

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF THE BRITISH ISLES

# WELSH REGION BULLETIN

*Editor:* S. G. Harrison, B.Sc., F.L.S.

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No. 20

JANUARY, 1974

Price: 5p

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*Contents*

Editorial	...	1
Annual General Meeting, Llandrindod Wells, 1973	...	2
Annual General Meeting 1974	...	5
Programme of Field Meetings 1974	...	5
A Molinia Meadow	...	6
Biological Recording Field Meetings in Wales	...	8

*Cardiff, January, 1974*

## EDITORIAL

The uncertainty of the transport situation, and particularly the possibility that petrol rationing may have to be introduced, makes our programme of field meetings seem a little optimistic. Let us hope that this optimism proves to be justified.

Members may like to know that the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, is planning an exhibition on Flowers of Europe to be open from 23rd March to 30th June. It will consist of colour photographs taken by Desmond and Marjorie Parish, who will give a public lecture on the subject in the Reardon-Smith Lecture Theatre at 6.30 p.m. on Friday, 22nd March. Similar but smaller exhibitions of these photographs have been staged at the British Museum (Natural History) and by Kodak.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, 1973.

SECRETARY'S REPORT.

On July 14th 1973 the Eleventh Annual General Meeting of the Welsh Region was held at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells.

As our Chairman Dr. W.S. Lacey was to be in the U.S.A. for considerable periods during 1973 and 1974, he had regretfully resigned both as Chairman and Representative on Council. The members were therefore welcomed by the Vice-Chairman, Mr. T.A.W. Davis. Tribute was made to Dr. Lacey for his immense contribution to B.S.B.I. in Wales. Dr. Lacey had been the first Chairman of the Welsh Region and actively involved with the Welsh Region Committee ever since its inception. The members of Welsh Region who were present requested that the Secretary wrote a letter to Dr. Lacey expressing their thanks.

Reviewing events in the Welsh Region during the past year, the Secretary mentioned the successful two-day field meeting held in Denbighshire and Flintshire on June 23rd and 24th 1973 and thanks were expressed to the leaders Messrs J.M. Brummitt and Goronwy Wynne.

Mrs. Vaughan and Mrs. Faish were thanked for their production of the very effective B.S.B.I. Exhibit on Welsh Lakes and Rivers at the C.P.R.W. Conference in April, 1973.

We are also grateful to the Editors of Welsh Region Bulletins Nos. 18 & 19, Mr. Harrison and Mrs. Vaughan respectively. As usual they would greatly appreciate articles for inclusion in future issues.

Membership of the Welsh Region remained at about the same level and it was hoped that members would try to interest others in the activities of the Society.

The election of officers for 1973-74 then took place.

Chairman : Mr. S.G. Harrison.  
Vice-Chairman : Mrs. D.E.M. Paish.  
Secretary : Mr. M. Porter (re-elected)  
Minutes Secretary : Mr. M.E. Massey (re-elected)

The following, retiring Senior Committee members were re-elected: Mr. T.A.W. Davis, Miss V.J. Macnair, Mrs. I.M. Vaughan, In addition Mr. G. Wynne and Dr. J.G. Duckett were elected:

The Welsh Region Committee for 1973-74 consists therefore of the officers given above, plus the following:

Senior Committee Members : Dr. J.G. Duckett.  
Mr. S.B. Evans.  
Mrs. H.E.R. Perry.  
Dr. J.P. Savidge.

Junior Committee Members : Mr. T.A.W. Davis.  
Miss V.J. Macnair.  
Mrs. I.M. Vaughan.  
Mr. G. Wynne.

The following representatives of the Committee were also elected:

Council : Mr. S.G. Harrison.  
Conservation Committee: Mr. S.B. Evans.  
Records Committee : Mr. T.A.W. Davis

This concluded the formal business of the A.G.M.

There followed a most interesting illustrated lecture about the vegetation and development of the Llyn, a mire near Newbridge in the Wye valley, and the research conducted there in recent years, by Mr. P.J. Beckett of the University College of Swansea. It is hoped that it will be possible to publish a short account of this talk in a future issue of the Welsh Region Bulletin.

After tea Mr. F.M. Kendrick from the Woolhope Club spoke about another famous botanical site in Radnorshire - Stanner Rocks. With the aid of rock samples and coloured slides he explained the complicated geology of this area which has intrigued many generations of botanists.

Both talks generated a number of interesting questions, some of which were further discussed after dinner. In particular the problems of conserving the delicate ecology of these sites were discussed in greater depth.

A wide range of fascinating specimens had been assembled for the pre-dinner Exhibition, and we are most grateful to all members who brought exhibits and talked about them so informatively. This exchange of information and ideas between members is an aspect of Welsh Region activities which it would be helpful to develop further.

