

'Vegscapes of Ceredigion' – Annette Williamson

An ongoing (started in 2020) personal project to artistically witness and record some of the vegetation of Ceredigion.

A long time ago I did a botany degree and more recently completed some courses on botanical illustration with Aberystwyth University. As I have got older, and after more recently, losing my Dad and subsequently going through a serious health scare, I have become more and more passionate about trying to capture how plants look within their habitat, growing with each other and other species and how they change over a season. It seems to me that vegetation when represented in art usually provides the backdrop for the 'real action' and has been/is rarely the subject of a realistic celebration for itself (though, if searched for, there are some wonderful examples out there, e.g. Rayma Peterson).



Devil's-bit scabious/Tamaid y cythraul/Succisa pratensis, Llyn Llygad Rheidol, Pumlumon, August 24. Mixed media on paper 26x36cm.

Capturing the beautiful and complex visual sights that make up some of the natural vegetation examples in my local patch is both an uplifting experience and a physical challenge. The most wonderful thing is that I get to spend a bit of time sharing the same space with the plants that I love, in their world. I always draw from life at ground level in the first

instance, capturing a kind of 'map' of the main elements that I wish to include. I follow up at home (alas no studio!!) from photos. I use neutral pencil colour to map out initially and add colour with watercolour, coloured pencil and acrylic gouache. I use 300gsm hot press watercolour paper that I take out in the field and I make no preparatory drawings. I try to keep spacing of individuals as natural as possible rather than a kind of amalgamation of typical species. My 'method' is 'fudge and bodge' and rather 'messy' if it could be compared to traditional botanical illustration, though the emphasis is always on accuracy rather than making something 'pretty'. I concentrate on feeling my way through a picture as it develops rather than using a precise set of rules - though this may turn into a kind of 'method' as I get more experienced! I have over the years attempted to photograph vegetation but I have never been able to do it satisfactorily – drawing seems a better option for me and includes the use of photographs as a tool.

If I have enough time and resources, my long term dream would be to create a kind of library of habitat/vegetation 'vegscapes' that would form a kind of stepping stone between a species list (that usually only specialists can understand) and seeing the vegetation in real life. This could be potentially useful to conservation managers/ landowners/graziers/local councils/schools and the general public. It would also be wonderful, as a natural part of it, to

help bring more into use the Welsh language names for plants. It always strikes me that nature conservation, language use and the continuation of traditional music and dance are all part of the biodiversity theme.

If I was efficient and had more energy I would also complete, at the same time as doing a drawing, a thorough species list – though already, just getting out to draw has resulted in new discoveries that I have passed on to the BSBI (including a new VC 46 altitude record for bluebell (620m) and a really exciting new site for mossy saxifrage on Pumlumon). I have not yet had the time or real desire to set myself up on-line but any suggestions/observations/questions positive or negative would be most welcome on any of the above (including if this work/idea might be worth supporting generally). I'd like to thank Arthur Chater for encouraging me to share my work with the BSBI

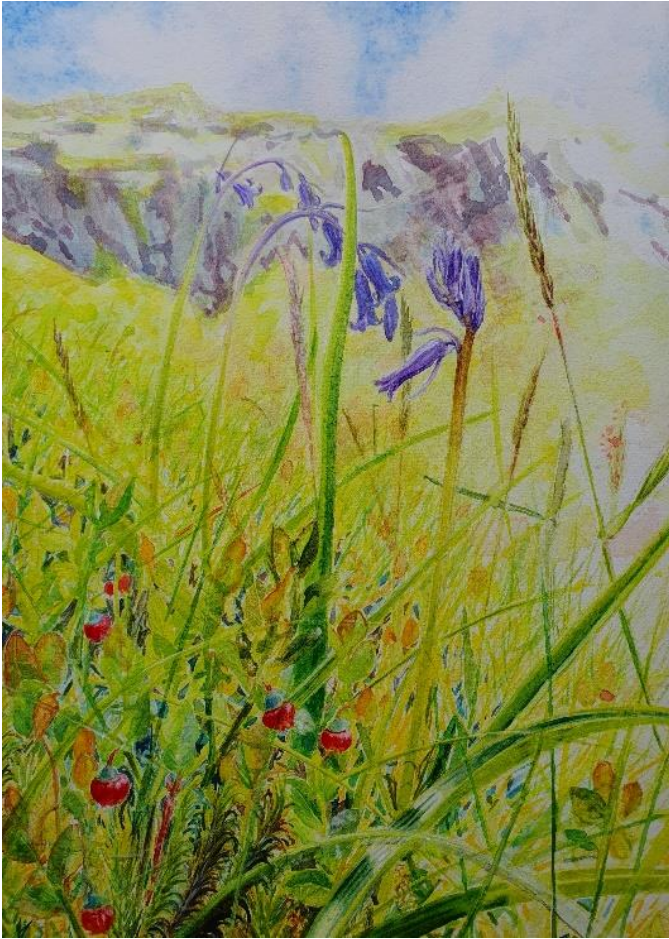
Annette Williamson November 2024

acwvegscapes@gmail.com

Below are a few examples of the vegscapes idea. Titles and species names etc could be adapted to potential audience.



Ynyslas dune flora, Ceredigion, May 2021
Mixed media on paper. 21.5x29.5cm



Bluebell/Clychau'r gog/*Hyacinthoides non-scripta* with
Bilberry/Llus/*Vaccinium myrtillus*, Llyn Llygad Rheidol,
Pumlumon, June 2024. Mixed media, 26x18cm



Grey willow/Helygen
Iwyd/*Salix cinerea* with
Purple moor-
grass/*Glaswellt y*
gweunydd/*Molinia*
caerulea and Bog
myrtle/Helygen
Fair/*Myrica gale*, Cors
Fochno, Ceredigion,
March 2024. Mixed
media on paper
26x36cm.



Morfa Borth, relic dune vegetation, Ceredigion, July 2020. Mixed media on paper, 21.5x29.5cm.



Hare's-tail cottongrass/Plu'r gweunydd unben/Eriophorum vaginatum Llyn Llygad Rheidol, Pumlumon, March 2024. Mixed media on paper, 26x18cm