

DERBYSHIRE FLORA PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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1. EDITORIAL (AW)

Firstly I'd like to draw your attention to the exciting new developments which now makes public much of your hard work and efforts over the last 10 years. This is our brand new Flora of Derbyshire website, news of which is given in Section 4.

During 2008 we will continue with outdoor survey meetings, any ideas for venues welcome (Section 6). There are now also opportunities for photographers with a digital camera and internet connection to make a significant contribution to our project (Section 4).

Please note Saturday 5th April 2008 in your diary for this year's Indoor Meeting. See Section 5.

Finally as I have retired from the University of Derby, may I highlight changes to my contact address and email for anyone wanting to submit or query any plant records. See Sect.10.

2. PROGRESS WITH FLORA PROJECT

The Museum's volunteer team computerised over 16,000 plant records during 2007, and we've now virtually eliminated our records backlog. The database we built to help us write the Flora was completely updated with new maps and statistics in September, making the task of editing the draft species accounts much easier.

We made two other major advances during the year. In December 2007 we produced an update to our 2002 plant checklist (see Section 3) and during the summer we reviewed our progress in publishing the book. We do still intend to publish a paper-based Flora but, with uncertainties at Derby Museum, we feel we still can't give a reliable forecast on when this will be achieved. With this in mind, and rather than lose momentum, we decided we should publish all our records in map form on the internet. This involved a lot of preparatory work, but was fully supported by Derby City Council and has resulted in an exciting product. (See Section 4 below).

We'd like to encourage you to continue recording and submitting record cards during 2008. In the year ahead we plan to help the Wildlife Trust clean up some dubious records from its database, revise the list of county Red Data Book plants, and to publish these online.

3. CHECKLIST UPDATE

In the five years since we published our Checklist of the Plants of Derbyshire, we have recorded so many alterations and additions that we felt we should bring together all of these changes in one place. So, we've produced an eight page update to the checklist which gives all additions, deletions and amendments noted since 2002. You may purchase copies of the Checklist and its update from Derby Museum (price £2.50p, address at end and cheques payable to the "Derbyshire Flora Committee".) Alternatively you may download a copy of both for free from www.derby.gov.uk/flora

Section 7 of the Checklist Update clarifies for the first time the county status of a number of problematic species. We have long been aware that we hold computer records that are really not acceptable as valid county plants. Despite this, they are of interest and we don't want to delete them. This is because they were planted in wild situations (but don't yet show signs of spreading), or they may occur in flowerbeds but have spread no further (e.g. *Duchesnea indica*). If any do start to spread in the future these retained records will give us a better idea of how they got here and when they were first seen. One or two species translocated from Teesdale in the 1970s are also recorded in this way, despite not surviving their first winter here (eg *Carex capillaris*). By keeping them on our systems and publishing their names we avoid the need to reinvestigate them each time someone queries their validity.

4. FLORA WEBSITE www.derby.gov.uk/flora (NM)

I'm delighted to bring you news that, after 10 years of hard work by over 100 volunteers, everyone's efforts in recording the plants of Derbyshire are now available for the public to see. In January we went online with a new website for The Flora of Derby & Derbyshire! You can find us at www.derby.gov.uk/flora

The site has a bright, bold appearance, with lots of photographs. Every plant species in Derbyshire now has both a 2km and a 10km distribution map available. You can search for a species by any part of its common or scientific name, or select from an alphabetic or taxonomic list. So far we've only presented a small selection of full written accounts, but the number will increase as editing work progresses. So far the Orchidaceae and the fern allies are the only completed families, but many individual plants accounts are now published. The taxonomic list gives hyperlinks to all those plants with full accounts already published.

We can include your photographs into any of these accounts if you have them in digital form and have internet access. We encourage botanists to join the photo-storing website Flickr (www.flickr.com) so their pictures can be included in this Flora website. Please contact me if you'd like to participate, or would like further guidance to join Flickr. To see what results this can give, take a look at entries for Musk, Moschatel, Green-winged Orchid, Labrador Tea or Bog Bilberry. Some of these accounts include images of herbarium voucher specimens from Derby Museum – a great way to link past records with current data.

Our thanks go to the Web Development Team at Derby City Council for supporting our project and bringing it to fruition so quickly. We plan to make major updates every six

months or so, but we can add or edit individual accounts at any time, especially if you upload a photograph for us to use!

5. INDOOR MEETING 2008

We have decided to organise an indoor meeting this year as we feel we have sufficient progress to report upon. The venue will be Derby Museum as in previous years, commencing with an opportunity to chat informally over lunch from 11.30 am, before we start at 1pm. The date will be Saturday 5th April. Please let us know if you are planning to attend, especially if you wish to show a few pictures or say a few words. (Please tell us if you need a slide/digital projector).

6. OUTDOOR MEETINGS 2008 (AW)

I will be organising a series of Saturday outdoor meetings again this summer. I have so far pencilled in, with the help of Ken Balkow, a meeting to the Hathersage area on 26th July and to the Pleasley area on 9th August. However, I still need more ideas for visits so all suggestions would be gratefully received. I have also toyed with the idea of some midweek daytime meetings since I am now retired, and would be interested to hear comments from you if you might be interested.

