

Highlights of the 2019 Glynhir Recording Meeting, v.c.44 Carmarthenshire

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Monday 8th July 2019

The week began, and largely continued, sunny and six participants congregated at Glynhir Mansion in time for lunch (Arthur Chater, Arthur Copping, Graeme Kay, Martyn Stead and Richard & Kath Pryce). This was followed by an interesting visit to 'Garden Cottage', the former Home Farm located in the walled garden at Gelli Aur (SN5920), where we were hosted by Diane and Thomas Crimble (formerly of the pop-group Hawkwind). Rebecca Blackman, Kevin McGinn, Nigel Stringer and Stephen & Ann Coker joined the party for the afternoon which was led by Ivor Stokes of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust. The principal reason for visiting was the promise of seeing the massive *Liriodendron tulipifera* (Tulip Tree) planted in about 1767, which certainly turned out to live up to its reputation (see photo) with its incredible girth of 9.25m dividing into two great trunks about 3m above the ground, reputedly the largest specimen in the country at 25m tall. The area was, however, densely clothed with other trees and scrub making it impossible to stand back far enough to appreciate the true magnificence of the specimen. The flora of the nearby, rather shaded lake was disappointing with submerged vegetation seemingly limited to dominant *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort) but a smaller overgrown pond had abundant *Typha x glauca* (Hybrid Bulrush), the first confirmed VC record, together with a few plants of *Osmunda regalis* (Royal Fern) which had originally been introduced here in 1981 from a site that was about to be opencasted near Saron (SN609128). A plant of *Sinapis alba* (White Mustard) growing at the edge of the vegetable garden, in full flower but also displaying its distinctive-shaped siliqua, was the seventh VC record and new for the hectad. The return walk through the orchard and mainly wooded part of the walled garden also involved crossing a stream and passing an active wasps' nest by a large fallen *Carpinus betulus* (Hornbeam), finally emerging back near the Cottage by a couple of sleeping pigs in their sty. The Crimbles offered tea which was gratefully received in the heat and drunk whilst watching Siskins on the garden feeders beneath which, young, self-sown plants of *Guizottia abyssinica* (Niger) were abundantly growing, the eighth VC record and also new to the hectad.

On arriving back at Glynhir (SN639151), some of the party examined the cobbles adjacent to the large barn and were surprised to find a plant of *Spergularia rubra* (Sand Spurrey) and two of *Sherardia arvensis* (Field Madder), neither recorded here before (the former a new hectad record) despite this year's meeting being the 19th consecutive year at Glynhir. Chris Cheffings and Guy and Tristan Moss arrived in time for dinner.

Tuesday 9th July 2019

The group split into three, with Martyn volunteering to go square bashing in the north-west of the VC, boosting the numbers of records in the area south-east of Llanglydwen in tetrads SN12X and SN22C where *Polygonatum multiflorum* (Soloman's-seal) was frequent in roadside hedgebanks but, in order to access these, his route took him into SN12Y and SN22D where, in the former, he recorded *Clinopodium vulgare* (Wild Basil) (SN191267 & SN192266), a new hectad record.

Another group visited Morfa Bychan SN2207, Pendine, where Matt Sutton met us (Matt's honey for sale was an added bonus). This group included Arthur Copping, so several less-familiar grasses (in VC44) were confirmed including *Brachypodium pinnatum* (Tor-grass), *Vulpia fasciculata* (Dune Fescue) and *Dactylis glomerata* var. *collina* (the dwarf maritime form of Cock's-foot) from the cliffs on the east side of the bay and the presence of Arthur Chater and Graeme Kay added to the wealth of expertise. The *Erodium maritimum* (Sea Stork's-bill) was refound in the centre of the bay near the ruined war-time installations from where the party scrambled along the loose, rocky cliff base on the western side of the bay but some present were more agile than others with Matt being able to scale the steep slopes, reporting back his finds such as *Asplenium obovatum* (Lanceolate Spleenwort) and *A. marinum* (Sea Spleenwort). Several flowering plants of *Hypericum humifusum x linariifolium* (Trailing St. John's-wort x Toadflax-leaved St. John's-wort) were refound following the discovery of this taxon here by members of the Glynhir party in 2016 and confirmed by Mike Proctor in 2017. In addition to the grasses mentioned above, the eastern cliffs had *Limonium procerum* ssp. *procerum* (a rock sea-lavender), *Inula conyzae* (Ploughman's Spikenard), *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird's-foot) and *Spergularia rupicola* (Rock Sea-spurrey). The day's heat had taken its toll on the recorders so on the return journey to Glynhir, a stop was made in Pendine to buy ice-creams, where *Spergularia rupicola*, *Erodium maritimum* and *Polygonum depressum* (Equal-leaved Knotgrass) were established in cracks

