

Glamorgan Botany Group

2024 Excursion Report

Our excursions this year had something of a focus on the often-ignored bits of habitat within and between our urban areas, proving on several occasions that if you look where no-one usually bothers to go, you always turn up good plants! Along with numerous interesting finds from our towns, we also surveyed two vice-county rarities of an acid bog site, and held an enjoyable joint meeting with v.c. 35. We hope you enjoy reading these accounts, and look forward to seeing you all next year!

David Barden, Julian Woodman and Karen Wilkinson

Sandy Bay, Porthcawl – Sunday 14 April

On a rather cloudy but improving sort of day, our group of 11 met at Sandy Lane car park, and proceeded to examine the banks and rough ground adjoining the ‘Sandy Bay Bowl’ nearby. We soon spotted plenty of species typical of dry, sandy ground, although the timing of our visit meant that we were often challenged by early-stage, non-flowering plants.

Two clovers – *Trifolium scabrum* (Rough Clover) and *T. arvense* (Hare’s-foot Clover) – were nice finds early on, with the former proving generally frequent in suitable places. We also admired good quantities of the attractive *Saxifraga tridactylites* (Rue-leaved Saxifrage), some of which were



Some of the more interesting finds in and around Sandy Bay Bowl: ❶ A pale pink form of *Geranium molle* (Soft Crane’s-bill); ❷ *Phleum arenarium* (Sand Cat’s-tail); ❸ *Fumaria muralis* subsp. *boroei*; ❹ Masses of *Bromopsis erecta* (Upright Brome); ❺ A lovely show of *Saxifraga tridactylites*; ❻ *Medicago arabica* (Spotted Medick); ❼ *Trifolium scabrum*, with the distinctive thickened and recurved veins at the leaf margins just being visible in this photo.

incongruously growing on a pile of dumped tarmac. Those species were relatively easy, but more challenging were *Cerastium semidecandrum* (Small Mouse-ear) and *Fumaria muralis* subsp. *boraei* (Common Ramping Fumitory), forcing us to get out our handbooks. A small quantity of a *Valerianella* was seen in flower, and pleasingly this turned out to be *V. locusta* (Common Cornsalad), now far less commonly seen than the *V. carinata* (Keeled Cornsalad) that is so plentiful in urban areas.

Within the 'bowl' itself, *Bromopsis erecta* (Upright Brome) was dominant over large areas, and here we were treated to the surprising sound of a calling Grasshopper Warbler, presumably having just arrived on its migration northwards. The rosettes of *Centaureum erythraea* (Common Centaury) were also noted, as were three rather battered rosettes of *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid).

After lunch, we moved slightly eastward, encountering a plant unfamiliar to nearly all of us, which at length we agreed was the introduced species *Euphorbia cyparissias* (Cypress Spurge). *Lamium amplexicaule* (Henbit Dead-nettle) and *Picris hieracioides* (Hawkweed Oxtongue) were also present in this area, with the latter occasioning lengthy discussion!



Euphorbia cyparissias was a surprise find, and it turned out to be the first hectad record since 1941!



The brilliant magenta flowers of *Lamium amplexicaule* never fail to disappoint.



A young rosette of *Picris hieracioides* proved a tough challenge, but the Vegetative Key once again proved a life-saver, by drawing attention to its distinctive forked, hooked hairs.

At that point, we headed into the small area of dunes, but added little interesting to our list there, except *Euphorbia paralias* (Sea Spurge). We therefore ambled down to Rhych Point, where we eventually convinced ourselves of the identities of *Raphanus raphanistrum* subsp. *maritimus* (Sea

Radish), *Tripleurospermum maritimum* (Sea Mayweed), *Beta vulgaris* subsp. *maritima* (Sea Beet) and *Carex distans* (Distant Sedge).

By this time, it was nearing 3.30pm, so we headed back to the cars – surprisingly exhausted, given that at no point had we been any more than 750 m from our starting point!

Tripleurospermum maritimum (left) and *Carex distans* (right) were two plants of the rocky margins of the otherwise uninteresting trampled grassland of Rhych Point.



