

2019 Flora Group Outings - a Short Report

There were seven 1-day outings, a *Rubus* weekend with expert Dave Earl, and a 3-day intensive recording session. Average attendance at the day-outings was 8 and 12-14 people attended each day of the Intensive. Please note that some of the plant names below have been changed in the latest edition of Stace - these have asterisks* and the new names are listed at the end of this report.

Late April **Near Llanwnog (SO09H)**

Habitat: lane verges, field edges and a small wood.

A true Spring day with sunshine, showers and Blackcaps singing. A good plant list in a very agricultural area with intensive sheep farming, poultry units, and many pheasants. A nice wood, less grazed, had some big old oaks and three sedges, Wood, Smooth- stalked and Remote sedge (*Carex sylvatica*, *C. laevigata*, *C. remota*), together with Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*). On lane banks, Bitter vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*) and Bush vetch (*Vicia sepium*) were already flowering as were the speedwells - we saw a good number throughout the day; Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Wall speedwell (*V. arvensis*), Thyme-leaved speedwell (*V. serpyllifolia*), Germander speedwell (*V. chamaedrys*), Wood speedwell (*V. montana*), Green Field-speedwell (*V. agrestis*), Common Field-speedwell (*V. persica*) and Ivy-leaved speedwell (*V. hederifolia* ssp. *lucorum*). Hard Shield fern (*Polystichium aculeatum*) was spotted in a small dingle close to Llanwnog while Common Whitlow -grass (*Erophila verna*), which seems to be increasing its range, was recorded in the car park.

Early May **Neuadd Bridge (SJ00Z)**

Habitat: river bank, woodland, lanes, fields, ponds.

The lodge park and environs proved surprisingly interesting with a variety of habitats: wooded river bank with flowering Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*), Water Avens (*Geum rivale*), Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Early-purple Orchids (*Orchis mascula*), native Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon* ssp. *montanum*) and Common Bistort* (*Persicaria bistorta*). Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*), and Hairy Wood-rush (*Luzula pilosa*) were locally abundant in drier, more acid parts of the wood while stands of Glaucous and Carnation sedge (*Carex flacca* and *C. panicea*) were beginning to flower in wetter hollows. Bottle sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and Water horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) were seen in two carp pools while a good stand of Wood Club-rush (*Scirpus sylvaticus*) was found along the Afon Banwy. Hedgerow along the woodland edge supported Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) and Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*), while Burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and Spring Sedge (*Carex caryophylla*) were found on a grazed, steep field bank. A very wet day did not spoil the botanical delights of the Afon Banwy river bank and woodland.

Late May **Cwm Belan (SN98K)**

Habitat: lanes and road verge.

The rain had stopped and the sun was shining by the time we parked at the side of the A470 near Cwm Belan. The wide road bank proved rewarding with Betony (*Betonica officinalis*), Ragged Robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*), Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*) and Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*) as well as Spreading Meadow-grass (*Poa humilis*) at the kerb side (the latter identifiable by hairs at the junction of the sheath and leaf). The lanes north of Cwm Belan provided a good range of late Spring flowers including several vetches; Bitter Vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*), Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), Hairy Vetch* (*Vicia hirsuta*) Bush Vetch (*Vicia sepium*), Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa* ssp. *nigra*), and Tufted Vetch (*V. cracca*) the latter not yet in flower but clearly identifiable. Other notable finds included Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*) on the edge of a lane and Wood Horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*) on the damp A470 verge as we returned to the cars.

July

Llanbrynmair Moors, South of Llanerfyl (SH90L)

Habitat: rushy upland pasture, road verge, improved upland pasture, stream bank.

There was a pleasing range of plants in a farmed upland area (over 300m). Some good *rhos* (rush) pasture dominated by Sharp-flowered rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) but also supporting Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) and a few spikes of Heath Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*). Around the edge of the *rhos* and surrounding stream banks Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*), Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*), and Eyebright (*Euphrasia* agg.) were recorded. Traversing rougher wetter ground (degraded rushy upland bog), we found a small quantity of Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*), Bottle sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and both Cotton grasses (*Eriophorum vaginatum* and *E. angustifolium*). In a wetter *Molinia*-dominated zone, at the edge of conifer plantation, we finally found Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) and the upright, bright green shuttlecocks of Narrow Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*). A sheet of Mountain pansies (*Viola lutea*) covered a steep, grazed slope of improved upland pasture; they were all yellow. We ended the outing with a very short section along the Afon Gam's bank recording Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*) and a single spike of Northern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*). We met the farmer at the start of the day and subsequently sent him a plant list; we were also able to send some photos of his beautiful Mountain pansies.

