

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF THE BRITISH ISLES

WELSH BULLETIN

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Stachys alpina del. H. M. Reynolds 1981

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EDITORIAL

Our grateful thanks are due to the contributors who sent in articles for this issue.

It is with sadness that we report the loss of T.A. Warren Davis, one of the stalwarts of the B.S.B.I. in Wales. He is indeed sadly missed.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1980

Report by Hon. Secretary.

The 18th A.G.M. of the B.S.B.I. Wales was held at Cartrefle College, Wrexham, on September 13th, 1980.

In the morning a party of about twenty members visited the University of Liverpool Botanic Gardens, Ness, where they were shown around by Mr. Hugh McAllister and Mr. David Parker. All agreed that the visit was a very enjoyable experience and the two guides were warmly thanked.

A short meeting of the B.S.B.I. Committee for Wales was held at 2.30 p.m. and the formal part of the A.G.M. commenced at 3.0 p.m.

The Chairman, Mr. Goronwy Wynne, opened the proceedings by reporting the death of Mr. T.A.W. Davis, mentioning the many contributions he had made to the Society and to botany in Wales. He would be greatly missed by all. The members then stood in silent tribute.

The Chairman warmly welcomed those attending the meeting, making particular mention of the President of the B.S.B.I., Mr. R.W. David, and the Hon. General Secretary, Mrs. Mary Briggs, who both briefly addressed the meeting. Attention was drawn to the Welsh Language Poster depicting a Primrose and the artist Margaret Todd was warmly thanked for her help. The election of Officers and Committee Members then took place. Five members resigned from the Committee and four indicated their willingness to stand for re-election, Mr. S.B. Evans, Mrs. J.A. Green, Dr. Q.O.N. Kay and Mrs. M.E.R. Perry. Mr. M. Morris did not wish to stand again because of ill-health, and was warmly thanked for his contribution to the Society during his years as Committee member. There was, therefore, one vacancy on the Committee, but as no nominations were forthcoming from the meeting, the Committee were authorized to co-opt a member to make up the number. The four nominees were then duly elected to serve on the Committee for a period of two years. Mr. R.G. Ellis was nominated for re-election to the post of Secretary and was duly elected. Mr. S.B. Evans was nominated to replace Mr. T.A.W. Davis as vice-county recorder for Pembrokeshire, his name to go forward to the Records Committee for ratification.

The Hon. Secretary, Mr. R.G. Ellis, then gave his report on the activities of last year. He pointed out that, before his death, Mr. T.A.W. Davis had been made an Honorary Member of the B.S.B.I. together with Mrs. I.M. Vaughan. The composition of the Committee for Wales had remained unchanged during the year although there was now one vacancy. The Flower Colour Polymorphism Survey had been launched and Dr. Kay was thanked for having organised it. Members were urged to support the survey by filling in some of the forms. The Secretary then reported that the recent publicity drive, coupled with the new Welsh Language Conservation Poster, had resulted in 26 new Welsh members joining the Society. Eight existing members had moved to Wales making a total of 34 new members in 1979-80.

Three field meetings were held in 1979 after the A.G.M. and six in 1980. The Secretary, on behalf of the members, thanked all the Leaders for the work they had put into making these meetings successful - Dr. M.E. Gillham, Mr. M. Porter, Mr. J.M. Brummitt, Mr. R.H. Roberts, Mr. D. Davies, Mr. T.G. Evans, Mr. S.B. Evans, Mr. T. Ellis-Williams (replacing Mr. M. Morris) and Mr. R. Woods. He then drew attention to the field meeting to be held the following day in various parts of Flintshire under the guidance of Mr. G. Wynne.

The Secretary thanked both Editors of the 'Welsh Bulletin' for the issues they had produced and drew attention to the fact that 'Welsh Plant Records' now appear in the 'Bulletin' and not in 'Nature in Wales'. He also mentioned the perennial problem of lack of contributions: unless more contributions were forthcoming it would not be possible to continue publishing two issues a year. He urged members to submit something for publication, not necessarily a lengthy taxonomic article, but anything botanical. Examples of the type of thing required could be found in any issue of that excellent publication 'B.S.B.I. News'. The 'Bulletin' was now costing something in the region of £50 per issue and it might have to be limited to just one issue a year.

The Secretary, on behalf of the Society, then thanked the Officers of Cartrefle College for allowing the use of their rooms, and Mr. G. Wynne for making the arrangements. He also drew members' attention to the fact that on September 12 and 13, 1981, the B.S.B.I. Recorders Conference would be held at Cartrefle College.