Dinas (Rhondda) and Trealaw – Saturday 11 May

For many of us travelling up the valley from Cardiff, this excursion started with a pleasant train journey to our meeting point, at Dinas train station. Our group of 11 botanists had two aims, to investigate the street plants of both Dinas and Trealaw, before shifting our focus to the semi-natural habitats within Trealaw Cemetery. The day started bright, warm and sunny.

On the verges, pavements and walls of these valleys towns, typical street plants were noted. Whilst we did not come across anything extraordinary, we were able to pay more attention to the common and widespread. We reminded ourselves of the difference in relative glume length in *Vulpia myuros* (Rat's-tail Fescue) and *V. bromoides* (Squirreltail Fescue), by closely examining a specimen of the former annual species. This was growing along an alleyway, alongside *Polypogon viridis* (Water Bent), a species continuing its expansion in the UK – its dispersal presumed to be human-induced – and *Anisantha sterilis* (Barren Brome). Whilst considering the ferns of these valley town walls (*Asplenium trichomanes* (Maidenhair Spleenwort), *A. ruta-muraria* (Wall-rue) and *A. ceterach* (Rustyback)), we also discussed the ecology of *Cymbalaria muralis* (Ivy-leaved Toadflax), whose fertilised flowers, rather than moving towards light, seek out dark crevices and gaps in mortar in which to deposit their seeds.



(Left) Tim Rich examining a *Hieracium* (Hawkweed) on the narrow road on the S side of Alaw Primary School, while everyone else looks on! Elsewhere in these streets, *Cerastium glomeratum* (Clustered Mouse-ear, centre) and *Sagina apetala* (Annual Pearlwort, right) were points of discussion.

Trealaw Cemetery held much more interest. Also known as 'Llethyrddu', it was established in 1881 and to this day continues to support a large area of semi-natural habitat, which occurs both between the graves and as large as-yet undisturbed areas of grassland, where we found some areas of flushed damp vegetation. The cemetery also backs on to the hillside of Mynydd Troed-y-rhiw, and looks across to Mynydd y Cymmer and Mynydd Dinas on the southern side of the valley – the source of the Cuckoo calls that accompanied us intermittently during the day.



The semi-natural habitat within Trealaw cemetery, also showing the adjacent hillside. One of the *Tilia x europaea* trees at centre left held a clump of *Viscum album* (inset).

An area of short, species-rich vegetation on the lower slopes grabbed our attention. Here, we recorded both *Sanguisorba officinalis* (Greater Burnet) and *Poterium sanguisorba* (Salad Burnet) – the latter species together with the *Primula veris* (Cowslip) possibly suggesting some base-enrichment of the soil (or maybe both were planted by grave tenders?). Other species in this short turf included *Luzula campestris* (Field Wood-rush), *Anthoxanthum odoratum* (Sweet Vernal-grass), *Lotus corniculatus* (Common Bird’s-foot Trefoil), and in one location *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush). Between the graves we noted *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath-grass) and *Leontodon hispidus* (Rough Hawkbit) – both typically associated with species-rich grasslands.



The *Sanguisorba officinalis* we found was in small quantity, and this early in the season, it took us some time to be convinced of its identity.

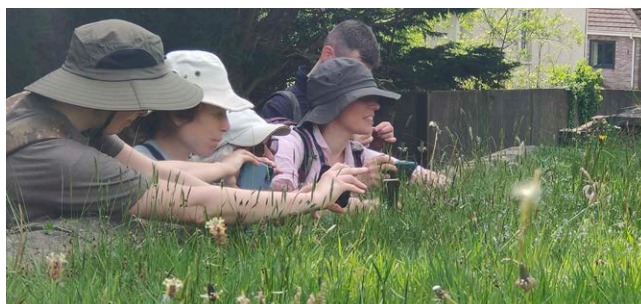


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(Top) Jeanette, Faith and David investigating the plants of the short, flushed grassland in the cemetery, which included a large swathe of *Carex panicea* (Carnation Sedge, bottom left) and young shoots of *Achillea ptarmica* (Sneezewort, bottom right), here accompanied by the leaves of *Trifolium medium* (Zigzag Clover).

The press pack descend on a photogenic patch of *Veronica serpyllifolia* (Thyme-leaved Speedwell).



