

ADDITIONS TO THE FLORA OF WARWICKSHIRE 2016 AND 2017

by John and Monika Walton

Recording for the BSBI Atlas 2020 Project is continuing steadily with a total of 39,265 records received during the last two years, an increase of over 23% on the previous two. Many of the less attractive tetrads have now been visited. Inner city tetrads can be very productive, but neat and tidy suburbia and tetrads that consist of nothing but intensively farmed agricultural land can be very poor in terms of biodiversity. There is a rural tetrad near Monks Kirby which has been visited three times throughout the year and still has a total of less than eighty species!

The central and south of the county has benefited from the hard work of John and Val Roberts who, during the last two seasons, have amassed a total of 15,618 new records between them.

In 2016 the Warwickshire Flora Group ran a workshop at Brandon Marsh focussing on The Vegetative Key to the British Flora (Poland and Clement) and the following year there was a half-day session on Winter Twig Identification.

Twenty-nine Field Meetings took place during the two years, including two Wild Daffodil Walks in March and a fascinating visit in 2016 to the Winterbourne Botanic Gardens in Edgbaston organised by Mike Poulton of the Birmingham and Black Country Recording Group. The following year he led a very wet, but well attended meeting around the canals and roads of Digbeth in the centre of Birmingham adding many species to a couple of poorly recorded tetrads.

Regular meetings to survey Sutton Park, organised by Ian Trueman, continued during 2016 but there were fewer in 2017 as much of the baseline survey work had been completed.

The annual out-of-county meetings were to Brian Laney's own county of Northamptonshire in 2016 and to the Oxfordshire Cotswolds in 2017. The Cotswold meeting took us to a special reserve that contained rare arable weeds such as Red Hempnettle (*Galeopsis angustifolia*) and Night-Flowering Catchfly (*Silene noctiflora*), which are now extinct in Warwickshire.

Only 30 new species were added to the county list during 2016-7. All but one of these were either casuals, garden escapes or planted introductions.

THE ONLY NATIVE SPECIES

A colony of *Euphrasia arctica x confusa* (Hybrid Eyebright) was seen at Windmill Hill Nature Area, Nuneaton. It was first noticed by Jon Bowley and John Harris in 2016 and ripe material was sent to Chris Metherell for identification in July 2017. This is the first record for Southern England and the Midlands.

WINTERBOURNE BOTANIC GARDENS

The visit to Winterbourne Botanic Gardens in August 2016 produced some rather exotic naturalized surprises. The first was *Pteris vittata* (Ladder Brake), a native fern of the tropics that had seeded itself on the outer wall of the heated orchid house. Mike Poulton had seen noticed it earlier in the year when the AGM of the Birmingham and Black Country had held their AGM at Winterbourne.

We discovered *Geranium brevicaule* from New Zealand established between pavement cracks and *Nicotiana sylvestris* (Argentine Tobacco), which had self-seeded in a disused greenhouse border. *Salpichroa oranifolia* (Cock's-eggs), was spotted growing against the restaurant wall and there were many seedlings of the South American tree *Nothofagus alpina* (Rauli) in the garden beside the main house. A seedling of the dark-fruited *Cotoneaster nitens* (Few-flowered Cotoneaster) was encountered in the marshy area and the pretty but invasive "Jack Hawkes's Potato" *Solanum chacoense* from Peru, which is now a real nuisance in the garden, was seen by the entrance.

OTHER INTRODUCED SPECIES

Even more invasive was the American subspecies of the horsetail Dutch Rush, *Equisetum hyemale* **subsp. affine** that had been planted as an ornamental in a pond near Barnacle, Bulkington. Its rhizomes had invaded a whole field with hundreds of metre high horsetails spread out across the area, looking like something out of child's dinosaur book.

Another very satisfying record was *Hieracium fictum* (Lacerate-leaved Hawkweed), found at Wootton Spinnies, north of Warwick, which was still found to be thriving 131 years after it was previously recorded in 1875!

In October 2017, I received a mysterious phone call from Brian Laney asking me to ring Paul Stanley. Paul was driving south on the M42 and luckily got held up in a traffic jam where it crossed the M6. He spotted a colony of *Dittrichia graveolens* (Stinking Fleabane), a species of yellow Aster common in the Mediterranean, which is becoming frequent on the motorways south of London and appears to be spreading northwards.

The WFG field meeting at Broom in October 2017 added two new species to the county list. An **Onion** (*Allium cepa*), that may have fallen from a lorry, was found growing in a crack at the edge of the bridge over the A46. A shoot of a Sedum from the edge of the bridge over the nearby river was collected and grown on until it flowered, when it was identified as *S. kamtschaticum* **var. ellacombeanum** by Ray Stevenson, the BSBI Sedum referee. This is a species regularly sold in garden centres, usually labelled wrongly.