He concluded his report by inviting members to attend the exhibition and discussion which would be held that evening at 8.0 p.m.

Under 'Any Other Business', the problem of children making collections of wild flowers for competitions at local flower shows was discussed. It was generally agreed that it would be a shame to forbid collecting altogether, but large collections or the collection of rare plants should be discouraged. One suggestion was to confine the competition to the best collection of garden weeds.

The Chairman later returned to the problem of contributions to the 'Welsh Bulletin'. He emphasised that it would be a pity if the Bulletin was forced to cease publication and set the ball rolling by publicly declaring that he would write an article for the Bulletin. Several other members, including our President, then agreed to do the same.

The Chairman next apologised for the change in programme, which was due to the fact that Dr. R.E. Hughes was unable to deliver his scheduled talk on Arctic-alpine species in Snowdonia.

After tea and biscuits, the Chairman introduced Mr. David Parker who gave an extremely interesting and stimulating talk on the cultivation of Saxifraga cespitosa from seeds collected in Cwm Idwal, and the subsequent successful re-introduction of plants to the wild in the same area.

Following the election of Officers and Members, the composition of the Committee for Wales for 1980-1981 is as follows:-

Chairman	Mr. G. Wynne
Vice-Chairman	Mr. M. Porter
Secretary	Mr. R.G. Ellis

Committee Members :

Mr. N.H. Brown *	Dr. Q.O.N. Kay
Mr. S.B. Evans	Mrs. M.E.R. Perry
Mrs. J.A. Green	Mr. R.D. Pryce *
Dr. R.E. Hughes *	Mr. R.G. Woods *

One vacancy.

* Retiring Member

The field meeting on Sunday consisted of visits by small parties to one or more 'tetrads' and recording the plants found for the proposed 'Flora of Flints.'. Mr. G. Wynne gave each group a map of the tetrad and a list of species already recorded (if any). A large number of records were, in this way added to the 'Flora of Flints.' master cards.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1981.

The 19th Annual General Meeting will be held at Trinity College, Carmarthen, Dyfed, on July 11th, 1981.

PROGRAMME

July 11th

- 10.00 a.m. Visit to sites of interest nr Carmarthen
- 1.30 p.m. Meeting of Committee for Wales
- 2.30 p.m. The invisible surface; colour, pattern and structure in petals. by Dr. Q.O.N. Kay.
- 3.30 p.m. A.G.M.
- 4.00 p.m. Tea
- 4.30 p.m. 'An informal look at Carmarthenshire plants' by Mr. R.D. Pryce
- 7.00 p.m. Dinner
- 8.00 p.m. Exhibition and Discussion
Members are invited to bring along a selection of their colour slides or any other interesting botanical exhibits.

July 12th Field meeting at Pembrey Burrows.

Accommodation is available at Trinity College at approx. £8 per night, including meals. All B.S.B.I. members and their guests are welcome. Further details can be obtained from the Secretary to the Committee for Wales - Mr. R.G. Ellis, Dept. of Botany, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, CF1 3NP. Please apply before June 1st, 1981.

Nominations for membership of the Committee for Wales, or for the post of Hon. Secretary, should be made in writing, with the signature of the nominee, before the end of May, to the Hon. Secretary at the above address.

FIELD MEETINGS, 1981

SUNDAY, 28th June, LLYN LLYGAD RHEIDOL, DYFED (v.c. 46)

Leader : A.O. Chater.

The meeting will explore the cliffs above the lake in this remote corner of Cardiganshire.

Applications before 28th May, please.

SATURDAY, 4th July, LOWER CLWYD VALLEY, nr LLYSFASI, CLWYD (v.c. 50)

Leader : J.M. Brummitt.

This meeting will explore low wet land and limestone ridges and will check an old record for Stachys germanica.

Applications before 4th June, please.

SUNDAY, 12th July, PEMBREY BURROWS, DYFED (v.c. 44)
(In conjunction with the B.S.B.I. Wales, A.G.M. in Carmarthen, Saturday 11th July).

Leader : R.D. Pryce.

Visit to an extensive dune system and marsh.

Applications before 12th June, please.

SUNDAY, 19th July, CRYMLYN FEN & DUNES, GLAMORGAN (v.c. 41)

Leader : Q.O.N. Kay.

This meeting will explore the very rich flora of this classic site.

