

## Dumfriesshire Botany Group Annan Sunday 23 April 2023

Six of us met at Annan harbour on a warm dry day. The plan was to explore the early flowering species on the southern edge of town and along the lanes and foreshore of south Annan. Recording was focussed on the two monads NY1865 with 18 previous records and NY1965 with 3 previous records. By the end of the day we had added 115 records to NY1865 and 122 records to NY1965. In each case a visit later in the summer will add more species that are yet to develop especially on the merse.

We spent a bit of time initially looking at the spring annuals and early plant growth on and around the harbour itself. The harbour is of course tidal. It was low tide when we were there and it was a long drop into thick mud for those looking over the edge at the harbour wall. Here **Common Scurvygrass** *Cochlearia officinalis* was already in flower. In muddy areas **Celery-leaved Buttercup** *Ranunculus sceleratus* was identifiable from the shiny leaves. Less expected was a good growth of **Mind-your-own-business** *Soleirolia soleirolii*. This species has been recorded up river and is clearly tolerant of some saline inundation. The 2020 Atlas suggests it is frost sensitive so is usually coastal in Scotland.



Annan harbour Chris Miles

Small white flowered annuals were evident in the paved areas and are pretty universal in such situations at this time of year. These included from the Brassicaceae **Thale cress** *Arabidopsis thaliana*, **Common Whitlowgrass** *Erophila verna*, **Wavy Bitter-cress** *Cardamine flexuosa* and **Shepherds purse** *Capsella bursa-pastoris* and from the Caryophyllaceae **Sticky Mouse-ear** *Cerastium glomeratum*, **Common Mouse-ear** *Cerastium fontanum* and **Common Chickweed** *Stellaria media* .

They were joined by other common annuals like **Wall Speedwell** *Veronica arvensis* and **Red Dead-nettle** *Lamium purpureum*.



Common Scurvygrass and Celery-leaved Buttercup Annan harbour Jan Davidson

In the hedgerows there were frequent patches of **Ivy-leaved Speedwell** *Veronica hederifolia* with tiny lavender flowers. There are two subspecies *V. hederifolia* ssp. *hederifolia* and *V. hederifolia* ssp. *lucorum*. In the latter the fruiting pedicels are longer and the mid leaf lobe is usually longer than wide. It is also said to be a plant of hedgerows and woodlands rather than open fields. Apart from the habitat I find the morphological differences difficult in the field and we recorded the plants we saw at the species level.

Further along the road we reached the area of merse, or saltmarsh formerly protected from flooding by a sea wall though this has been breached for many years so the highest tides reach most of this area and flood the road occasionally. The area is grazed and it was too early for many of the saltmarsh plants to be showing much but we did identify **Sea Club-rush** *Bolboschoenus maritima* , **Sea-milkwort** *Lysimachia maritima* and **Sea Arrow-grass** *Triglochin maritimum*.

Further around the coast later in the day we saw a seawall that had been raised at Back of the Hill. The material used clearly had brought with it some interesting seeds. We saw a lot of **Hemlock**, *Conium maculatum* an umbel that is usually coastal in SW Scotland. There were large dried seedheads from another plant that we will need to come back to see later as there was no new growth yet.

In the lanes on Annan Hill there were some mature hedges where a number of garden escapes had established. These included **Lords and Ladies** *Arum maculatum* an infrequent plant in Dumfriesshire

always found close to residential property in hedges or road banks. It is never seen in more natural woodland. It is regarded as non native north of the border. We saw one majestic **Hornbeam** tree *Carpinus betulinus* just coming into leaf. This is one of our most attractive native trees at this time of year (though probably not native this far north).

Chris Miles

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