The County Bryologist also had a successful outing with us, recording *Barbiolpazia kunzeana* on wet heath; a second county record.



July

North east of Pont Llogel (SJ01N)

Habitat: road verge, lanes, unimproved pasture, plantation and forestry track.

The road verge at the start was interesting: Goat's-beard (*Tragopogon pratensis*), Zigzag Clover (*Trifolium medium*), and at least two different hawkweeds (*Hieracium* agg.). Following a bridleway brought us to some nice meadows resplendent with Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), but the highlight was a small flush in a damp area with Quaking-grass (*Briza media*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*) Ragged Robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*), Tawny Sedge (*Carex hostiana*) and Flea Sedge (*C. pulicaris*), as well as the more acidic species of Lesser Skullcap (*Scutellaria minor*), Bog Pimpernel * (*Anagallis tenella*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and Heath Spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*). Lesser hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*) was found on a drier field bank, Water-purslane (*Lythrum portula*) in a damp hollow on a track close by, with Marsh Hawk's-beard (*Crepis paludosa*) and Upland Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circaea x intermedia*) recorded along a shady stream. Bristle Club-rush (*Isolepis setacea*) was seen along forest track while Eyebright (*Euphrasia* agg.) was in full flower close-by. Those not flagging from the heat on the hottest day of the year managed to spot Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*) on top of a churchyard wall and Rock Stonecrop* (*Sedum forsterianum*) on the road verge at the very end of the day.

Early August

Rubus Weekend

Kate arranged and hosted this weekend with the aim of improving our recording of this difficult plant group in Montgomeryshire. Dave Earl (*Rubus* expert and Referee) spent two and a half very long days with Kate and others touring eastern Montgomeryshire looking at *Rubus*. Over 300 new records were added comprising 28 different species. This included a County first record for a specimen collected in the west (Llyfnant, SN79) prior to the meeting and later identified by Rob Randall (another *Rubus* Referee) as *R. ludensis*. Its main area of distribution is central Wales.

Dave and Kate worked extremely hard, literally dawn to dusk, scouring sites that included Roundton, Churchstoke, Montgomery, Welshpool Canal, Hirnant, Llanfyllin, Lake Vyrnwy, Penybontfawr and Bwlch Cibau. Over the weekend Kate collected specimens for pressing as a reference herbarium for *Rubus* in the east of the County. There are c. 325 named taxa of *Rubus* in the British Isles and perhaps 200 more forms which remain unidentified or undescribed (according to the BSBI Plant Crib). Different areas of the country are characterised by assemblages of particular species. This means we could only expect to find certain taxa in east Montgomeryshire. It was clear from Dave's visit that this is a very difficult plant group and it really is necessary to have an expert with you in the field; pressed specimens out of context are difficult, even for experts.

August

North of Llanfihangel (SJ01U)

Habitat: Lane and road verges, improved and rough pasture, field ponds

With eleven attendees we were able to split into two groups to cover more ground. The OS map indicated extensive wet areas, but unfortunately most of the ground had been drained for farming. The stand-out species for one group was Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) which was abundant in a small shaded field and along adjacent road verges. Field ponds seemed to be a feature of the area and supported Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Marsh Cinquefoil (*Comarum palustris*), and Bottle sedge (*Carex rostrata*). Bifid hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis bifida*) was found by both groups along lane verges, while Small Cudweed (*Filiago minima*) was recorded close to a ménage, and Hybrid Woundwort (*Stachys x ambigua*) on a stream bank. Shore horsetail (*Equisetum x litorale*), the hybrid between Field Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) and Water Horsetail (*E. fluviatile*), was recorded on a wet verge with one of the parents growing close-by (*E. fluviatile*). A quick way to identify the hybrid is to look at a stem cross-section with a hand lens - the central hollow should occupy about 50% of the stem, whereas in Water Horsetail it's c. 80% and Field Horsetail c. 33%.

Early September Cyfronydd (SJ10I and J)

Habitat: fields, river bank, lanes, railway yard.

