

Wigtownshire (Vice-County 74) botany newsletter 2022

Records were made at a number of locations in 2021 and below is a little information on two of them, followed by a list of particularly interesting records from the vice-county as a whole. These include a few from earlier years by visiting botanist Paul Stanley.

Portencorkrie Bay to Crammag Head

On a beautiful summer's day I set off towards Portencorkrie Bay, which is on the wild, west coast of Wigtownshire. My objective was to contribute to the BSBI's Scottish Hectad Rare Plant Project by searching for Chaffweed *Lysimachia minima* (*Centunculus minimus*) and Allseed *Linum radiola* (*Radiola linoides*), two nationally notable plants, neither of which has been recorded at Portencorkrie since before 2000.

As I walked down the narrow road towards the bay I couldn't help but notice two people approaching, one carrying a gun. This really is the wild west I thought, but fortunately I turned off through a field gateway just before we met, looking as casual as possible, and was not followed. At the bottom of the field my progress was halted by a substantial fence that surrounded much of the beach. On the other side was lush tall herb fen and scrub vegetation on sloping ground leading to the boulder strewn beach. With grazing animals effectively excluded, there looked to be very little of the open, wet habitat suitable for the plants that I was looking for. Having scaled the fence, I pushed my way through the fen and eventually did find one or two patches of open, wet ground, on the north side of the bay, but there was no sign of Chaffweed or Allseed (which frequently grow together). So, I walked, or rather jumped, along the top of the beach from large boulder to large boulder, pausing where a massive rusty container had washed up. Close to it were small, shallow pools in which I was delighted to find several specimens of Saltmarsh Flat-sedge *Blysmus rufus*, a scarce plant in these parts. Just a few yards away I could see quite a few flowers of the always a delight to find Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris* growing in shorter fen vegetation just above the high-water mark.

Having reached the southern end of the small bay, and still not finding either of my target species, I decided to carry on towards Crammag Head. The cliff tops between were covered in maritime heath and eventually I did see a few sheep grazing the wind-blasted vegetation. Plants here included low-growing Creeping Willow *Salix repens* and Crowberry *Empetrum nigrum*. The huge and imposing cliffs to the south of Crammag Head lighthouse were studded with prostrate Juniper *Juniperus communis* bushes and the bright yellow flowers of the nationally scarce Golden-samphire *Limbarda* (*Inula*) *crithmoides*. So, I had had a great day, even if I didn't find any of the Chaffweed or Allseed. Maybe I'll find them at one of the other locations in Wigtownshire where they haven't been seen yet this century.

Mull of Galloway

A few miles down the coast from Portencorkrie is the Mull of Galloway. Best known perhaps from a natural history point of view for its large seabird colonies, there is also a good flora with several nationally notable plants. At the tip of the Mull the RSPB has a nature reserve with varied habitats including cliffs, heathland and wetland and during the summer I was invited by the reserve staff to help them monitor the notable plants on the reserve. We found, amongst others, good populations of the nationally rare Rock Sea-lavender *Limonium recurvum* subsp. *humile* and nationally scarce Golden-samphire *Limbarda* (*Inula*) *crithmoides*. I also recorded both of these species at other locations on the Mull cliffs outside of the reserve and a single specimen of Seaside Centaury *Centaureum littorale*, it too a nationally scarce species. Gavin Chambers had earlier almost certainly found a different plant of this species at the same location. A further record of Seaside Centaury was made at The Hooies, a coastal site to the north of Portencorkrie, suggesting that it may be more frequent in

Wigtownshire than previously thought. I made a second visit to the Mull to attend a general recording event organised by staff from the South West Scotland Environmental Resources Centre.

First records for VC74

African Lily *Agapanthus praecox* – Stranraer NX064609, 8/2021, one plant at base of bank in old car park, PS.

Hybrid Foxtail *Alopecurus x brachystylus* (*A. geniculatus* x *A. pratensis*) – Cairnryan NX060697, 1/8/2011, PS.

Snapdragon *Antirrhinum majus* – Newton Stewart NX4065, 8/10/2021, edge of pavement, MJ.

Giant Montbretia *Crocsmia masoniorum* – Claymoddie NX424375, 2021, on track verge, PS.

Hybrid Willowherb *Epilobium x schmidtianum* – Wigtown Harbour NX437555, 2016, PS conf. G.Kitchener.

Hybrid Willowherb *Epilobium x heterocaule* – Whithorn NX445402, 1991, PS.

Leopardplant *Ligularia dentata* – Physgill Glen NX428360, 8/2011, single clump by stream, PS.

Slender Naiad *Najas flexilis* – Elrig Loch NX324490, 8/2014, numerous washed up pieces on shore; PS, conf. E.J.Clement. Also found in 2016 & 2021 (Sco, NS).

Water Bent *Polypogon viridis* – Logan Botanic Garden NX096426, 8/2020, in rockery gravel, PS.

Tibetan Cowslip *Primula florindae* – Logan Botanic Garden NX095426, 1/8/2020, PS.

Hybrid Rose *Rosa x involuta* – Changue Port NX301472, 2010, suckering patch on road verge and another at NX299474 on shingle, PS.

Green Brittle-grass *Setaria viridis* – Port William NX3443, 8/9/2021, AW.

Greek Sea-spurrey *Spergularia bocconeii* – Stranraer Station NX061614, 8/2021, 30-40 plants in middle of access road, PS, conf. Dr T.Rich.

Other selected records

Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica* – Laih Sinniness NX213523, 30/5/21, MP (LS).

Saltmarsh Flat-sedge *Blysmus rufus* – Isle of Whithorn Bay NX47563630, 27/7/21, MJ; Portencorkrie Bay NX09073525, 4/8/2021, MJ (LS).