The most pleasant surprise this year came from Mike Slater who sent in a photo of the ridiculously coloured leaves of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* **var. rhodochila** a rare variant of our Common Spotted Orchid.

The Rugby Natural History Society initially identified the strange plant growing on Graham Robson's lawn at Tithe Barn, Marton as either our native Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*) or Field Eryngo (*E. campestre*). Its ID was settled when the Flora Group visited in October 2017. It turned out to be a seedling of *Eryngium planum* (Blue Eryngo), a handsome blue native of Southern Europe that is becoming a popular garden plant and is spreading throughout the Midlands as a garden escape.

Further species include:

Acaena novae-zelandiae (Pirri-pirri-bur), Main Street, Easenhall, SP46307964, 22 October 2016, D. Long.

Achillea fliipendulina **Cloth of Gold** (Fern-leaf Yarrow) Farthing Lane, Curdworth, on roadside bank away from houses, SP18309327, J. Walton and M. Walton, 5 October 2016.

Alnus x hybrida, (*A. glutinosa* x *A. incana*) (Hybrid Alder), Sutton Park, SP11569612, Birmingham and Black Country Recording Group, det. I. Trueman and M. Poulton, 3 June 2016, growing with both parents.

Barbarea stricta (Small-flowered Winter-cress), Moor Street Station car park, SP07428687, 20 May 2017, Warwickshire Flora Group and Black Country Recording Group.

Brachyglottis x jubar (Shrub Ragwort), beside Worcester and Birmingham Canal, Five Ways, Birmingham, SP0585, 2 September 2016, J. Walton, M. Walton, M. Poulton.

Chamaecyparis pisifera (Sawara Cypress), seedling in pavement crack in Gilson Way, Kingshurst. SP17338855, 13 February 2017, John and Monika Walton, det. C. S. Crook.

Corylus maxima "**Purpurea**", (Purple Filbert), Kenilworth Castle SW, SP278718, 15 May 2017, Warwickshire Flora Group, naturalized in a hedge, at least ½ mile away from the nearest house.

Cyclamen coum (Eastern Sowbread), Pedley's Wood, Leamington Spa, SP34246517, 9 February 2014, John Stephen. This record was received after the record from Eaves Green, Meriden, two plants beside lane, SP26198266, 17 March 2017, Warwickshire Flora Group, was published in the WFG Newsletter 13 as the First County Record.

Cyrtomium fortunei **var. fortunei** (Fortune's Holly Fern) Edgehill, SP3742147470, G. Thompson, 29 February 2016, two seedlings found on a grassy bank near garden. Material identified by F. Rumsey.

Euphorbia maculata (Spotted Spurge), Stoneleigh Park, SP3237871636, Bastiaan Brak, 6 October 2016. .

Malva verticillata (Chinese Mallow), West Leyes, Rugby, beside wall next to seed supply shop, SP49997519, 2 Jan 2017, D. Long, det. J. Walton, F. Verloove.

Macleaya x kewensis (Plume-poppy), Ilmington Village, SP21074348, J. S. Walton, M. V. Walton, J. Roberts, V. Roberts, 25 June 2016, two seedlings growing beside the stream.

Salix x rubra (S. purpurea x viminalis), (Green-leaved Willow) SK211007, 3 July 2016, M. A. Arnold, determined J. E. Hawksford, in shallow water by the River Tame.

Sorbus x thuringiaca (S. aucuparia x aria), (German Service-tree), Ninian Way, three 20 -30 year old plantings on the edge of industrial estate, SK222009, M. A. Arnold, determined J. E. Hawksford. 9 October 2016. Extinction refound, first record since Bagnall in 1875.

Spiraea x vanhouttei (Van Houtte's Spiraea), Winderton, SP3240, 29 September 2017, John R. Roberts, Val Roberts.

If you would like to find out more about the **Warwickshire Flora Group** and would like to help with plant surveying please contact us at johnwalton46@tiscali.co.uk or phone us on 01827 712455.

You can also visit our website at www.bsbi.org.uk/warwickshire.html

Plant records, in any format, of both rare and common species are very welcome.

Finally:

A RARE PLANT REGISTER FOR WARWICKSHIRE (V. C. 38)
by **John and Monika Walton** has recently been published by the
Warwickshire Biological Records Centre.

It is available to download free at www.bsbi.org.uk/warwickshire

Paper copies are available from Warwickshire Biological Records Centre at £8 (including postage), e mail wbrc@warwickshire.gov.uk or telephone 01926 418060 to request a copy.