KW

An area of short, flushed vegetation towards the northern edge of the cemetery held our attention after lunch. There was a particular abundance of *Carex* (sedges) here, meaning we were able to practise our vegetative identification skills, and compare species here with those from the surrounding dry turf. In particular, we looked at the number of veins on the underside of *C. panicea* (Carnation Sedge) (closer to five veins either side of the mid-rib) and *C. flacca* (Glaucous Sedge) (closer to 10 veins either side of the mid-rib) and also considered *C. demissa* (Common Yellow-sedge), and *C. caryophyllea* (Spring Sedge). A small number of additional species typical of damp ground were noted, including a few plants of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid).

A particular highlight from the edge of one of the graves was a clump of *Poa angustifolia* (Narrow-leaved Meadow-grass), spotted by Tim, and (as is typical) growing in slightly droughted soil. As the name suggests, this species is identified by the narrow leaves on the vegetative growth. It is infrequent in Glamorgan, and is a first for this hectad, and may be the first record for the Rhondda Valleys area.



David and the group pose with the *Poa angustifolia* (left and centre), and examine a bank filled with *Veronica chamaedrys* (right).

Two large *Tilia × europaea* (Common Lime) trees, along a narrow road that bisects the cemetery, each supported a clump of *Viscum album* (Mistletoe) – an uncommon species in Glamorgan, with only two other recorded locations from the Rhondda Valleys.

Whilst by no means rare, a particularly floriferous and beautiful stand of *Veronica chamaedrys* (Germander Speedwell) caught our attention as we began to make our way back to the train station. This was followed by an attractive and photogenic stand of *V. serpyllifolia* (Thyme-leaved Speedwell).



Other points of interest in Trealaw Cemetery included *Myosotis discolor* subsp. *dubia* (Changing Forget-me-not) ❶, *Avenula pubescens* (Downy Oat-grass) ❷, a seedling *Aesculus carnea* (Red Horse-chestnut) ❸ from a nearby planted tree, a pink-flowered *Vicia sepium* (Bush Vetch) ❹, *Alchemilla filicaulis* subsp. *vestita* (Hairy Lady's-mantle) ❺, and mixed vegetative *Pilosella officinarum* (Mouse-ear Hawkweed) and *P. aurantiaca* (Fox-and-cubs) ❻.

Cefn Glas, Bridgend – Saturday 15 June

Starting from Wildmill View, our group of 13 botanical enthusiasts first examined Tim's find of *Vicia villosa* (Fodder Vetch) from Rhyd Lane, taking note of its calyx with a bulge on the upperside, and its striking purple-and-white flowers (a known colour form).

We then crossed over the A4063 to a rather scrappy and rutted piece of ground, but one that held plenty of botanical interest, with 78 species noted. These included *Trifolium medium* (Zigzag Clover), *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid), *Neottia ovata* (Twayblade), *Equisetum telmateia* (Great Horsetail) and several *Carex* (Sedge) species. We also saw what we thought was more *Vicia villosa*, albeit just with uniformly purple flowers, but some in the group were less convinced about the difference from regular *V. cracca* (Tufted Vetch), and following the meeting we realised that we had been too willing to jump to conclusions, and that only Tim's original specimen was true *V. villosa*.



The rough ground by the A4063 (above) where we found two small plants of *Neottia ovata* (centre) and where regular *Vicia cracca* (right) rather needlessly caused us confusion!



Pavement-edge habitats then provided us opportunity to compare some members of the Brassicaceae, and also yielded *Catapodium rigidum* (Fern-grass), the increasingly frequent *Polypogon viridis* (Water Bent), and the uncommon *Epilobium roseum* (Pale Willowherb).

Heading single-file along the narrow and busy Cefn Glas Road, it was with relief we turned into the area that was our main target for the day. Parts of this, known as Coedtymaen and Coed-y-gains, are designated a 'Site of Interest for Nature Conservation', but there were very few localised records in the database. This we dealt with satisfactorily, totting up 143 species for the site as a whole, being guided through the extensive mix of rough grassland and woodland by local resident and naturalist Andrew McGleish.



One of the highlights of a relatively diverse, open area within Coed-y-gains was a hybrid swarm featuring plants at all points on the spectrum from (left to right) *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh Orchid) via *D. x grandis* (Leopard Marsh Orchid) to *D. fuchsii* (Common Spotted Orchid).