in the concrete promenade, whilst the limestone cliffs by the kiosks had *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid), *Orobanche hederæ* (Ivy Broomrape), *Allium ampeloprasum* var. *babingtonii* (Babington's Leek) and *Lycium barbarum* (Duke of Argyle's Teapant, 'Goji Berry'). Refreshingly, one of the shop owners came out to talk to us about the Pyramidal Orchid that he had noticed close to his shop a week or two earlier and was interested when we pointed out the broomrape and the 'Goji Berries' growing above his premises.

The Cheffings-Moss family visited a previously unsearched area of Banc Wernwgan on Mynydd Du (SN6818) to look for *Antennaria dioica* (Mountain Everlasting) on the Carboniferous Limestone outcrop and also found numerous plants of *Botrychium lunaria* (Moonwort).

Theresa Greenaway arrived at Glynhir during the afternoon and Bron and David Wright arrived from Edinburgh late in the evening (to be welcomed with a plated-up dinner of chicken curry followed by the chocolate pud!). Martyn reported seeing two Hedgehogs inside the door of the studio late into the evening, which he persuaded outside before he locked up!

Wednesday 10th July 2019

With the exception of Martyn, who did more very useful square bashing, this time in the Nant-y-Ffin area of Brechfa Forest (SN53L) where he found several plants of *Carex pallescens* (Pale Sedge) in two monads in the forest at SN548322 & SN554328 as well as *Cystopteris fragilis* (Brittle Bladder-fern) on the bank of a roadside ditch at SN553323 and on the side of a forest track at SN551323 (a new species for the hectad), the whole group went for the day to Machynys Golf Course. The course was designed by Jack Niklaus about twenty years ago and constructed on the grazing marshes of South Llanelli (SS5198), where we had been invited by the course manager. We were joined by Nigel Stringer, Kevin McGinn and the Cokers and, following comprehensive safety instructions by the course staff, we concentrated on recording the rough grassland, lakes and drainage ditches, keeping a wary eye out for flying golf balls. Our presence generated some interest and most of the golfers we spoke to were interested in the wildlife although one was concerned that there may be adders! Several *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) plants were scattered over the course, now mostly past their flowering best, a small area of *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling) at the edge of one of the fairways and, in one rough, an extensive stand of *Bromus commutatus* (Meadow Brome), the sixth post-2000 VC record, whilst a small stand of *Carex pseudocyperus* (Cyperus Sedge) was found in a willow-shaded, wet depression, a species not recorded at this site prior to this year. The drains were often covered with rafts of aquatic vegetation and their banks supported a good number of emergent species. On the water's surface above the often dominant *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Spiked Water-milfoil), one wide drain had, amongst the *Lemna minor* (Common Duckweed) and *L. minuta* (Least Duckweed), both *L. trisulca* (Ivy-leaved Duckweed) and *L. valdeviana* (Valdevana Duckweed), whilst rafts of *Azolla filiculodes* (Water-fern) added a red-tinge to the vegetation. Marginal species included extensive stands of *Eleocharis palustris* (Common Spike-rush), *Bolboschoenus maritimus* (Sea Club-rush) and *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* (Grey Club-rush), occasionally with *Hippuris vulgaris* (Mare's-tail), *Veronica catenata* (Pink Water-speedwell) and *Berula erecta* (Lesser Water-parsnip), the flowers and leaves of which were contrasted with the more abundant *Apium nodiflorum* (Fool's-watercress). Walking parallel with the northern boundary of the course, Arthur Chater drew attention to the numerous distinctive *Taphrina alni* galls infecting the mature, originally-planted swathe of *Alnus glutinosa* var. *macrocarpa* trees (the large-fruited variety of Common Alder).

Back at Glynhir, following a meal which included lemon pudding, most of the party accepted an invitation to hear Tristan Moss give a recital on his cello in the lounge of the mansion, accompanied by Chris Cheffings playing the piano. It made a lovely end to the day and brought back good memories of James and Mary Iliff playing the grand piano at Glynhir some years ago, not to mention Graeme and Chris playing the piece for bassoon and cello specially composed for them by James.

