

Anglesey Plants in 2019

As usual this is partly an account of some of the interesting plants noted this year together with a record of the activities of the Anglesey Flora Group.

In February Nigel spotted *Polystichum x bicknellii*, the hybrid between Hard and Soft Shield-fern, with both the parents in limestone pavement at Parciau, SH50.84, the first certain record of the hybrid since 1989.

The Flora Group got off to an early and very wet start this year with a 7th March visit to Ynys Faelog, one of several small islands in the Strait, off Menai Bridge. Both this and the neighbouring Ynys Gaint, contain semi-natural habitats modified by various land use changes and plantings over the years. This has resulted in first records including *Choisya ternata* (*Mexican Orange*), *Pseudosasa japonica* (*Arrow Bamboo*) *Skimmia japonica* (*Skimmia*) and *Veronica brachysiphon* (*Hooker's Hebe*).

On the morning of Monday April 8th 13 members met at the California Hotel, Brynteg for an early season planning meeting when we were joined by Barbara Brown, the BSBI Wales Officer and Aisling May from COFNOD. The main topics centred on the BSBI's Atlas 2020 with the priorities for action in this last year of recording and progress with monad recording towards a possible new Anglesey flora.

In the afternoon we visited limestone grassland at Glyn, near Benllech, finding a few small patches of *Alchemilla filicaulis* ssp. *vestita* (Common Lady's Mantle) and *Viola hirta* (Hairy Violet),

On the Tuesday the morning was spent on Ynys Gaint (SH56.72) – see above, and 170 taxa were listed. The flora ranged from heather and wavy hair-grass on the rocky outcrops, through scrub with dog's mercury and sanicle to salt-marsh, the last with convincing *Cochlearia anglica* (*English Scurvygrass*), many of the Anglesey records of this species are now thought to be the *Cochlearia x hollandica* the hybrid between *C. anglica* and *C. officinalis* (*Common Scurvygrass*). As on Ynys Faelog the semi-natural vegetation has been much modified by introductions in the past and further first records included *Cotoneaster salicifolius* (Willow-leaved Cotoneaster) and *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (Kohuhu) as well as many other alien plants, testifying to the many uses to which the island has been subjected to over the years.

Ynys Gaint was visited again on 11th August when a further 48 species were added to the list – including again a number of trees originally planted and now mixed amongst the semi-natural vegetation. Pat Denne identified *Ostrya carpinifolia* (*Hop Hornbeam*), *Abies nordmanniana* (*Caucasian Fir*), and *Picea orientalis* (*Oriental Spruce*) as further first county records. *Hypericum hircinum* (*Stinking Tutsan*) is widespread shrub along the Strait, along with *H. androsaemum* (*Tutsan*) and several bushes on the island appeared to be intermediate and were identified as the hybrid – *H. x inodorum* (*Tall Tutsan*) – for which there was only one other Anglesey record in the DDB, from Holyhead in 2006.

In October Robbie Blackhall-Miles made another visit to the island and made the most exciting discovery of a single tree of *Sorbus arvonica* (*Menai Whitebeam*) growing with *Sorbus croceocarpa* (Orange Whitebeam). Menai Whitebeam has been known for many years by the Menai Strait at Nantporth in VC49, but this is the first time this critically endangered endemic has been found on Anglesey.

In the afternoon of 9th April the Flora Group visited Cadnant Dingle SSSI, courtesy of Anthony Taverner, The wooded Dingle supports the largest population of *Polystichum aculeatum* (*Hard Shield-fern*) on Anglesey and several plants of *P. x bicknellii*, the hybrid between Hard and Soft Shield-fern were also noted for the second time this year.

Cemaes SH37.93 was the starting point on Thursday the 11th for an exploration along the coast to Llanbadrig Point in SH37.94. The complex of Precambrian rocks of this area include areas of limestone and finds included a new hectad record for *Myosotis ramosissima* (*Early Forget-me-not*) and a limestone face with over 30 clumps of *Asplenium ceterach* (*Rustyback*) on natural rock, almost all other Anglesey localities are on mortared walls.