Left (from left) Paul van Maaren, Julian Woodman, Andrew McGleish, Kerry Gale, Tim Rich and other members of the group negotiating the long grass of the large open area towards the north of Coed-y-gains. Centre: *Geranium pratense* (Meadow Cranesbill) was of probable native occurrence here, although its distribution is increasingly obscured by seed-mix plantings. Right: We also saw a rayed form of *Centaurea nigra* (Black Knapweed).

Generally speaking, the open areas were rather dominated by coarse grassland, with no sign of grazing or other management. Although for the time being there was reasonable diversity, nutrient levels were clearly rather elevated, and it was clear that before long much of it would be turning into scrub. A highlight near the start was some *Bromus racemosus* (Smooth Brome), the first hectad record this century, a fine orchid population (see photos), and a small quantity of *Hypericum hirsutum* (Hairy St John's-wort), only the fourth hectad record.

Some of the woodland was fairly young and not of special interest, but other areas were clearly of greater age, and we were pleased to see good indicators of this habitat, none of which have many records in this part of Glamorgan. These included four patches of *Paris quadrifolia* (Herb Paris) at its only hectad site, the bedraggled remains of *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel), locally plentiful *Galium odoratum* (Woodruff), a single spike of *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple Orchid), as well as a small quantity of *Milium effusum* (Wood Millet), the first hectad record since the 1950–1969 date class.

In a small, open, damp area with standing water, we had *Glyceria notata* (Plicate Sweet-grass), which proved again to be the first hectad record since 1950–1969, along with *Equisetum palustre* (Marsh Horsetail), *Chara vulgaris* (Common Stonewort), and *Silene flos-cuculi* (Ragged Robin).

Moving out of the woodland, we passed through a field that had we were told had previously contained a large population of orchids, but which had not been



Members of the group examine a patch of *Bromopsis ramosa* (Hairy Brome), a plant mostly of damp, alkaline soils.



By our lunch stop, sitting on a fallen tree in a sunny glade, we saw a convincing example of *Juncus conglomeratus* × *effusus* = *J.* × *kernreichgeltii* (a hybrid rush), which has scattered records in the W half of Glamorgan, but fewer in the E, where it may be overlooked.



Left: *Glyceria notata* (Plicate Sweet-grass) in the small pool on the path in Coedtymaen.

Middle: *Silaum silaus* is an increasingly rare plant in the vice-county, with only nine sites recorded this century. The group did well to spot this vegetative plant!

Right: *Polypogon monspeliensis* (Annual Beard Grass) was one of the finds on the roadsides in Cefn Glas. Along with *P. viridis* (Water Bent), which we also saw, this species is turning up with increasing frequency in urban areas in Glamorgan, usually on salted roadside verges, reflecting its native habitat of coastal grasslands in S and E England.

ideally managed in the recent past. We did nevertheless locate some *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted Orchid), but more remarkable was a single plant of *Silaum silaus* (Pepper Saxifrage), which previously only had a pre-2000 record for this tetrad (SS88V).

We then headed back through the housing estates of Cefn Glas, which at first were tight-packed new-build and pretty sterile, but became more interesting to the E, with wider verges and pavement cracks allowing plants to gain a toehold. *Epilobium tetragonum* (Square-stalked Willowherb) was nice to see, as was *Papaver lecoqii* (Yellow-juiced Poppy), which is a very occasional plant in the vice-county.

BSBI AGM and Excursion weekend – Friday 5 July to Sunday 7 July

A report of this three-day event, including visits to Crymlyn Burrows, Baglan, Cefn Cribwr and Margam Mine, will appear in the *BSBI Yearbook* (<https://bsbi.org/members/bsbi-yearbook-members-only>), which will be published in January/February 2025.

Cwm Rhydymilwyr – Sunday 4 August

Meeting at the Taff Ely Ridgeway car park on a fairly bright, breezy, and increasingly sunny day, our group of seven botanists headed briskly down the road and towards the little-recorded valley that was our target on this excursion. We learnt that the name translates as ‘soldier’s ford’, and a later search found that apparently many men were slaughtered here during a battle in the distant past.