7. NATIONAL BSBI MATTERS

The BSBI are planning to produce a new definitive set of maps in 2012 to replace those in the 2002 plant atlas. As a first step they are looking to create checklists for each county. They will send each county recorder a list of what they think we have, and will ask us if we agree! The need for this approach came about because BSBI have been accepting many records electronically onto their national database without detailed checking. They feel this may have led to some errors creeping into their records (no surprise there). Luckily our own Checklist work should make our job relatively simple.

8. Max Bryce

As some of you may already know, Max Bryce sadly passed away on December 24th at the DRI aged 81. Professionally he was a chemist at Boots but outside work he loved the open air and wildlife, particularly that around his home area of Long Eaton. He joined us on a number of our outdoor meetings there, and contributed many records for the new flora. He will be greatly missed by friends and family.

9. RECENT PLANT RECORDS FOR VC 57 (AW)

***Cyrtomium falcatum* (House Holly-fern)**

This unusual fern was found by Kieron Huston where it was growing in marshy ground by a woodland lake at Spinneyford Brook (SK2444) late last summer. He showed it to me and I was quite excited since he thought it was self-established. I went back with him later, but closer examination of the site clearly suggested that the plant had been introduced. It was growing along with other exotic species around a summerhouse on the lake shore. So nearly a new county record, but not quite!

***Cornus australis* (Southern Dogwood)**

This was mentioned in an interesting article in BSBI News last year by Peter Sell as a look-alike for our Dogwood (*C. sanguineus*). He reported that it was almost indistinguishable from our native species and was being frequently planted in Cambridgeshire in restoration schemes. The only way to tell them apart is by the hairs

on the back of the leaves. In our native plant they are up curved and fixed at the base, whilst those on *C. australis* they are flat to the surface and fixed in the centre. In my opinion the leaves of the new plant are also larger than those of our native species. Armed with what to check for, it has been quite easy to find the look-alike in Derbyshire. I first saw it in the car park at Miller's Dale Station (SK1373) in July 2007, and then found it self-sown in a shrubbery at the University of Derby, Derby (SK3437) in November. I am sure it will be soon found in many other places around the county.

***Dactylorhiza x grandis* (an orchid hybrid)** Several large specimens of this hybrid were found at Bees Nest Pit (SK2354) last summer growing amongst scrub on disturbed ground. They were growing in a hybrid swarm with both parents *D. fuchsia* (Common Spotted-orchid) and *D. praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid).

***Dactylorhiza x insignis* (a marsh-orchid hybrid)** This was found some time ago, (1988 in fact) at Grin Low (SK0571) by the late Dr Lawrence Storer. However, the record appears to have been missed by local botanists then and has only recently come to my attention.

Lycopodiums (Clubmosses) One of our outdoor trips last year was to the Bees Nest Pit where we hoped to re-find the clubmosses that had been recorded there in the past. We did manage to see all three but the individual plants were quite small and, for those who had not seen them before, most uninspiring. We found *Diphasiastrum alpinum* (Alpine Clubmoss), *Huperzia selago* (Fir Clubmoss) and *Lycopodium clavatum* (Stag's-horn Clubmoss) growing together amongst scattered grassy tufts on the side of one of the water-filled holes in the disused pit (SK2454).

***Potamogeton trichoides* (Hairlike Pondweed)** This was discovered for the first time in Derbyshire at one of the fishing ponds Darley Abbey (SK3538) by Trevor Taylor in 2005. These ponds have been extensively stocked with plants and fish by the angling club so it seems likely the plant was introduced here.

***Sesleria caerulea* (Blue Moor-grass)** On another of our trips last year we were pleased to see this grass growing in Monk's Dale (SK1373) at its only Derbyshire locality. Nearby we also found *Blysmus compressus* (Flat-sedge), *Hypericum montanum* (Pale St. John's-wort), *Pinguicula vulgaris* (Common Butterwort) and *Potentilla neumanniana* (Spring Cinquefoil). All are well known for the area but it was a treat to see so many unusual plants growing together in one small spot.

***Zantedeschia aethiopica* (Aitar-lily)** This exotic alien was found flowering in a stream-fed pond in farmland at Topley (SK3079) by Ken Balkow in 2007. This is a most odd find and a first for the county. It has been recorded introduced further south so maybe global warming is really reaching us now.

10. ENQUIRIES & CHANGE OF ADDRESS (AW)

I retired from the University of Derby late August after 36 years teaching at Kedleston Road. I may retain some tenuous connection for research purposes but will not be there on a regular basis. People should only try to contact me at my home address or on my new home e-mail.

Any enquiry concerning the Flora scheme in general or requests for recording cards can be sent to either of use. Ideally, questions about plant determinations and areas to record should be directed to Alan Willmot. To enquire about computerisation of records, query published records on maps and to request particular up-to-date species maps contact Nick Moyes. Though maps can now be seen on our new website.

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