this point is a meeting plane of acid bog and salt-tolerant species where one finds an unusual association of species such as Ranunculus baudotii, Carex otrubae, C. nigra, C. panicea, Carum verticillatum, Viola palustris, etc.

From Black Scar we proceeded to Moeche Farm where there was a wide stretch of closely grazed salt-marsh. Callitriche stagnalis and C. obtusangula were found in ditches at the upper edge of the salt-marsh and Alopecurus bulbosus occurred in the main salt-marsh sward. Finally we went to a small wood of mixed-deciduous trees, mainly oak, but with a good admixture of beech and holly.

H.R.H.V.

Gt. and Lt. Ormes; 17th June; Leader Morris Morris.

This was a joint meeting with the North Wales Naturalists' Trust. It was attended by 15 members who spent the morning on the slopes of the Great Orme where a good number of plant species was observed. Epipactis atrorubens and Hypochaeris maculata, together with a few plants of Anacamptis pyramidalis, were seen within an area of a few square yards. On the Orme, the Epipactis atrorubens is normally a plant of rock ledges and crevices, but in this particular area it grows in fair quantity in short scrub. Mr. J. Brummitt very kindly showed members a single plant of Neottia nidus-avis which he had discovered growing close to one of the paths within the boundary of the Heulfre Gardens.

After lunch, the party visited the Little Orme, stopping on the way to see Leonurus cardiaca and Erodium maritimum. On the Little Orme, several plants of Sedum forsterianum, Minuartia verna, and Polypodium australe were observed

The final site to be visited was the extensive salt-marsh at Morfa Uchaf, where the dominant species was Juncus maritimus. Brackish pools to the rear contained the water crowfoot Ranunculus baudotii and forms with and without floating leaves were present. Some of these pools were colonized by Ruppia maritima whose insignificant flowers were pointed out. Isolated plants of Apium graveolens grew on the raisedbank at the back of the marsh while, on the seaward edge, a thriving patch of Artemisia maritima was seen on one of the runnel banks. A final stop was made on a sandy track where the part prostrated itself to see a minute colony of Trifolium ornithopoides in its only known county station.

Interesting observations made by members included a colony of Orobanche hederæ, which was parasitic on a ground cover of ivy; the prostrate form of Solanum dulcamara (var. marinum) on the beach; and a single plant of the spasmodic Atriplex lacina L.

R.F.M.

Summary accounts of the meetings to Modras on 8th July and to the Dulus Valley on 2nd September will be found in Proceedings. Details of the Gower excursion on 24th September are given at the end of the Report of the Autumn Meeting in this Bulletin.

Minutes of the Sixth Annual General Meeting held at 5.30p.m. on 28th September, 1968
at Gregynog Hall, Newtown.

1. The Minutes of the 5th Annual General Meeting held at U.C.W., Swansea, on 23rd September, 1967, and circulated to members, were approved.
2. Matters arising from the above Minutes. Concerning Item 3, it was reported that there had been no response from the S.P.N.R. concerning the Welsh Region's suggestion of the formation of a Welsh Conservation Committee.

3. Chairman's Report.

The Welsh Region's suggestion of an inter-regional photographic competition and an inter-regional Bulletin had been rejected. Council appeared to be opposed to the idea of popularising botany. Difficulties had been encountered in obtaining material for the Welsh Region's Bulletin. Members were urged to submit articles (not necessarily scientific papers of a high technical nature) for publication in the Bulletin.

In 1970 the Welsh Region will be entitled to submit a nomination for the Vice-Presidency of the B.S.B.I. The Society had undertaken to produce a standard list of popular English names for plants. It was hoped that the Wild Plant Protection Bill would get a second reading in the next session of Parliament.

The Council for Nature had been reorganised. It was now a Council of representatives of various bodies. Some of the scales of representation were: S.P.N.R. (4); R.S.P.B. (4); Natural History Societies (4); B.S.B.I. (1). The B.S.B.I. is represented on the new National Conservation Liaison Committee by two members. The Region's three secretaries were thanked for their support during the past year.

4. Secretary's Report

a) Conservation We have been concerned with the continual threat to and erosion of habitats. Dr. Savidge has carried out work on the plant communities of the doomed Upper Towy valleys and meetings have been held to assess the relative values of threatened reservoir sites in Montgomeryshire. At an appeal in Brecon for permission to develop the hitherto unspoilt end of Llangorse Lake, two B.S.B.I. members gave botanical evidence of the scientific importance of the lake. The Minister rejected the appeal.

b) Membership This is fairly static. We have had six resignations and two new members, together with four members transferring their homes from England to Wales.

c) County Recorder Mr. Michael Porter of Christ College, Brecon, has been appointed Recorder for Brecon.

d) Common Land A ruling was obtained from the Minister through the Council for Nature that to avoid confusion, scientific interest should not be recorded until the legal registration had been effected and boundaries defined. The Minister will then consult with the interests concerned as to information to be recorded.

e) C.P.R.W. At the Annual Conference of the C.P.R.W. at Aberystwyth in March the Welsh Region put on an excellent exhibition including photographs generously loaned, distribution maps, living material, and a very effective poster by Fr. Francis Harpin.