Photo of *Myosotis ramosissima*
Early Forget-me-not. Photo credit;
Hugh Knotts

In early May a visit to Fedw Fawr, SH60.82 enabled a check on the small (80 x 50cm.) patch of *Antennaria dioica* (*Mountain Everlasting*), only 30 inflorescences were counted, a reduction on the 2017 figure and this is now one of only four surviving locations. The Group then made their way west along the newly opened coastal path and were surprised the abundance of *Adoxa moschatellina* (*Moschatel*) growing beneath bracken along the cliff-top.

Jane and Ivor Rees have continued to add a great many records. Especially notable was the discovery of *Chaenorhinum minus* (*Least Toadflax*) at the base of a wall in Bethel (SH396.704) – the first sighting since 1987. Other finds include new localities for *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (*Bird's-foot Clover*), *Trifolium subterraneum* (*Subterranean Clover*) in the Llanfaiynghornwy area SH31.92 & 32.92 and *Trifolium scabrum* (*Rough Clover*) at two sites in Aberffraw (SH34,68 & 35.69) and along the sea front in Rhosneigr (SH31.72). Also the rediscovery of *Viola lactea* (*Pale Dog-violet*) and *Viola canina* (*Heath Dog-violet*) from coastal slopes at Porth y Garan, SH25.77 – neither have been seen from here since the 1980's



Trifolium subterraneum. In sheep grazed pasture near Llanfairynghornwy, Anglesey, 18th May 2019. Note leaves trimmed by grazing. Photo L.J. Rees (Left image). Detail showing reddish rings at base of calyx tubes

The Flora Group visited the coast at Porthygychiaid, S. of Point Lynas on 15th June in an effort to relocate Paul Day's 1983 record of *Vicia sylvatica* (*Wood Vetch*) on the coastal slopes – however without success! They did manage to add *Calamagrostis epigejos* (*Wood Small-reed*), *Erodium maritimum* (*Sea Stork's-bill*), *Serratula tinctoria* (*Saw-wort*) and 26 other taxa to the monad list. *Hylotelephium telephium* (*Orpine*) was especially frequent – making for one of the best populations around the coast.

On 20th June the Flora Group visited Pentraeth Forest SH5478 & 5578 refinding *Dryopteris carthusiana* (*Narrow Buckler-fern*) and *Thelypteris palustris* (*Marsh Fern*) the latter quite commonly in the carr around Llyn Llwydiarth. Also a new locality for *Oreopteris limbosperma* (*Lemon-scented Fern*) only the fifth recent record; but unable to refind *Dryopteris aemula* (*Hay-scented Buckler-fern*) and *Osmunda regalis* (*Royal fern*). Walking between Pentraeth and the Forest there were 100's, if not 1000's of flowering shoots of *Orobanche rapum-genistae* (*Greater Broomrape*) beneath the gorse bushes.

Geranium endressii (*French Cranesbill*) was found established in a small field near Llanddona on 1st July – just the third VC record.

A visit on 4th July to arable fields in the Rhosbadrig area SH35.72 found *Chenopodium ficifolium* (*Fig-leaved Goosefoot*) for the first time and *Lamium amplexicaule* (*Henbit Dead-nettle*) only the fifth post2000 sighting amongst a number of other arable weed species. The rubble surrounds to the carpark at Rhosneigr golf club continues to support the only known population of *Amsinkia micrantha* (*Common Fiddleneck*) first noted here in 1999 along with *Lupinus arboreus* (*Tree Lupin*).



Lamium amplexicaule
Henbit Dead-nettle
Photo credit Hugh Knott

In August the RAF kindly facilitated a two day follow up visit to Valley Airfield. Although not blessed with the glorious sunny weather we enjoyed in June 2006 the Group still managed to make a good few additions to the monad lists. The more notable finds included two new locations for *Equisetum x meridionale*. This hybrid horsetail, between *E. ramosissimum* (*Branched Horsetail*) and *E. variegatum* (*Variiegated Horsetail*), has been known since 2000 from either side of the entrance to the RSPB Valley Lakes reserve and because it is only found here and in Cheshire and has a complex taxonomic history, it has featured in earlier Annual Reviews. Three groups of plants were found in rather grassy dune heath in two monads, SH30.75 and 31.75, further material was collected for Herb. BM. Adding to the clover finds several groups of *Trifolium scabrum* (*Rough Clover*) were growing along runway edges also *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (*Bird's-foot Clover*). A scatter of *Filago germanica* (*Common Cudweed*) were also noted, which is a markedly uncommon plant on Anglesey with only three other post2000 locations and two small clusters of *Parentucellia viscosa* (*Yellow Bartsia*), again an uncommon species with only three other locations – all quite recent as it was not found on the Island until 2004.