The following day, Sunday July 15th, we visited the Llyn and Stanner Rocks and members saw at first hand some of the Conservation problems. Mr. Beckett piloted us expertly around the fringe of the bog avoiding damage to the very susceptible vegetation. Rough pastures and scrub adjacent to the bog were also investigated with interest.

After lunch we drove to Stanner Rocks and spent some time discussing the problems of grazing and encroaching forestry. Having struggled through the latter, some of the more intrepid members were rewarded by finding Hypericum montanum, Veronica spicata ssp. hybrida and Lychnis viscaria in the precipitous upper regions. In the short time available before a deluge cut short the search, we were unable to refind many of the notable plants of this famous botanical locality. However, we are extremely grateful to Mr. Beckett, Mr. Kendrick and Miss A. Powell for leading these expeditions.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1974.

The 12th A.G.M. (Welsh Region) will be held at Gregynog Hall, Newtown, Montgomeryshire on Saturday, July 13th. As it is also our quadrennial Regional Meeting, a separate notice will be sent out later in the spring giving details of the programme.

There will be special lectures and discussions as well as a field meeting on the following day.

Members who wish to avail themselves of the limited accommodation at Gregynog Hall (including dinner on the evening of the A.G.M.) should apply to the Welsh Region Secretary, before March 1st 1974.

PROGRAMME OF FIELD MEETINGS, 1974.

In addition to the field meeting associated with the 1974 A.G.M., there are the following:

Saturday, 18th and Sunday 19th May, Denbighshire

Saturday 18th May.

Bodnant Gardens, Conway valley.

By kind permission of Lord Aberconway.

A host of unusual plant species growing in a spectacularly effective setting.

Meet at the car park, 11 a.m.

Sunday 19th May.

Bryn Euryn and the Colwyn Bay limestone

Leader : J.M. Brummitt.

Meet : Junction of Tan-y-bryn and Rhos roads  
Colwyn Bay (G.R. 23/834803) 10.30.a.m.

Early booking of hotel accommodation in the Conway/Colwyn Bay area is advisable for this meeting.

Sunday 23rd June, Glamorgan.

Pyrrddin Valley, North of Pont-nedd-fechan

Leaders : R.G. Ellis and A.E. Wade.

Meet : Pont-nedd-fechan SN 900076 by the bridge  
over the stream.

Time : 11.a.m.

Waterproof footwear an advantage. Main objective to examine the interesting and varied flora on both sides of the stream, including Meconopsis cambrica and Crepis palustris.

For further details of any of the field meetings please apply to :

Michael Porter, Ynys Villa, Llangynidr, Crickhowell, Brecs.

#### A MOLINIA MEADOW

I.M. Vaughan.

In July 1973 a brief visit was paid to an area of wet pasture which had been reported to me as being "full of orchids". The orchids were indeed plentiful though all of one species Dactylorhiza maculata ssp. ericetorum, by far the most frequent under these conditions. The grassland, however, proved quite interesting both for what was in it and for what was absent.

The term "Molinia Meadow" is here used in the sense employed by Tansley (1949) following Stapledon (1914) to distinguish an even sward of non-exclusive Molinia dominance from the rough tussocky formation of the true Molinietum which makes little room for associated species to establish themselves. In the agricultural sense of distinction between hay meadow and grazing pasture this piece of grassland was definitely wet pasture not meadow mown for hay,

It lies at about 450 ft. a few miles to the east of Llandovery towards the Brecon border on a gentle slope affording some drainage to the north west and at about the point of transition from the Silurian to the Ordovician series of shales; it is well sheltered by strips of mixed deciduous woodland and scrub on three sides and, at the time of my visit, was said to have been virtually ungrazed since the previous October. Judging by the growth of species of Betula, Salix and Ulex it had not been ploughed for many years, if ever, and, surmising from the presence of Briza media and a number of sensitive herbs, it had not known much of the fertiliser bag. The dominance of Molinia would be the key to its neglect for the place is too wet for sheep and the herbage largely unpalatable to cattle for which it would also provide little dry lying ground. Horses introduced in June were said to have been so tormented by flies that they had to be removed on compassionate grounds.

In the woodland strips both native oaks were recorded with Betula pendula, Fagus sylvatica (rare), Fraxinus excelsior, Corylus avellana, Ilex aquifolium, Crataegus monogyna, and, at the lower end, Populus tremula. Of these Oak, Birch, Holly and Aspen were regenerating freely: the first three by seedlings and saplings, the last by suckers. In the scrub were Salix cinerea, S. aurita, Betula sp., Ulex europaea, Rosa arvensis and for good measure, one bush of R. micrantha, indicative of at least some degree of mineral soil.