We soon encountered several nice plants along a narrow path, including *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John’s-wort) and *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath Grass), and in damp ground close by, a foretaste of some of the species that we would later find much more of.

Keen to make progress, we dropped down from the bracken-covered slopes into the floor of the valley, which was dominated by *Molinia caerulea* (Purple Moor Grass). The going was difficult, with plenty of tussocky grass, water-filled hollows and boggy pools to slow our progress, and giving ample opportunity for those of us not shod in wellies to regret our choice of footwear!

The plants of this habitat were diverse, and included many of the species that one would expect in acidic boggy ground in south Wales. Generally or locally plentiful here were *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel), *Erica tetralix* (Cross-leaved Heath), *Juncus bulbosus* (Bulbous Rush), *Scutellaria minor* (Lesser Skullcap), *Eriophorum angustifolium* (Common Cottongrass), *Drosera rotundifolia* (Round-leaved Sundew), *Hypericum elodes* (Bog St John's-wort), *Menyanthes trifoliata* (Bogbean), *Potamogeton polygonifolius* (Bog Pondweed) and *Narthecium ossifragum* (Bog Asphodel). Indeed, the latter proved to be especially abundant over the floor of the valley, and must have been a fine show when flowering slightly earlier in the summer.



Highlights of Cwm Rhydymilwyr ❶: *Rhynchospora alba* ❷; the same, growing with *Narthecium ossifragum* and *Erica tetralix* ❸; *Drosera rotundifolia* with the leaves of *Anagallis tenella* ❹; *Scutellaria minor* ❺; *Eleogiton fluitans* ❻; boggy pools with *Menyanthes trifoliata* (right) ❼; *Hypericum elodes* ❽; *Potamogeton polygonifolius* amongst *Eriophorum angustifolium* emerging from an iridescent film of 'bog oil' ❾ – a complex biopolymeric material produced by the action of the bacterium *Leptothrix discophora* upon iron dissolved in oxygen-poor water.

Also present, but only local or in smaller quantity, were *Eleocharis palustris* (Common Spikerush), *Viola palustris* (Marsh Violet), *Dryopteris carthusiana* (Narrow Buckler Fern), *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Clubrush), *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort), *Epilobium palustre* (Marsh Willowherb), *Carex panicea* (Carnation Sedge) and *C. demissa* (Common Yellow Sedge).

In one spot we found *Carex demissa* × *hostiana* = *C.* × *fulva* (a hybrid sedge) with the first but not the second of its parents, and there were two places with a small quantity of *Vaccinium oxycoccos* (Wild Cranberry), not previously recorded for this site. But the main task for the day was to relocate and map the known population of *Rhynchospora alba* (White Beak Sedge), at one of only five sites recently seen in Glamorgan. This proved to be fairly plentiful in two main areas of the valley bottom, separated by about 60 m, on or near hummocks amongst peaty, boggy pools, one of which was ‘quaking’. Unfortunately, Karen had made the decision to head back only a few minutes before we discovered it! However, she and the rest of the group had already seen the good population of another target species, *Eleogiton fluitans* (Floating Club-rush), which we later found in smaller quantity in two other places further downstream.



The very narrow, greyish leaves and erect, clustered flowering spikes of *Agrostis curtisii* were scattered on the N side of the ford.

We paused our progress down the valley at the aforementioned ford, where we had lunch, finding a good colony of *Agrostis curtisii* (Bristle Bent) by the stony path. Afterwards, we continued downstream, finding largely the same mix of plants – but with no peaty pools in this section, both the *Rhynchospora* and the *Eleogiton* were absent. However, we did encounter three species that we might have expected to have seen earlier – *Dactylorhiza maculata* (Heath Spotted Orchid), *Trichophorum germanicum* (Common Deergrass) and *Wahlenbergia hederacea* (Ivy-leaved Bellflower), albeit all in small quantity. The latter is normally a frequent species of marshy habitats from the border ridges northwards – but perhaps the rather peaty soil conditions do not quite suit it here. We also found *Frangula alnus* (Alder Buckthorn) along the stream, and – less happily – four plants of *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan Balsam), for which members of the group made a detour through difficult ground to pull up.