In mid August Llyn Hafodol (SH39.89) and Salbri Bog (SH37.88) were visited as a change from early March visits to monitor *Ranunculus tripartitus* (Three-lobed Crowfoot). The first site appeared rather undergrazed but a good list was made from the tall fen vegetation with more Narrow Buckler-fern. At Salbri we were impressed by the amount of *Carex limosa* (Bog-sedge) scattered quite widely over the site.

The west end of Cemlyn (SH32.93) became one of the most visited monads this year. In August. Richard Birch surveyed the pools west of the causeway to Tyn Llan and added *Ruppia cirrhosa* (*Spiral Tasselweed*) in addition to *Ruppia maritima* (*Beaked Tasselweed*) and also *Zannichellia palustris* (*Horned Pondweed*). Followed by Nigel Brown who visited the walled grounds of Bryn Aber to list the plants for the owner. Like Ynys Gaint in the Menai Strait (see above) Bryn Aber is a mix where ornamental plants have been introduced into a range of semi-natural habitats and many of them continue to coexist. The result is 15 additions to the SH39 hectad, of which four are 1st county records: *Forsythia suspensa* (*Trailing Forsythia or Golden Bell*), *Olearia nummularifolia* (*Daisy Bush*), *Petunia x hybrida* (*Petunia*) and *Pittosporum crassifolium* (*Karo*).

A September visit to Tywyn Fferam and Tywyn Llyn at Rhosneigr was principally to advise NRW about invasive aliens in the dunes in advance implementing the Dynamic Dunes Project, which aims to revitalise dunes here and elsewhere around the Anglesey coast. One result was an addition to the Flora – *Olearia solandri* (*Coastal Daisy-bush*) a shrub native to New Zealand, determined by Mark Duffell, the BSBI Referee for this group. Also new hectad records for two Michaelmas Daisy hybrids, *Symphotrichum x salignum* and *S. x versicolor* and for *Phormium tenax* (*New Zealand Flax*).

The last field visit of the season was on 8th October to the Anglesey Show-ground at Mona (SH40.75) one of the very few unvisited monads in the county. Despite the late date over 200 taxa were noted by the four recorders. *Clematis montana* (*Himalayan Clematis*) robustly overtopping one of the hedges was the only new county records and it was interesting to spot *Spergularia marina* (*Lesser Sea-spurrey*) away from the coast.

In addition to being a “good” year for annual clovers, especially Rough Clover, it has also been good for *Spiranthes spiralis* (*Autumn Lady's - tresses*) with Richard Birch finding c. 35 flower spikes in what appears to be a new site in the former limestone quarries at Carreg Onnen (SH58.81 & 58.82) and Ivor & Jane Rees and James Robertson estimating a population in excess of 10,000 flower spikes in the large dune slack at Aberffraw

(SH35.68).

There have also been exceptionally good numbers of *Gentiana pneumonanthe* (*Marsh Gentian*) over 4000 plants at Penrhoslligwy (SH48.86) and the highest count on the NWWT's Cors Goch sites since 1996.

Raphanistrum raphanistrum subsp. *maritimum* (*Sea Radish*) is a plant having more than a good year – indeed it has been spreading in abundance around the coast since around 2000. In *Flowering Plants and Ferns of Anglesey* (1982) Roberts lists subsp. *maritimum* as very rare on sandy or gravelly shores and gives just two localities: Traeth Llydan, Rhosneigr (SH3272) and Trwyn Cemlyn (SH33.93?). In the first published version of the Anglesey Rare Plant Register (2006) Sea Radish is included as a County Scarce plant recorded from 14 monads between 1971 and 2005. The current version of the Anglesey Flora database (October 2019) lists records from 63 monads (58 of them post2000 localities). It would be interesting to have confirmation that this spread is replicated in other coastal counties in Wales and is a worthy subject of a separate article.



