

Dumfriesshire Botany Group at Wanlockhead 11 July 2021

We have been visiting tetrad squares that have few or no records with the eventual aim of having no tetrads without a reasonable number of records in Dumfriesshire. On this occasion we were visiting NS81Q, an area of the Lowther Hills south of Wanlockhead with 7 records. Some of these were interesting species that would be great to re-find such as a **Wood Bitter-vetch**, but clearly there had not been systematic recording previously.

So on an overcast day eight of us met in the overflow car park at Wanlockhead. We headed south into the Mennock Pass and almost immediately one of the party found **Moonwort** *Botrychium lunaria* in the grassland on the bank at the end of the car park. Given the time and energy taken to find **Moonwort** previously in Wanlockhead this was an unexpected first find. Luckily we saw it later in the day in the square in which we were recording. It was on open ground near an old bridge close to the road where there were three spikes. These were new monad records.

The dominant habitat in these hills is heather moorland maintained for driven grouse shooting and sheep grazing. There are also flush habitats and upland burns but relatively little natural rock exposure.



Pale Forget-me-not Meikle Arthur Grain

Given the hills on either side of the Mennock Pass rise to over 500m to the west and 600m to the east we spent the day to the east of the road recording in two monads. We followed an old route across the slope to a lochan on the Mossy Burn. This was probably created as part of the mining industry that was active in the hills here until the 1950s. Now it was a good place to find two Lowther Hills specialities, **Hairy Stonecrop** *Sedum villosum* and **Pale Forget-me-not** *Myosotis stolonifera*. These were in flower along the shoreline and found again in the Meikle Arthur Grain and Whitestone Cleuch. These species grow in Sphagnum lawns and on gravels where it remains moist. Both have their UK headquarters in the Southern Uplands and North Pennines. The Forget-me-not does not occur west of the A76 and the Stonecrop only just gets into Galloway so the Lowthers more or less marks their western limits. In the flushes beside them the small white flowered **Scottish Eyebright** *Euphrasia scottica* was also plentiful and in the lochan a typical assemblage included

Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, **Common Spike-rush** *Eleocharis palustris*, **Broad-leaved Pondweed** *Potamogeton natans* and **Intermediate Water-starwort** *Callitriche brutia* Ssp. *hammulata*.



Hairy Stonecrop Whitestone Cleuch

The dominant vegetation is made up of wet and dry heath species, **Heather**, **Blaeberry**, **Cotton-grass** and **Deergrass**. Under the heather where there are Sphagnum hummocks is always a good place to look for the diminutive **Lesser Twayblade** *Neottia cordata*. This has been known for a while in the hills here but not recorded in this square since 1985. So it was good to find it in the two monads we visited.

Wood Bitter-vetch *Vicia orobus* and **Globeflower** *Trollius europaeus* remain to be refound but there is plenty of ground west of the road that we did not search.

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