Thursday 11th July 2019

Four separate groups went out today, with Martyn, Richard and Kath visiting farmland near Llansaint with the aim of re-finding *Trocdaris (Carum) verticillatum* (Whorled Caraway) at its only known site in SN30 and only seen once previously, in 1993, but when we arrived, the field had been ploughed and reseeded and was growing a lush crop of rye-grass. The farmyard (SN3908), however, had numerous plants of *Bromus commutatus* associated with imported straw, presumably the source of the plants and a nearby, rank, unmanaged field, disappointingly just in SN40, had at least three small stands of *Trocdaris* not more than 15m over the boundary at SN400093, as well as *Sanguisorba*

officinalis (Great Burnet) which proved to be the first post 2000 hectad record. The new owner of the field seemed keen to manage it to maintain and enhance its plant diversity.

Arthur Chater and Theresa Greenaway, joined by Ray Woods visited SN32B, a tetrad north-east of Meidrim and recorded an incredible 243 vascular plant species in addition to their comprehensive recording of fungi, lichens, smuts, rusts and powdery mildews; no doubt any other species that crossed their paths would also have been duly identified and recorded! Highlights included a single plant of *Trocdaris*, a few *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine), a large patch of *Geranium columbinum* (Long-stalked Crane's-bill) in a hedgebank, the first post-2000 hectad record, and both *Potentilla x suberecta* and *P. x mixta* (hybrid cinquefoils), the latter being the first hectad record. Other first hectad records included *Veronica agrestis* (Green Field-speedwell), *Briza media* (Quaking-grass), *Linum catharticum* (Fairy Flax), *Valerianella carinata* (Keeled-fruited Cornsalad) and *Senecio viscosus* (Sticky Groundsel). A further six first post-2000 hectad records rounded-off an excellent day's recording.

Arthur Copping, Graeme Kay and Bron & David Wright visited SN32W just north-west of Carmarthen, between Trevaughan and Newchurch where, following a circuit on minor roads and footpaths, they recorded *Anisantha diandra* (Great Brome), the 6th VC Record and first hectad record and *Corylus avellana* var. *grandis* (a variety of Hazel).

Chris, Guy and Tristan visited Felin fach, Cwm Twrch, SN71K, a part tetrad which covers a narrow nib of land sandwiched between Glam and Brecs into which is crowded the river, disused railway, main road, bridleways and a ribbon of miners' houses, all clustered together on a steep hillside. It was surprisingly diverse with species including *Matricaria chamomilla* (Scented Mayweed), the first record for the Carms part of the hectad, *Polystichum aculeatum* (Hard Shield-fern), *Lathyrus linifolius* (Bitter Vetch) and *Melica uniflora* (Wood Melick), the latter being a re-discovery of George Hutchinson's 1983 record and the first post-2000 record for the Carms part of the hectad. In all they recorded 177 species!

Andy Jones arrived by the evening and after the meal everyone enjoyed a walk around the walled garden with Rupert, our host, pointing out the various herbs and forage plants and were pleased to note that the *Usnea articulata* (Bearded Sausage-lichen) continues to thrive on one of the apple trees.

Friday 12th July 2019

Martyn again went out on his own today, this time to two tetrads at Meidrim SN22V and SN32A. In the SN2921 monad he made the first hectad record of *Asplenium trichomanes* ssp. *trichomanes* (the ssp. of Maidenhair Spleenwort that grows on acid rock), *Carex muricata* ssp. *pairae* (Prickly Sedge) (the first post-2000 hectad record), *C. laevigata* (Smooth-stalked Sedge) and *Stachys x ambigua* (a hybrid woundwort) bringing the species total to 236 (the highest number for any tetrad in SN22). He also had *C. muricata* ssp. *pairae* at SN310212, bringing the total to 151 species for SN32A.

Arthur Copping, Graeme and Bron & David visited SN22D and SN22I east of Blaenwaun, where, in the former, they had about twenty plants of *Lilium pyrenaicum* (Pyrenean Lily) on a roadside bank at SN217274 as well as *Lathyrus linifolius* and *Hylotelephium telephium* (Orpine), whilst, in the latter, they had *Polystichum aculeatum* and *Sonchus arvensis* (Perennial Sow-thistle).