Llanddona end of Red Wharf Bay, Anglesey, showing abundance of *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp *maritimum* on ground immediately behind the shingle storm beach, 14th June 2019. Photo Ivor Rees.

During the year David Morris, who surveyed possible mitigation wetland sites for Horizon plc, kindly passed on his plant records. Among the welcome lists of mire species was an unexpected record of *Bryonia dioica* (*White Bryony*) scrambling through willow scrub at the edge of one of the basin mires between Cemaes and Burwen, (SH39.94). Although a widespread plant in England and into east Wales there are no historic records of this species from Anglesey and only two other records. The first by John Hawksford in 1992 when he noted it as a probable introduction at the edge of a caravan site just N of Benllech (SH522.833) and the other from the Gallow's Point area of Beaumaris in 2006.

Henry Cook, Living Landscapes Officer, Anglesey Fens for the NWWT on habitat management, also kindly supplied lists from various sites. Of particular interest was finding *Viola lactea* (*Pale Dog-violet*) on an area recently cleared of heather on Penrhoslligwy SSSI, the first record from this SSSI in the Database.

Other interesting findings include a second county record of *Crassula tillaea* (*Mossy Stonecrop*) Chris Dixon recorded numerous plants along one of the Newborough Forest rides at SH400.644. The first record was only in 2015 from a carpark in Rhosneigr and it is

surely lurking elsewhere on the Island.

Another second and indeed third record was of the hybrid between two widespread orchids, *Dactylorhiza x transiens*, the hybrid between *D. fuchsii* (*Common Spotted-orchid*) and *D. maculata* (*Heath Spotted-orchid*). Nigel Brown noted this with both parents on the coastal slopes near Porth y Corwgl, Llanelian, SH48.92 and from a hay meadow in Talwrn, SH49.80. The only other record in the database is by RH Roberts in 1962, who noted that this was a rare hybrid.

Jane Stevens found *Senecio vulgaris* var. *hibernicus* (*Rayed Groundsel*) between paving slabs in Llangefni this autumn almost exactly where her late husband, David, reported the plant in 1999. Rayed Groundsel is either overlooked or surprisingly scarce as there have been only 5 other records since the first in 1986 and one of these was also from this summer when Jane & Ivor Rees noted it on the station platform at Ty Croes (SH34.72). Also in Llangefni Market Place Jane found the first record of *Erigeron* (*Conyza*) *floribundus* (Bilbao's Fleabane) 5 flowering stems among about 60 plants between paving slabs by the Afon Cefni and in November Nigel Brown further plants nearby outside the Aldi store.

Of course this year has seen the conclusion of recording for Atlas 2020. A much better coverage has been achieved for all the hectads (10km. squares) than for the 2000 Atlas – the coverage can be viewed on the BSBI website. Disappointingly though each hectad has about 10-13% of taxa not recorded since before 2000. The reasons are varied, sometimes just the difference between aggregate and segregate species, or that the early record was of some unusual casual or hybrid. Or gaps in our expertise, *Agrostis gigantea* (*Black Bent*) seems to be overlooked, we are also weak on several of the “critical” groups like *Rosa* (roses), *Rubus* (*brambles*) and *Taraxacum* (*dandelions*). There may also be genuine declines like less *Campanula rotundifolia* (*Bellflower*); but for many we were not looking in the right place at the right time!

However to offset this every hectad has many additional taxa never recorded before, amounting to an impressive average of 203 new taxa per hectad.

Special thanks this year to Pat Denne & Jane Stevens who have each adopted a group of monads around where they live and with repeated visits throughout the seasons have made many additions and useful updates of earlier records. Also to Ivor & Jane Rees for the steady flow of new and updated records from all over the County.

Also many thanks to all those who have supplied records, or photographs this year, or attended Flora Group field meetings and for their company in the field.

Especially thanks to Nigel Brown, my co-recorder, for all our deliberations and for organising all 20 of the field meetings.

A full list of the over 20 new 1st County Records and Hectad additions will appear in Plant Records in the next Welsh Bulletin.

Ian Bonner