New Zealand Bitter-cress *Cardamine corymbosa* – Logan Botanic Garden NX097426, 8/20, 2nd VC74 record, the 1st at same location, PS.

Tufted Sedge *Carex elata* – Elrig Loch NX32314894 & NX32184883, 15/10/21, 2 large tussocks at each location on shore, MJ (Sco, LR).

Prickly Sedge *Carex muricata* subsp. *paiirae* – Newton Stewart NX404664, 24/9/21, one plant on roadside verge, JM (LS).

Dotted Sedge *Carex punctata* – Rocks of Garheugh NX26565040, 12/6/21, 12 plants on rocks, close to shoreline, MJ (Sco, NS, LR).

Seaside Centaury *Centaureum littorale* – The Hooies NX06814434, 2/7/21, good clump on rocky coast, NC; Mull of Galloway NX15053045, 13/7/21, one small plant on cliff slope with short sward and bare ground, MJ. Another plant found at the same location by GC earlier in the month was almost certainly of this species (NS, LR).

Six-stamened Waterwort *Elatine hexandra* – Elrig Loch NX323489, 15/10/21, scattered small fragments floating amongst emergent Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, MJ (LS).

Purple Ramping-fumitory *Fumaria purpurea* – Cairnryan NX060697, 8/2012, at least one plant near ferry terminal buildings, 3rd VC74 record, 1st since 1912, PS; Claymoddie NX419368, 2021, in cereal field, PS (Sco, NS, LR).

Golden-samphire *Limbarda (Inula) crithmoides* – Mull of Galloway NX157303, a few plants on rocks below the lighthouse, MJ; Mull of Galloway NX154303, many plants in gully below the car park, MJ; Mull of Galloway (Lagnagatchie) NX144303, a few plants on

cliff slope, MJ; Mull of Galloway NX142305, frequent on rocks in gully, 19/8/21, MJ; Sloucheen Slunk, Crammag Head NX09253389, 4/8/21, many plants on steep sides of cliff gully, MJ (Sco, NS, LS).

Lax-flowered Sea-lavender *Limonium humile* – St. Helena Island NX193557, 13/8/21, locally frequent in saltmarsh, MJ; Garlieston Bay NX4846, 12/8/21, locally frequent in saltmarsh, MJ; Stinking Port NX479365, 27/7/21, locally frequent in saltmarsh, MJ (NS).

Rock Sea-lavender *Limonium recurvum* subsp. *humile* – Mull of Galloway NX154303, abundant on steep cliffs below car park, MJ; Mull of Galloway (Lagnagatchie) NX14433036, 19/8/21, patch on steep cliff, MJ; Mull of Galloway NX14303041, 19/8/21, locally frequent on cliff top, MJ (NR, GB: VU, LR).

Ivy Broomrape *Orobanche hederæ* – Port Castle Bay NX424359, 14/10/21, at least 40 spikes on ivy-covered cliffs, MJ (Sco, LR).

Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis* – Elrig Loch NX32184883, 15/10/2021, 10 plants in wet birch woodland, MJ (LS).

Hairy Buttercup *Ranunculus sardous* – Crook of Baldoon RSPB NX44545309, 6/7/21, one small plant in flower on track, MJ (Sco, LR).

Prickly Saltwort *Salsola kali* – St Helena Island NX18815569, 13/8/2021, 3 plants, MJ; Clayschant NX11205191, 14/7/2021, NC (Sco, GB: VU).

Glasswort *Salicornia* agg. – St. Helena Island NX19425584, 13/8/2021, in saltmarsh, MJ.

Green Figwort *Scrophularia umbrosa* – Physgill Glen NX42613587, 14/10/21, one large plant in burn, MJ (LS).

Globeflower *Trollius europæus* – Low Glasnick NX34276071, 19/5/21, large colony of many flowering plants on a river island, OF; Glenhapple Marshes (part of Wood of Cree RSPB NR) NX37777096, NX37777103 & NX37757105, 22/5/21, 5 plants, MJ.

Bithynian Vetch *Vicia bithynica* – Port of Cunan NX414363, 1/6/21, abundant over 20 x 20m area of steep stony earth bank, MJ (Sco, NS, GB: VU, LR).

Yellow-vetch *Vicia lutea* – Auchenmalg NX253513, 2/6/21, abundant, AW (Sco, NS, GB: NT, LR).

Eelgrass *Zostera marina* – Loch Ryan NX0861 & NX0862, 3/12/21, numerous fresh shoots amongst seaweed washed up onto beach, MJ (GB: NT, LR).

Contributors in 2021 (several via iRecord)

Jim Black, Max Carstairs, Gavin Chambers, Paul Collin, Nic Coombey, Owen Figgis, David Hawker, Michael Jeeves, Jim McCleary, Peter Norman, Mark Pollitt, Paul Stanley, Andrew & Lesley Turney, Alan Wake.

Key to plant status, given in parentheses above

Sco – Scottish Biodiversity List

NR – Nationally Rare

NS – Nationally Scarce

GB: EN – GB Red List (Endangered)

GB: VU – GB Red List (Vulnerable)

GB: NT – GB Red List (Near Threatened)

LR – Locally Rare in Wigtownshire (1-3 sites)

LS – Locally Scarce in Wigtownshire (4-10 sites)

I would be happy to try and answer any queries on matters related to Wigtownshire's flora and especially glad to receive any records that readers might consider of interest. My thanks to those who contributed records in 2021.

Michael Jeeves

Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland Recorder for Vice-County 74 (Wigtownshire)

michaeljeeves@hotmail.com