

Dumfriesshire Botany Group at Moffat 5 September 2021



#### Thorn-apple east side of Moffat

Seven of us met up at the Ram Statue in the middle of Moffat on a warm sunny day. The objective was to record in a couple of monads in and on the edge of town and search for a nineteenth century record for *Hieracium umbellatum* on Auldtoun Motte. Records from these monads would contribute to completing a survey of Moffat Dale.

Moffat has one main street and many small back roads and lanes linking the town with walks into the surrounding countryside. It has some admirable buildings and walls which harbour a good variety of plant life. One frequent occupant of these walls which we saw in several places was **Pale Toadflax**, *Linaria repens*. It is probably as abundant in Moffat as anywhere else in the vice county where it typically crops up on river banks. The walls also supported plenty of **Wall Rue**, *Asplenium ruta-muraria* and **Ivy-leaved Toadflax** *Cymbalaria muralis*. Much less frequently we saw **Black Spleenwort** *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*. There were plants that like the niches towns offer such as **Butterfly-bush**, *Buddleja davidii* and **Canadian Fleabane** *Erigeron canadensis*. The latter, only first recorded in Dumfries in 2015 is now establishing itself in both the Moffat and Dumfries areas and is likely to soon pop up in other towns.

You generally get a good selection of garden escapes in towns and we saw a few as we headed east. The more or less ubiquitous **Yellow Archangel** with silver blotched leaves, *Lamiastrum galeobdolon ssp. argentatum* is one of Dumfriesshires most frequent garden escapees. We also saw **Buck'-beard**, *Aruncus dioicus* and **Western Sword-fern** *Polystichum munitum*. The fern was well established growing at the base of a hedge. The owner of the house happened to be painting their gate and told us that the fern was spreading wildly in her garden.

We headed for lunch on the old Motte of Auldtoun Castle. This was a rock strewn scrubbed up mound normally subject to cattle or sheep grazing. While it may not have changed greatly since a record of *Hieracium umbellatum* was made in 1893 it did not support that species today.

After lunch we headed east across farmland and came to an area where it appeared soil or stoney waste was being spread on tracks and into the edge of a wet area fenced off from grazing stock where the best plants were found. This had a range of ruderal species, some possibly native and some may be bird seed aliens. Most striking was **Thorn-apple** *Datura stramonium* a very rare plant in the vc, only recorded once before in Dumfriesshire. It was also found along the farm track we followed where stock were grazing though they were wisely leaving the **Thorn-apple!** Other things seen here were **Wild Pansy** *Viola tricolour*, **Field Pansy** *Viola arvensis*, **Cut-leaved Dead-nettle** *Lamium hybridum*, **Large-flowered Hemp-nettle** *Galeopsis speciosa* and the tropical grass **Cockspur** *Echinochloa crus-galli*.



Large-flowered Hemp-nettle East side of Moffat

When we reached the Frenchland track at exactly 2:30pm we were treated to a flyby over Moffat of a solitary Spitfire. This was part of the annual Lord Dowding memorial service given Moffat is where he was born.

Back in town we looked along part of the Birnock water where it passes by the small park by Burnside Road. Here there were several garden species established but most unusual at this inland site was **Diffenbach's Hebe** *Veronica diffenbachii*. This is normally only established in coastal sites. One final notable species in Well Street was **Four-leaved Allseed** *Polycarpon tetraphyllum*. This is a casual record of a plant normally found in SW England. It was growing in a pot containing an Olive tree so presumably hitched a ride.

Chris Miles

VCR Dumfriesshire

