

River Urr, Corsock: 25th March 2022

I chose this site because there are very few records for the River Urr between Old Bridge of Urr and Corsock and it looked in passing as though it should be good. The major problem is finding anywhere to park along this busy but narrow B-road. However, although it was a bit of a struggle getting the 9 cars into the only suitable layby, we, all 11 of us, struck lucky with the glorious sunny weather and low water levels in the river. I had expected a number of plants to be in flower but it was a bit disappointing – we had to rely on vegetative characters to identify almost all the 102 species recorded in this single monad (NX7674).

What greeted us was a clump of bright and intensely deep blue flowers with reddish-pink buds, of lungwort *Pulmonaria officinalis* (a garden escape) in the layby.



Iain Gormly

At first sight, the adjoining woodland floor looked to be just a dense carpet of greater woodrush *Luzula sylvatica*, showing the beginnings of flower heads and flower stalks. Closer inspection gave us the leaves of wild garlic *Allium ursinum*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and diffuse clumps of one of the comfrets *Symphytum* sp. Down by the river's edge, it got more interesting with pink purslane *Claytonia sibirica*, another well-established garden escape in abundance; marsh ragwort *Senecio aquaticus*; marsh hawksbeard *Crepis paludosa*; and finally a small clump of non-flowering Townhall clock *Adoxa moschatellina* (later found elsewhere, on the point of opening flowers). The remains of stone bridge buttresses at the extreme south of the monad gave us maidenhair spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes* subsp. *quadrivalens*. We'd also looked at a few of the fern fronds from last year and found both Narrow and Broad buckler ferns, *Dryopteris carthusiana* and *D. dilatata* respectively. A polypody with parallel-sided fronds, round sori (2 characteristics of

Polypodium vulgare) and inflexed lower pinnae with spores apparently maturing now (*P. cambricum* characters) seems to suggest a hybrid between two species.

The party then split, with most of us fording the river just south of a weir to explore a bit of the west bank which was partly wooded having been mixed conifer/deciduous before felling. 5 magnificent giant redwoods *Sequoia sempervirens* still stood amidst a scattering of Broom *Cytisus scoparius*, various grasses and the solid-stemmed Soft rush *Juncus effusus*. The access track through the wood gave us the tiny mats of parsley piert *Aphanes australis*. It was here in another drain that Bob gave us a couple of water starworts *Callitriche* spp. which I have yet to identify.

Back on the east bank and away from the woodrush carpet, there was a marshy area bordering a stream/ditch and a large patch of bare ground. The latter held about 50 flowering plants of creamy butterbur *Petasites japonicus*.



Iain Gormly

Round-leaved water crowfoot *Ranunculus omiophyllus*, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and flote-grass *Glyceria fluitans* were also in the ditch. Meanwhile Bob had been sweeping the river and turned up a 15cm salmon and a golden-ringed dragonfly nymph. Those unwilling to cross the river scoured the roadside and adjoining vegetation to record a further 12 species not found elsewhere, such as wood cranesbill *Geranium sylvaticum*, white poplar *Populus alba* and sloe *Prunus spinosa*.

After that it was lunch, seated on the remains of a stone dyke, in the sunshine. Lunch over, we wandered along the edge of a grass field bordering the river as far as the dyke in the distance (photo below), hoping to add a few more species. This wasn't particularly

productive, a single old fruiting stalk of knapweed *Centaurea nigra* probably being the highlight!



Bob Merritt

So, just 8 species in flower, including dandelion and daisy, fewer species than recorded during the New year Plant Hunt at the turn of the year!

Thanks to everyone for their efforts and hope it was worthwhile for you.

Next meeting 8th April is scheduled for Ravenshall Point about 6 miles west of Gatehouse, with the rare holy grass *Hierochloe odorata* (now named *Anthoxanthum nitens*). I have found very demanding access to the shoreline of this cliff site, **suitable only for those fit to scramble down some steep vegetated slopes along paths muddy/marshy in one or two places**. On one access path, there is a strong rope lying alongside the path, attached to trees, to help both up and down, but you will need both hands free!

I need to stress that anyone attending this meeting does so entirely at their own risk.

If you feel up to this demanding site, then meet 10am at the layby (NX 5254 5237) about ¾ mile west of Auchenlarie Holiday Park. It's just after (before, if you're coming from Newton Stewart) the numerous Z-bends and there's not much warning of it beforehand. Boots or stout walking boots necessary and a walking stick might also come in handy. Both the shoreline and the adjoining woodland, and possibly the rock faces, should provide plenty of different species. **Please let me know if you are coming.**

If the weather is wet and/or there has been rain the day before, then I will cancel the meeting, as the risk of slipping becomes significantly greater.