(Left to right) Tom, Aaron, Faith, Megan and Tim at the E end of Cwm Rhydymilwyr, close to the boundary of the access land.



There were a few specimens of fruiting *Frangula alnus* E of the ford.

Having reached the E boundary of the site, we briefly investigated alternative routes up to no avail, before retracing our steps back to the ford, and from there back to the car park along the main footpath. We were stunned when it took us only 10 minutes, despite having taken all day to progress down the valley! All agreed that it had been an excellent day out, and we felt that the site is amongst the best of what Glamorgan has to offer in terms of acid bog habitat, despite no grazing or management being obvious on the valley floor at the time we visited.

New Tredegar & Brithdir – Saturday 7 September

On this joint excursion with Monmouthshire Botany Group, the approximately 18 assembled botanists gave brief introductions to each other, before starting on the task of cataloguing some less well-recorded habitat either side of the Rhymney. The weather was damp and misty following heavy rain the previous day, and this, along with the large turnout and the tall bracken on the Glamorgan side, dissuaded us from heading up onto the hills as originally planned. We therefore largely kept to the roads and tracks lower down, which as it turned out gave us plenty to look at, with some route re-planning allowing us to divide our time more-or-less equally between the vice-counties.



The group scratches their collective heads at the colony of very tall *Pastinaca sativa* – a species which seems to be increasing on road verges in south Wales.



The hybrid *Salix cinerea* × *viminalis* = *S.* × *holosericea* (Silky-leaved Osier), growing close to the River Rhymney, on the v.c. 41 side.

Starting off in v.c. 35 therefore, we soon encountered some rough grassland, where we concluded that some *Pastinaca sativa* (Wild Parsnip) was indeed just the regular stuff rather than an alien taxon, and where a *Carex* with blackish seeds was decided, at length, to be *C. divulsa* (Grey Sedge) well past its best. At this point, David belatedly discovered that we had in fact already crossed the vice-county boundary, because the river had been culverted over at this point for a stretch of about 100 m, making it undetectable. Thankfully, this error only entailed a small amount of record re-allocation!

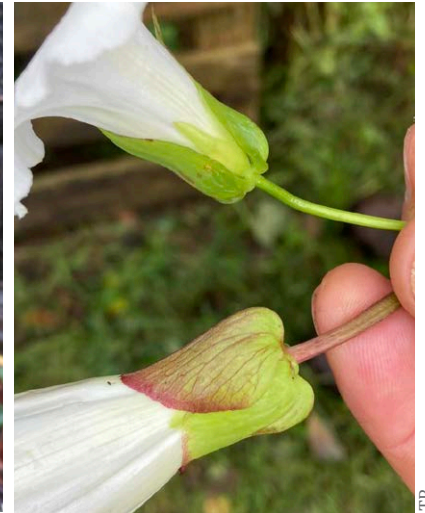
Crossing the railway line, we proceeded along the terraced back lanes of Brithdir, finding the usual associations, although there was an oddity in the shape of a garden variant of *Trifolium repens*, here very likely to be a throwout. At one point some of us thought we had *Epilobium lanceolatum* (Spear-leaved Willowherb) until we were brought down to earth with the realisation that it was, in fact, just *E. montanum* (Broad-leaved Willowherb)! Some pairs of species were noted for comparison – *Polypogon viridis* (Water Bent) and *P. monspeliensis* (Annual Beard Grass), *Polygonum aviculare* (Common Knotgrass) and *P. depressum*, formerly *P. arenastrum* (Equal-leaved Knotgrass), and *Calystegia silvatica* (Large Bindweed) and *C. sepium* (Hedge Bindweed).



A patch of the striking *Trifolium repens* cultivar 'Dragon's Blood' was naturalised along the back lane of Milton Terrace in Brithdir.



The heavily indented veins, stalked leaves and pale flowers indicate this is *Epilobium roseum*.



Tim Rich demonstrates the sepal characters that distinguish *Calystegia sepium* (top: flat, separate) from *C. silvatica* (bottom: pouched, overlapping).



An unusually compact specimen of *Dryopteris affinis* (Scaly Male Fern) on the roadside retaining wall was not convincing for either subsp. *affinis* or subsp. *borreri*, and further expert determination was rendered difficult by the absence of any sori.