This was a two-part day. In the morning we briefly skirted a short stretch of the Afon Banwy dominated by Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) but we did see Giant Fescue (*Schedonorus gigantea*), Butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*) and some large old Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) trees. We recorded Lesser Swine-cress (*Lepidium didymum*), Ivy-leaved crowfoot (*Ranunculus hederaceus*), White and Red Dead-nettle (*Lamium album* and *L. purpureum*), Crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*) and Wild Basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*) as we followed farm lanes back to Cyfronydd. Ballast at the old rail yard proved interesting with Canadian Fleabane* (*Conyza canadensis*), Red Bartsia (*Odontites vernus*), Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*), Musk-mallow (*Malva moschata*) and a beautiful Clouded Yellow butterfly. Having seen both parents closeby, Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*) and Trailing Tormentil (*P. anglica*), Kate was on alert for the hybrid (*Potentilla x mixta*) which she soon spotted. It usually has both 4 and 5 petalled flowers, petioles >1cm and all the same length, and it's sterile. This is the first confirmed record (by the BSBI referee) for this hybrid in the county.

After lunch, we followed an overgrown green lane from Llangyniew. This led to a lovely south-east facing field with some good U1 grassland where we recorded: Lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*), Thyme-leaved Sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*), Small Cat's-tail (*Phleum bertolinii*), Slender Trefoil (*Trifolium micranthum*), Dove's-foot Crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*), Squirreltail Fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*), and Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*).

18 - 20 June Flora Group Intensive Recording

We recorded in three groups with 12-14 people on each day. Ten people stayed over in our accommodation at Tyddyn, near Carno which was very comfortable. The large farmhouse-style kitchen was not only the focus for eating delicious moussaka and baklava in the evening, but also for examining plant specimens. On the first day, groups recorded at Glanfeinion (SO08C) near Llandinam, north of Y Fan (SN98P), and around the Upper Afon Bidno east of Llangurig (SN88R). Day two saw groups recording near Cefn Coch (SJ00G and SJ00M) and at Cwm Cra (SN99Z) close to Carno. Recording moved north on the final day; one group recording in Cwm Twrch (SH91T) and the other two groups both working west of Foel (SH91L) on both sides of the main Welshpool road. Botanical finds included:

Wood Bitter-vetch (*Vicia orobus*) - two new sites north of Y Fan for this priority species in Wales. It is nationally scarce and near threatened in the UK although it does somewhat better in Wales (Section 1 of RPR). This was a good find because nearly all the existing sites in Mont are on (vulnerable) road verges and one of these was on a field margin.

Lesser Club-moss (*Selaginella selaginoides*) - this was only the 5th post-2000 record in VC47 and at a new site on the northern edge of Llanbrynmair moors. This species is of local importance being rare at county level (Section 3 of RPR).



During the Intensive we made about 2,000 records that included:

Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*), Lesser Hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*), Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*), Water Avens (*Geum rivale*) and the hybrid (*Geum x intermedium*), Marsh Speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*), Beech Fern (*Phegopteris connectilis*), many sedges (*C. hostiana*, *paniculata*, *laevigata*, *pallescens*, *caryophylla*, *canescens*, *pilulifera*, *pulicaris*, *leporina*, *panicea*, *nigra*, *demissa*, and *rostrata*), Yellow Oat-grass (*Trisetum flavescens*), Viviparous Fescue (*Festuca vivipara*), and much more.

The County Bryologist joined us one day and found a Red Data Book (RDB) liverwort, *Jamesoniella undulifolia*, in nice mire above Carno. This is the second record from VC47, and only the third for Wales.

A big thank you to everyone who has joined us on outings in 2019 and also to those who have been out recording individually and submitted records. The recording period for the next Floral Atlas (2000-2019) will end soon and records have to be entered into the BSBI database by 31 December 2019 so if you have any records not already submitted please send them in ASAP.

Despite the Atlas recording period ending in 2019 we will still be going out looking for and recording plants in Montgomeryshire, though we hope at a slightly more relaxed pace. We look forward to seeing you in 2020.

Kate Thorne and Gill Foulkes
November 2019

*** Name Changes**

<i>Stace 3</i>	<i>Stace 4</i>	<i>Common name</i>
Anagallis tenella	Lysimachia tenella	Bog Pimpernel
Conyza canadensis	Erigeron canadensis	Canadian Fleabane

Filago minima	Logfia minima	Small Cudweed
Persicaria bistorta	Bistorta officinalis	Common Bistort
Sedum forsterianum	Petrosedum forster	Rock Stonecrop
Vicia hirsuta	Ervilla hirsuta	Hairy Tare