Applications before 19th June, please.

SATURDAY, 22nd August, LLANYMYNECH ROCKS, POWYS (v.c. 47)

Leader : Miss D. Pugh.

This meeting will look at the rich flora of this Limestone outcrop.

Applications before 22nd July, please.

SUNDAY, 6th September, CRAIG-Y-LLYN, GLAMORGAN (v.c. 41)

Leader : R.G. Ellis

This meeting will explore the cliffs above the twin lakes of Craig-y-Llyn (very strenuous, numbers limited to 12).

Applications before 6th August, please.

A Welsh rarity refound

R.W. David.

Sedges have a reputation for being dull and difficult. I deny both charges, and certainly a sedge can provide a thrill as great as any.

One section of *Carex* that people have found puzzling is that of the Prickly Sedges (*Carex muricata* L. aggregate). In fact it is only their names that are muddling, for the plants were very tidily sorted out by Ernest Nelmes in a paper, Two critical groups of British sedges, which appeared in the 1945 Report of the Botanical Exchange Club (published 1947) but which seems to have passed unread. Nelmes established that the sedge named *C. muricata* by Linnaeus was a strongly calcicole species of northern and eastern Europe, its place in the west and south being taken by a calcifuge ally generally known as *C. pairaei*. It is the latter that is fairly common in Britain; but in going through the herbaria of Kew and Oxford, Nelmes found specimens from four British localities that were clearly the true *C. muricata*, i.e. the northern and eastern species. One of these localities was in Gloucestershire, where the plant was refound by Mrs. Mack in 1973; a second was in south-west Yorkshire, where the sedge has probably been exterminated by the trappings of visitors, yet has lately been discovered in another place not 15 miles from the original one. A third locality was Lauder in Berwickshire, where the search has been fruitless.

The fourth of Nelmes' localities was near Wrexham: "on top of a limestone hill, 1840, J.E. Bowman". Here the superabundance of limestone hills was daunting, though I twice searched the (rather dull) Creigiau Eglwyseg without result. Then, in autumn 1978, Alan Newton told me, casually, that while botanising near Minera the previous year he had noticed a *muricata* sedge growing in limestone scree; was I interested?

I pressed Alan for details; and the following summer set off for the area, armed with a sketch-map which Alan had drawn for me, but which did not seem to bear much resemblance to the actual ground. I then enlisted a local botanist, Maurice Bunn, who had been with Alan on the day he saw the sedge and who generously offered to act as my guide. We found the patch of Lily-of-the Valley that was Alan's first 'marker', but there was no sign of the sedge. So back to Alan; and this time I insisted on a personally conducted tour.

On 14 June, 1980, Alan and I went together to Minera, on a day of pouring rain. It was at once apparent why Maurice Bunn and I had been unsuccessful: on the day of his discovery Alan had wandered away from the main party along a path higher up the hill than the one that we had explored. We searched and searched this higher path, but in vain. Tired, frustrated, and very wet, we decided to call it a day. Before leaving the ground I stepped into a little copse in order just (as the Elizabethans phrased it) "to look upon the hedge"; and there, five yards away, was a patch that, even at that distance, was instantly recognisable not only as a muricata sedge but as the sedge. There were indeed fifteen plants of it in a compact group, growing in loose earth and limestone scree in the light shade of hazel scrub.

Alan Newton thought that he had originally seen more than one colony, though we did not find a second. Since our discovery I have come across a herbarium specimen that may give a lead to another Welsh station for this rarity. I cannot believe that it is not elsewhere, and I beg anyone botanising in limestone country to keep a look-out for it (its distinguishing features are given on page 335 of Watsonia 12, which describes the finding of the Yorkshire colony) and let me know at once if any "possible" turns up.

Stachys alpina L. in Denbighshire.

J.M. Brummitt.

One of Denbighshire's few rare species is Stachys alpina L. It is a plant which likes partial shade with little competition, growing in open woodland, such as coppices, and along the edges of woods. Perhaps as a result of changes in woodland management it is now very uncommon in Britain. The 'Atlas of the British Flora' shows that it has been recorded in only two 10-km squares. One of these is in Gloucestershire where the Gloucester Nature Conservation has a reserve to protect the species. The other is in Denbighshire, over a hundred miles from the Gloucestershire site.