Turning under the railway bridge towards the river, we found colonies of two species that were new hectad records for the v.c. 41 side (but not for the v.c. 35 side) – *Epilobium roseum* (Pale Willowherb) and *Poa nemoralis* (Wood Meadow Grass). The latter was growing along a damp, shaded retaining wall next to the road, where there was also a good selection of ferns.

Crossing the river bridge, the recording 'baton' was duly passed from David to Steph Tyler and Elsa Wood. We lingered in a couple of grassy places as we headed up to the main road, and the group become somewhat split-up, but we soon regathered as we headed NW along Lower Road. We had hoped to head upwards here on a narrow path formerly known to Julian, but this had been blocked off by the landowner, and we were forced to retrace our steps. Feeling in need of sustenance at this point, we stopped for lunch, arrayed in a line along a roadside crash-barrier, near a colony of the rarely-encountered *Lactuca virosa* (Great Lettuce).



Lactuca virosa (Great Lettuce), found near our lunch stop, is thinly scattered in the S part of v.c. 35 and the Cardiff area in v.c. 41, but absent elsewhere – this is a new hectad record.

After lunch, it was time to get to grips with the characteristics of an unfamiliar member of the *Dryopteris affinis* group, subsp. *paleaceolobata*. This is rather erratically recorded nationally, and is previously unrecorded from either v.c. 35 or 41, but was ably spotted and demonstrated by Olga Krylova.

The weather briefly brightened at this point, and perhaps it was this unexpected sunshine that was the cause of an outbreak of botanical amnesia. We first mused over what appeared to be an odd-looking

non-flowering *Hypericum* by a roadside, with opinions unusually strongly divided between *H. pulchrum* (Upright St John's-wort) and *H. humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort) on account of its relatively upright habit. Shame-faced were we, therefore, when it turned out to be *Linum catharticum* (Fairy Flax), albeit in a rather atypical form, probably due to the application of salt-grit.

Not long after, plants which some in the group thought were good for *Agrostis curtisii* (Bristle Bent) were viewed a little more doubtfully by others, and at length it was concluded that they were in fact *Festuca rubra* (Red Fescue). Add to that a road layout bafflingly not shown on the OS map, another dead-end up a track necessitating a route revision, and the complete failure by the author of this account (who alleges to be keen on *Epilobium*) to observe a substantial colony of a plant that this time was actually *E. lanceolatum* (Spear-leaved Willowherb)... and it was clear that some of us needed a little more than a lunch break to revive our frazzled brains!



The grazed field at the end of Jubilee Road, Elliot's Town, which provided pleasant botanising in the afternoon.

Happily, some respite was provided by a short walk along a street that allowed us to get up onto the hillside, and here we spent a good 45 minutes or so examining the diverse flora of a grazed field. This site had drier ground with *Danthonia decumbens* (Heath Grass), *Rumex acetosella* (Sheep's Sorrel) and *Galium saxatile* (Heath Bedstraw), but of most interest were some damp flushes. These held a small selection of typical sedges and rushes, along with *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel), *Scutellaria minor* (Lesser Skullcap), *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush), *Veronica scutellata*



***Epilobium lanceolatum* – a plant that is... ahem... very easily overlooked!**



***Ononis repens* (Common Restharrow) as a street 'weed' in Elliot's Town provides a point of conversation...**



...as does *Veronica agrestis* (Green Field Speedwell) in New Tredegar later on. The pale flowers provided a hint of its identity, confirmed by the solely patent glandular hairs on the pods.



Two of the finds from the grazed field – *Veronica scutellata* with its distinctively narrow leaves, and (right) Tim Rich's find of a damaged *Rumex acetosella* leaf providing a perfect excuse to use an emoji in these reports for the first time 😊.

(Marsh Speedwell) and *Wahlenbergia hederacea* (Ivy-leaved Bellflower), with the last two perhaps being of most significance in a v.c. 35 context.

A wander back through New Tredegar yielded plenty of streetside 'weeds' (amongst an unwelcome abundance of general litter), and a 'interesting' conversation with a local resident. We then arrived back at the car-park, rather weary but satisfied after a long day's botanising in the best of company.

*Text by David Barden and Karen Wilkinson (May).
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