Arthur Chater and Richard & Kath followed-up an invitation from Alan & Margaret Pritchard, the owners of Brynceirch Farm, near Blaenycod, which straddles four tetrads (SN32I, SN32J, SN32N and SN32P). Alan had made contact as he'd found a single *Platanthera chlorantha* (Greater Butterfly-orchid) in one of their semi-improved hay fields, the first he'd ever seen on their land since retiring there from being a Reserve Warden for English Nature. The whole farm was explored including a disturbed area surfaced with sand where we found *Matricaria chamomilla* (Scented Mayweed), the first post-2000 record for the hectad, and *Taraxacum pietii-oosterveldii* (Piet Oosterveld's Dandelion), the first hectad record for this recently described taxon, whilst a tree of *Salix x capreola* (the hybrid between Eared Willow and Goat Willow) was growing in a nearby hedge (the first record for the hectad). Taking one of the steep paths down into the wooded valley, another *Salix x capreola* tree was discovered at the edge of a mown glade and further on, we came across a single plant of *Ceratocarpus claviculata* (Climbing Corydalis) whilst Arthur was very pleased to find *Puccinia obscura*, the rust on *Luzula pilosa* (Hairy Woodrush), only the second post-1964 record for Wales. On the way back across the fields to the farm house, we passed an extensive bed of arable weed and

pollinator plants in magnificent bloom which included *Agrostemma githago* (Corncockle), *Centaurea cyanus* (Cornflower) and *Papaver rhoeas* (Common Poppy).

Andy Jones took on the challenge of refinding some populations of *Viola lutea* (Mountain Pansy) in the north-east of the VC which hadn't been seen for many years but, disappointingly, he found only one plant at one of the three sites he visited - north-west of Llansadwrn at SN677333 where the population had been described when it was last seen in 1997 by John Humphrey as "frequent in all fields on north edge of forest".

Saturday 13th July 2019

Arthur Copping, Graeme and Richard went to SN32P, another tetrad north of Blaenycloed. After largely exhausting the recording potential of road and tracksides during the morning, a chance was taken by driving to Nant-y-castell, a farm near which were some promising-looking areas of habitat shown on the aerial photo. The owners couldn't have been more welcoming and said they had seen sundew on the nearby bog some years previously. We visited the area and, sure enough, largely-abandoned, tussocky *Molinia caerulea* (Purple Moor-grass)-dominated wet grassland still had some remnant *Sphagnum*-choked bog-pools in the centre with small amounts of *Erica tetralix* (Cross-leaved Heath), *Narthecium ossifragum* (Bog Asphodel), *Eriophorum vaginatum* (Hare's-tail Cottongrass), *Trichophorum germanicum* (Deergrass), *Carex echinata* (Star Sedge) and *C. nigra* (Common Sedge) and, in one spot, fifteen plants of *Drosera rotundifolia* (Round-leaved Sundew)! 208 species were recorded during the day bringing the total for the tetrad to 245.

Andy Jones extended his quest to refind populations of *Viola lutea* to the area around Cao, this time with greater success. He found plants to be abundant north-west of the summit at SN679386 in unimproved, dry, acid grassland growing with frequent *Campanula rotundifolia* (Harebell), *Festuca ovina* (Sheep's Fescue), *F. rubra* (Red Fescue) and *Poa pratensis* (Smooth Meadow-grass) together with many Skylarks, Meadow Pipits and a solitary Cuckoo watching from a bush. This population was last recorded by Jonathan Graham in 1994. He also found a small number of plants elsewhere on the ridge around SN677385 and a few more scattered south and west of a rocky knoll from SN677382 to SN678380, always with *C. rotundifolia* in unimproved acid grassland. The latter two sites had not been recorded previously although Mrs M. Barnes had noted the species from "Cao" in the early 1950s.

Martyn Stead, anxious to cover as much unrecorded ground as possible, returned to Meidrim to extend his previous day's recording from SN22V where he added several species including *Clematis vitalba* (Travellers-joy), a new hectad record, into SN22Q, where he found *Sherardia arvensis*, *Senecio sylvaticus* (Heath Groundsel) and *Asplenium ceterach* (Rustyback), all first post-2000 records for the hectad.