In the sward, besides Molinia the grass species included Agrostis tenuis, and Sieglingia decumbens, both locally abundant, Holcus lanatus, Anthoxanthum odoratum, and occasional Briza media: Deschampsia caespitosa was confined to the borders and to the wet hedgebanks of the approach lane where it was associated with Polygonum bistorta.

Of the rushes, Juncus effusus was conspicuous by its absence, probably reflecting the physical composition of the soil, its place taken by Juncus conglomeratus, J. inflexus and, in boggy places, J. kochii. Six species of Carex were seen, Carex nigra, C. echinacea, C. panicea, C. demissa, C. pulicaris and C. hostiana.



Evenly distributed were plants of Genista tinctoria, Valeriana dioica and Lathyrus montanus, with Carum verticillatum, Cirsium dissectum, and Pedicularis palustris in more disjunct groupings. In the wettest parts Galium palustre, Myosotis secunda, Epilobium palustre with the more heathy species such as Erica tetralix, Rhinanthus minor and Potentilla erecta in drier areas.

The composition of these small, often unmanaged, patches of grassland on derived soils in upland country needs much more study before they disappear altogether. To take one genus alone, the distribution of the orchids raises questions: we have the sporadic presence, though not rare in Carmarthenshire, of Platanthera chlorantha, or much more rarely, of P. bifolia; the association, or otherwise, of Dactylorhiza fuchsii with D. maculata ssp. ericetorum: the rare occurrence of D. praetermissa and D. incarnata and the very rare appearance, away from the dune meadows of the coast, of D. purpurella. The variation of all species associations obviously reflects the three main determining factors, climatic, edaphic, and biotic, but also past and present farming practice which is liable to sudden and catastrophic change.

References:

Tansley, The British Islands and their Vegetation.  
D.A. Wells, Welsh Region Bulletin No. 16

BIOLOGICAL RECORDING FIELD MEETINGS IN WALES

Mrs. B. Scotter..

Since the formation of a Working Group for Biological Recording in Wales in 1971, four field meetings have been held in under-recorded areas. The first, based at Newbridge-on-Wye, (see Welsh Region Bulletin No. 17, Aug. 1972) was followed in Oct. 1972 by a meeting held at Llangollen, Denbighshire. Amateur and specialist biologists worked together to record the flora and fauna of the Eglwyseg escarpment (SJ 24) from Trefor Rocks in the south to World's End in the north. The rich limestone cliff and Calluna heath vegetation provided many new 10 km. square records including several notable vascular plants: Cardamine impatiens, Cirsium acaule, Dryopteris villarii, Equisetum x littorale, Gymnocarpium robertianum, Hornungia petraea, Hyoscyamus niger, Sorbus rupicola, Taxus baccata, Torilis nodosa.

The third meeting was held in June 1973 and was based at Welshpool, Montgomeryshire. A visit was made to Gungrog Flash (SJ 261156) in the grounds of Welshpool High School. It was of particular interest since the marshy area was very rich in animal and plant life and provided one of the few localities in Wales for Hottonia palustris. A Conservation Club had been set up by the school to oppose plans to clear the area for playing fields. The area has now been studied extensively and a nature trail opened.

Perhaps the most interesting habitat visited was a bog near Llanfihangel (SJ 0816). Both British species of Pedicularis were sighted together with Eriophorum vaginatum, E. angustifolium, Vaccinium oxycoccus and six species of Carex. Neottia nidus-avis was recorded nearby at Pontrobert.

The last recording weekend was held in Oct. 1973 and based in Cardigan. Despite the fact that most flowering plants were dying back, nearly 300 species were recorded in the wealth of habitats that the area provides, Towyn Warren (SN 14) is an old sand dune system dominated by Ammophila arenaria and Agropyron pungens, and further inland by Rosa pimpinellifolia. There is a well developed salt marsh community at Nant-y-ferwig (SN 1648) with Aster tripolium, Atriplex glabriuscula, Glaux maritima, Salicornia dolichostachya, S. ramosissima, Salsola kali, Spartina townsendii, Suaeda maritima, Triplachin maritima. Visits were also made to the woodlands at Noyadd Trefawr (SN 24), the Afon Teifi reedbed reserve (SN 14), Ceibwr Bay (SN 14), and to a very rich bog in the Prescelly Hills (SN 1434). A visit to the area earlier in the year would certainly add many interesting records to our lists.

Looking to the future, a meeting is being planned for the week beginning May 22nd. 1974 at the Draper's Field Centre, Rhyd-y-crenau, N. Wales. It will be a course on biological recording techniques open to both professional biologists and amateur naturalists who are interested in acquiring a grounding in the techniques used. Further details may be obtained by writing to the Keeper of Zoology, or the Keeper of Botany, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, CF1 3NP.