Stachys alpina was first recorded in Denbighshire in 1927 by Albert Wilson, who lived at Rowen near Conwy. Few details of his discovery are known. Tradition has it that he was returning to North Wales by car, when he stopped at the roadside for a picnic and to his surprise saw a clump of S. alpina nearby. His herbarium specimens in the National Museum of Wales and the University of Bristol support his find, but unfortunately the label on these sheets give the locality only as 'near Cerrigydrudion', and there is now considerable doubt as to the whereabouts of the site.

There are some clues to it. In a letter accompanying one of his specimens Wilson wrote, 'The Stachys was growing partly in the shade... The habitat is a steep bank (on limestone), wooded at the top. The plants growing with it, or close to it, were Agrimonia odorata, Stachys sylvatica, Origanum vulgare and Urtica dioica. There are no houses near, and there seems no reason to doubt that the plant is indigenous. It is not confined to one spot, but occurs in three or more, in nice quantity.' There is no limestone close to Cerrigydrudion, but there is an outcrop of basic strata in the shales to the south-east, where Agrimony, Marjoram and the other plants grow.

Miss L.W. Frost, of New Milton, has given other helpful information. In 1946 she saw the plant flourishing in Wilson's garden, and was given directions by him for seeing it near Cerrigydrudion. She remembers Wilson saying, 'Of course the roadmen cut everything down and it is swept up and thrown over the wall into the river below.' After going to the area a number of times she found the plant and after that saw it on several occasions, the last being on 6th July 1954. In 1974 she made a map of the locality as she remembered it. Her memories make it very probable that the site was on the A5 road four miles south-east of Cerrigydrudion, where the road winds through the wooded gorge cut into the shales by the Afon Ceirw. An interesting point is that this is an area where base-rich strata are exposed.

I have not heard of anyone seeing the plant in that area since Miss Frost did in 1954. In spite of repeated searches over a number of years it has not been re-found. The A5 was widened there and its banks cut back at some time around 1960, and the stretch shown on Miss Frost's map was severely affected. It may well be that S. alpina is extinct there.

There is now another locality in the county for the species, ten miles to the north-west near Ruthin. In late 1973 Bruce Ing wrote to the Nature Conservancy's officer in Clwyd, to say that he had seen two plants of Stachys alpina growing in a small wood on limestone there. It was not until August, 1975, that David Wright, then the N.C.'s Assistant Regional Officer in Clwyd, and I saw it there. We had spent a morning searching the area near Cerrig-y-druidion without success, and then decided to go on to look at the plants near Ruthin. We had no difficulty in finding them. They were growing in rather open conditions where an old track runs through the wood, on just the right sort of habitat. The two plants were close together and had several spikes of flowers. They were quite distinctive and unlike the more common woundworts, but we took a leaf and one flower spike, and sent them to Dr. R.M. Harley at Kew, who confirmed the identification.

This occurrence at a new site was made more remarkable by the existence of another record made sixty-seven years earlier. In his 'Notes on the Flora of Denbighshire', of 1911, A.A. Dallman wrote that another rare species of Stachys, S. germanica L., had been found in 1908 by W. Hodge in Eyarth Woods and identified by Dr. W.B. Russell. S. germanica is almost as rare as S. alpina in Britain, being found in the past no closer than the counties of Oxford, Lincoln and Northampton. Eyarth Woods are close to the new S. alpina site, no more than a half-mile away on the other side of the Afon Clwyd. The chance of two such rare plants growing so close together must be rather low, and this suggests the possibility that Dr. Russell really saw S. alpina. Perhaps S. alpina has been growing in the area for many years. However, a search of Eyarth Woods failed to find either it or S. germanica there in 1975.

Later in 1975 David Wright and I returned to the plants, which were then fruiting well, and collected thirty 'seeds'. These were planted in a leaf-mould-rich compost, and exposed to the weather throughout the winter. Within a week at the end of February, thirteen germinated. They grew well in pots during the spring and summer, producing small, compact plants branching freely from the base. They did not flower in their first year. In March, 1977, we took these plants to the wood near Ruthin. There was no sign of either of the parent plants, but we planted out eleven of the young ones in the area where they had grown. This transplanting operation seemed to have been successful because in early September, 1977, David Wright noted that eight of the plants were flowering well. I did not see the wood again until the summer of 1978, and then had difficulty in finding any trace of the plants. The area where they had been planted was covered to a depth of two or more feet by a dense growth of brambles and other plants. A lengthy and careful search brought just two plants to light. I have not been there since, nor have I heard that anyone has seen S. alpina there in the last two years.