Arthur Chater, Chris, Guy & Tristan, Bron & David and Kath enjoyed a day at Garn Ganol, Crwbin (SN41R). A few orchid spikes in mature seed discovered in the limestone woodland were suspected to be *Ophrys apifera* which would have been a new record for the site but, on later examination of Bron's photographs, it was concluded that they were rather robust *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple-orchid) of which there are hundreds throughout the woods here. Chris provided some interesting insights into the possible reasons for the presence of *Botrychium lunaria* (Moonwort) in the woodland discovered here in June 2017. Only one plant of *Ononis repens* (Common Restharrow) has been seen on the site in the past, discovered in 2017, but today's visit was the first time that it had been seen in flower! Tristan was pleased to be provided with a hazel thumb stick cut from the woodland by David, who produced from his rucksack a special saw, carried at all times for just such an emergency! Five Palmate Newts were seen in the re-excavated pond near the ruined farmhouse and a Cockchafer was photographed in a field nearby. The party enjoyed the view from the Millstone Grit summit which takes-in the panorama from Gower and Worm's Head to the south, Caldy Island, Tenby and the Prescelly Mountains in Pembs to the west, north over the Tywi valley and east to Mynydd Du before a short siesta was taken in the cut hayfield by the ruin! (Richard wasn't with us so this was possible without scathing comments!).

Back at Glynhir an interesting and tasty meal was served, partly due to Rupert's foraging knowledge. It included rice and nettle balls, various greens (hogweed etc) and battered plants plus delicious red and blue potatoes! Nougat cream and Rhubarb completed this meal.

Sunday 14 July 2019

Guy, Chris & Tristan travelled to SN82C and SN22H at the eastern extremity of the county nearly as far as Llyn-y-fan fach where, in the former, they made new post-2000 tetrad records of *Carex hostiana* (Tawny Sedge), *C. pulicaris* (Flea Sedge), *C. x fulva* (the hybrid between *C. hostiana* and *C. demissa* (Common Yellow-sedge)), *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort), *Linum catharticum* and commented on the abundance of *Wahlenbergia hederacea* (Ivy-leaved Bellflower) along the banks of the upper Usk which marks the boundary with Brecks.

The rest of the party visited Cae Delyn Farm, Near Llanedi (SN50Y), at the kind invitation of Chris Onn and family where we were joined by the Cokers, Nigel Stringer and Ray Woods. Cae Delyn is an amalgamation of three farms on the east-facing slope of the Llŵchwr valley down to the river. In the rank meadows on the valley slope, some open areas in the extensive stands of *Filipendula ulmaria* (Meadowsweet) concealed several stands of *Trocdaris verticillatum*, whilst in various more remote marshy areas, *Sanguisorba officinalis*, *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel) and *Isolepis setacea* (Bristle Club-rush) were found. It was a fight to get through the scrub to the river bank where a few small rafts of *Ranunculus penicillatus* (Stream water-crowfoot) were growing in the river but nearby were several substantial stands of *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Wood Club-rush), the first record for the Llŵchwr valley and the Carms part of the hectad. The extensive flood-plain marshland had large stands of both *Bidens cernua* (Nodding Bur-marigold) and *B. tripartita* (Trifid Bur-marigold) with, more locally, *Carex vesicaria* (Bladder-sedge), also a new record for the hectad, *Rorippa palustris* (Marsh Yellow-cress) and a few plants of *R. islandica* (Northern Yellow-cress). A Kingfisher was seen flying along the river whilst a Red Kite flew overhead.

Back at Glynhir, after dinner, Graeme packed up his intriguing display of very attractive sculpture. This year it consisted of an owl by Anthony Theakston, Grebes by Alan Luckham (Horsea), a hippo and 3 snails. On the following day, he briefly stopped on his journey home where he was able to raise the total number of species from 5 to 92 in the almost totally afforested SN84L tetrad-fragment at the county boundary, including *Sanguisorba officinalis* on the roadside bank of the A483.

So, many thanks to land-owners who either invited us or gave permission to enter their land, as well, of course, to all participants for all the hard recording work that made such a magnificent contribution to the final push towards BSBI Atlas recording. At the time of writing, data processing is not yet quite complete but, so far, 5582 records made during the Glynhir week have been input representing 589 different taxa, including many new tetrad and hectad records and a smattering of new county records: another very successful and enjoyable week of botanical recording, with hardly any rain, in fact, on occasions, too hot for some!

REFERENCES

Woods, R.G., Stringer, R.N., Evans, D.A. and Chater, A.O. (2015). *Rust Fungus Red Data List and Census Catalogue for Wales*. A.O. Chater, Aberystwyth.



The giant *Liriodendron tulipifera* at Gelli Aur.
Photo by Kath A Pryce