

RECORDING IN WEXFORD (H12), 2011

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2011 has been surprisingly productive as I had not realised so many records had been collected until I checked my database for the total in December: 18,214 records of which just under half were made by me, the rest coming from recording with others or from individuals. Paula O'Meara was the largest contributor, sending her records in via Mapmate. It is so nice not to have to sit and enter the records up myself. When Paula showed me a photo of Meadow Barley at Kilmannock (S70.15) I got very excited as the meadow looked un-grazed, because each time I had visited the site before, the cattle had over-grazed it. Visiting the site together we found the *Hordeum secalinum* (Meadow Barley) in abundance and the species I had looked for many times before *Carex divisa* (Divided Sedge) in the thousands, it was great to see that sedge at last. Paula's *Veronica peregrina* (American Speedwell) from the boundary bank of the GAA pitch at Ballyfarnoge (S71.18) is only the second record for the county. *Claytonia sibirica* (Pink Purslane) from the graveyard at Ballykeeroge is the third record for the county; here it grew on the ditch around the graveyard and on a few graves. Zoë Devlin also sent records in via Mapmate. Her *Symphytum x hidcotense* (Hidcote Comfrey) from a road bank at Rosegarland (S85.16) was a new county record. Frankie Tennant and Roy Watson always give me a large pile of recording cards they have filled in from around the county. One of their favourite sites in the county is the disused railway station at Killinick (T05.13), a rich site with several orchid species and a number of other interesting species including: *Orobanche minor* (Common Broomrape), *Tragopogon pratensis* (Goat's-beard) and *Trifolium campestre* (Hop Trefoil). The other large contributor was the Wexford Naturalists' Field Club; they gave me plant lists made on several of their field excursions.

My first productive day out was on 2 March, a stunningly beautiful sunny day in the Enniscorthy area while waiting to pick a friend up from the station. The first stop was to see if I could find Stinking Iris at Ballycarney (S96.48) which Ro FitzGerald had recorded in 1991, not a difficult task as Ro had seen several clumps in the churchyard where the iris was easily found. The first good find of the day was one plant of *Artemisia absinthium* (Wormwood) on top of a stone gate pillar to the church car park; the first county record since 1976. A visit to the ruins of a castle at Mackmine (S97.32) produced the first new county record of the year; *Crocus vernus* (Spring Crocus) by the thousands, masses of large patches of purple. For a non-native species it certainly was beautiful. The crocus was in a very wide hedge dividing two fields and in the wood below the castle. In the wet woodland below the castle was one clump of *Leucojum aestivum* (Summer Snowflake), not quite in flower and as hard as I looked I could not find any other clumps. The snowflake has been known in this area since 1897 when found by E.S. Marshall. More snowflake hunting was done on the 20 March at Rosegarland (S85.15) in wet woodland, a site I had no record of until Dominic Berridge told me about it, known here for at least fifteen years. Dominic was concerned it may have been destroyed as some tree clearing had been done. How wrong he was! It was there by the thousands if not the millions, a beautiful spectacle on both sides of the Corock River. Some of this woodland was extremely wet and not safe to walk in. On the gravel drive leading up to the house of Rosegarland I started counting the rosettes of *Ranunculus parviflorus* (Small-flowered Buttercup); at two-hundred I gave up.

The 8 June, the dunes at Cahore (T22.46) were my destination to look for *Asparagus prostratus* (Wild Asparagus). There was a large new house on the crest of the dunes in the

area, my diagram showed me where I should be looking. I had almost given up looking as the scrub had become too dense to walk any further, turned around and there, amongst a small open area of ivy, were two asparagus stems. The unstable face of the dune had sixteen more stems. This small population survived the new development by less than ten metres. Naturalised amongst the scrub were scattered bushes of *Daphne laureola* (Spurge Laurel).

On 10 June in New Ross (S71.27), I was passing a small area of rough ground which was a thicket of sycamore until clear felled the previous year, when I realised it was now covered with *Campanula trachelium* (Nettle-leaved Bellflower). As it is a native further up the River Barrow, it would be nice to think it was native dormant seed waiting for disturbance to germinate. The following morning, I went for a pre breakfast walk along the banks of the River Barrow at Ballynacoolagh (S73.34), to see if I could find more bellflowers, as it is very frequent south of the stretch I walked along, unfortunately I had no success this time. A very dense thicket of willows are in the wetter areas joining the river and the drier slopes are herb rich mixed woodland. *Crepis paludosa* (Marsh Hawk's-beard), a rare species in the county, was in the damper areas. *Orobanche hederæ* (Ivy Broomrape) was abundant wherever ivy was growing. As the woodland became very steep and rocky Tunbridge Filmy-fern popped into my head as I had seen it up river in the same habitat in Co. Carlow in 2007. It was not long before a patch of *Hymenophyllum tunbrigense* was found. By now the slope had become too steep to go any further; I made my way to the top of the slope, went to leave the wood, got caught on a tree root, fell out of the wood onto a very large tree root and cracked a rib. In extreme pain I tried to take the easiest route back to the car. Maybe because I was driving slower than normal, there on the west bank of the R729 I noticed a patch of *Inula helenium* (Elecampane), found in the area in 1991 by Ro FitzGerald. I had looked for it several times before without success, this was the medicine I needed to keep me going on my journey home.

The 19 August took me over to the east coast to do some paid survey work. Seeing a blue flower from the car at Ballina (T08.27) I pulled over and as expected it was the beautiful *Nicandra physalodes* (Apple-of-Peru), another new alien for the county. One of my stops was at Glascarrig Point (T21.49) to look for *Arctium lappa* (Greater Burdock) known from this area since 1961 when found by F.W. Simpson and seen here in 1991 by Ro FitzGerald. The burdock was abundant in two sandy fields, apart from being rather short, only about one metre high, it seemed a good match for this species.

As I had seen *Carex divisa* the day before with Paula O'Meara I thought I would try my luck on 22 August at another known site, Pilltown (S69.18) where there is a herb rich meadow by the river. Like last time when I looked here I had no luck. The meadow had not been grazed. *Bromus commutatus* (Meadow Brome) was here, the only current extant site in the county and the field hedges in this area are filled with trees of various sizes of *Sorbus devoniensis* (Devon Whitebeam) and *S. hibernica* (Irish Whitebeam), both species fruiting very well.

Megan Morris joined me for a walk along the Owenduff River by Tayorstown Bridge (S82.14) on 11 September. *Brachypodium pinnatum* (Heath False-brome) was found in scattered patches along the wooded banks of the river north and south of the bridge. The highlight for me was finding six plants of *Centunculus minimus* (Chaffweed) in a muddy gateway between two fields, a species I have only seen along the western coast of Ireland before. Megan was amused that I could be so excited about finding such a small dull looking plant. We visited The Hollow (pub) (S75.10) for our evening meal, in the flower tubs on the

window sill was *Galinsoga quadriradiata* (Shaggy-soldier) a new alien species for the county. Several of the local botanists went to have a look. One of the pleasures of botany is telling others of your finds!

Seeing many clumps of *Ficaria verna* (Lesser Celandine) flowering vigorously on a road bank by Moore's Cross Roads (S80.30), on the 26 November, rounded the year off nicely.