It seems that S. alpina is an easy plant to grow, at least in a pot. The plants which grow in my garden flower freely and set seed well. I have new generations of seedlings from them, and in fact it has shown signs of becoming a weed. In the wild, though, it may be more difficult to maintain. It is likely that it is intolerant of competition, and it may require some help in the form of the removal of overgrowing bushes and brambles if it is to persist for a long period. With the experience we have gained, a further re-introduction should be more successful.

This brief history of the species in Denbighshire raises several questions and issues. It would be most satisfactory if the gaps in this account could be filled in, so I shall be very pleased to hear from anyone who can correct, expand or up-date this account of S. alpina in Denbighshire.

B.S.B.I. Field Meeting at Llyn y Fan Fach

21st June, 1980.

David Davies

Six members attended this meeting. We met at the filter beds and followed the track up to the lake. The Welsh Water Authority were carrying out road works on the track which had been severely damaged by floods during the immediate post-Christmas period 1979. After arriving at the lake, which was exceptionally low and with a wide margin of mud, we headed west, skirting its margin until we arrived at the cliffs which dominate the lake on its southern side. These Old Red Sandstone cliffs, with their northern aspect, rise 500 ft. above the waters of the lake and are of botanical interest; on their ledges are found arctic-alpine species here nearing their southernmost limit of distribution in Britain.

We climbed the cliff face as high as was possible within the bounds of safety (the rock is crumbly and notoriously treacherous) and recorded the following plants :

Asplenium viride	Cystopteris fragilis	Phegopteris connectilis
Blechnum spicant	Dryopteris pseudo-mas	Pteridium aquilinum
	D. filix-mas	
Alchemilla sp.	Angelica sylvestris	Campanula rotundifolia
Calluna vulgaris	Deschampsia cespitosa	Chamaenerion augustifolium
Carex demissa	D. flexuosa	Chrysanthemum leucanthemum
C. pulicaris	Digitalis purpurea	Oxalis acetosella
Festuca ovina	Geranium robertianum	Pinguicula vulgaris
F. rubra	Luzula sylvatica	Sanguisorba officinalis
Galium boreale	Pimpinella saxifraga	Saxifraga hypnoides
Geum rivale	Rubus saxatilis	Solidago virgaurea
Hieracium spp.	Sedum forsterianum	Sorbus aucuparia
Orchis mascula	S. rosea	Succisa pratensis
Primula veris	Thymus drucei	Thalictrum minus
Silene dioica	Vaccinium myrtillus	Viola riviniana
S. maritima	V. vitis-idaea	Galium saxatile

After traversing the cliff face we made our way to the summit along a gully. A moss found in the gully was identified by Mr. Ray Woods, and later confirmed by him, as Polytrichum alpinum. A search of the cliff ledges near the summit failed to reveal Salix herbacea at a site where it is known to exist.

OBITUARY : T.A. WARREN DAVIS

Thumbing through the back numbers of this bulletin you soon find that one of the most frequently recurring names is that of T.A.W. Davis who died on 27 July, 1980, aged 81, in the parish where he was born - St. Ishmael's, Pembrokeshire. Indeed he may well have held the record for the number of our committees and field meetings attended, jobs undertaken and field notes sent in. When we remember that he was just as involved with giving his services to the West Wales Naturalists' Trust and other good causes, we can fairly say that few have put their years of retirement to fuller use. Though far from robust in health he was one of those wiry individuals who press doggedly on all day: he showed no fatigue even after many long hours in the field, nor when his night's sleep had been severely curtailed by having to observe the moths. During his working life his great love was the trees, plants and birds of British Guiana where he was forest officer between the wars. In his retirement his dominant interest was the natural history of Wales.

Yet though expert in many fields - birds, mammals, insects and so on - his dominant interest was botany and this led to the production of his excellent Plants of Pembrokeshire in 1970. This list, however, was only an interim report, a spin-off from immense work done for the B.S.B.I. Atlas of 1962. It was offered as a prelude to a full county Flora, which he then reckoned would appear "about 1974". Alas for human hopes. By spring 1980 he was still saying he needed another couple of years. This greater project was clearly a victim of two circumstances : first, his perfectionism; and second, his ever-growing devotion to conservation (he gave unstinted service to W.W.N.T. and N.C.C., surveying possible reserves and S.S.S.I.'s). With his death a most lovable and valuable man passes from among us. We owe it to him to make sure that the Flora of his beloved county will be completed by others and published as soon as possible.

William Condry.