

Anglesey Plants in 2016

This has been a year of transition in the way the flora is recorded. Hugh Knott has completed his first full year as Joint Recorder and Ian Bonner his first full year as an absentee recorder and resident of Cinderford in Gloucestershire.

The map shows the current status of post-2000 recording on Anglesey, though not all the data has been processed to the DDb at the time of writing. Early in the year a considerable number of new records from Debbie Evans from 2014/15 were added to the DDb, mainly from under-recorded monads inland in the north and west of the island. In 2016 a minimum of 91 monads were visited by Debbie and Hugh, with help from a small number of others, again with the emphasis on those without previous records (or with few or none since 2000), and again mostly in the west and north. As a result some large, previously 'blank' areas of the map are being filled in. There do remain some significant gaps in our coverage, but the previous contrast between a heavily recorded coastal region and under-recorded central area has now been significantly reduced. The objective for 2017 will be to continue to fill in these gaps where possible (some monads have no public access) and to visit other monads with relatively few records. There will also be increasing emphasis on under-recorded areas of semi-natural habitat wherever these can be identified.

Twelve members of the Flora Group met on Newborough Warren on a very sunny 5th June to look particularly at water buttercups in some of the dune pools and confidently recorded *Ranunculus aquatilis* (Common Water-crowfoot) from two pools in SH42.62 and *Ranunculus trichophyllus* (Thread-leaved Water-crowfoot) from pools in SH43.63 & 43.64. Also along the way the Group made a good number of additions of common species to several monads in the NNR.

Otherwise, apart from a very useful recording day in the centre of Amwlch, SH44.92, the Flora Group has not been active this year.

Continuing his interest in the coast Ivor Rees has turned his attention to Scurveygrass (*Cochlearia* spp.) around Anglesey. Since 2000 there have been over 250 records of *Cochlearia officinalis* sens. lat. (Common Scurvygrass) from roadside banks (a feature of NW Anglesey), rocky shores and salt-marshes, but with little attempt to be more precise. Further progress seems to depend on choice of classification. Following Stace (2010) most plants fit *C. officinalis* L. sensu stricto, which according to Rich (1991) embraces the *C. officinalis* subsp. *officinalis* of Clapham et al (1987) However following Rich (1991) it is possible to fit some salt-marsh specimens to *Cochlearia atlantica* Pobed. Confusion though follows as Stace (2010) lists *C. atlantica* Pobed as a synonym of *C. officinalis* subsp. *officinalis*!

Before 2000 *Cochlearia anglica* L. (English Scurvygrass) was recorded from several muddy salt-marshes around the coast, but recent gatherings have failed to fully match the specimens to the description. Ivor Rees has collected a range of specimens in 2015 and 2016. Dr. Wyse Jackson (BSBI Referee for Cochlearia), determined the plants as *C. anglica* x *C. officinalis* = *C. x hollandica*. This hybrid has been quite widely recorded around the coast of Ireland, but these appear to be the first records for Anglesey and indeed for Wales.

The six records are scattered round the west, south and east coasts: from Porth Cwyfan and the Ffraw estuary at Aberffraw in SH33.68 & 35.68 respectively; the upper part of the Braint estuary, near Dwyran, SH44.65; the shore of the Menai Strait, below Coed Mor, SH54.71; two localities in Red Wharf Bay in SH54.79 & 52.80.

More detailed notes by Ivor Rees about *Cochlearia* on Anglesey appear elsewhere in this Issue ([page...](#)).

Cream coloured flowers of *Gentianella amarella* (Autumn Gentian) have been noted in a small area of dune grassland at Tywyn Trewan, SH31.74 since 2010 and were the subject of a note in *Welsh Bulletin* 91. January 2013, page 20.

The number of cream coloured flowers varied from year to year and they are mixed in with pale and the typical dark coloured flowers ([photo..](#)).

Counts have been made over the last six years with about 30-40 most years, peaking at 200 in 2012 and with none seen in 2013.

The site has changed somewhat over the period from having mainly a very short dune slack sward to being dominated by ranker grasses, except on the trampled paths. Numbers have been fewer in recent years but they have spread out more. Only about 15 of the cream coloured flowers were seen in 2016.

These plants showed a strong resemblance to the northern subspecies *septentrionalis*, which occurs in the

Northern Isles, the Outer Hebrides, other N & W coasts of Scotland and on the Northumberland coast around Lindisfarne. Inland they are found in part of the Scottish Highlands and on the limestone of the Pennines. In view of the distance from any the other populations and the variability of gentians there was reluctance to consider that those in Anglesey could really be the northern subspecies.

In July 2011 Tim Rich visited the site and collected specimens for **Herb. NMW**. This August Tim, (BSBI Referee for Gentianaceae) has been looking at cream coloured gentians in Scotland and is now happy to confirm the Anglesey plants as *G. amarella* subsp. *septentrionalis* (Druce) N.M. Pritch ([Photo, on p.](#)). Again these are first records for Anglesey and Wales.

It is interesting to speculate on the origin of this outlying population – long present native? Of recent origin? Or an introduction. The location is on and beside the Anglesey Coast Path and very close to the RAF Valley Airfield which, until recently, was home to a Search & Rescue Unit with helicopters operating to potentially many remote locations.

The ease of accidental introduction was shown when a couple of cream coloured plants spontaneously appeared on thin limestone soil in a garden where specimen collecting bags had been shaken out – though no plants appeared the following year.

Last year we reported on the *Atriplex* Workshop (Welsh Bulletin 97) and the discovery of the rather elusive *Atriplex longipes* (Long-stalked Orache) in tall salt-marsh vegetation, just below the sea wall, at Wern, Red Wharf Bay, SH55.80. It is usually just one of the parents in the widespread hybrids *A. x gustafssoniana* and *A. x taschereaui*. However further searches in 2016 by Ivor Rees have led to the discovery of *Atriplex longipes* elsewhere in tall salt-marsh vegetation in Red Wharf Bay, closer to Llanddona, SH56.80 and further north in Traeth Dulas, SH48.88. Also in SH48 a new hectad record for the hybrid *A. x taschereau* (*A. glabriuscula* x *A. longipes*) at Porth y Mor, SH49.88.

Look out for a separate note Ivor Rees is preparing for *BSBI News* about some of the difficulties in identifying *Atriplex* using bracteole characters.

Another coastal genus causing identification difficulties is *Salicornia* (Glassworts). They are widespread in the many suitable shore habitats around Anglesey, but too few of the records are at species level. This is partly due to phenotypic plasticity, but also the continuing disputes between taxonomic experts over classification schemes. A new hectad record though for *Salicornia ramossissima* (Purple Glasswort) from Traeth Dulas, SH48.88. [is illustrated on page ...](#)) and shows the broad scarious margins to the bulging segments and the differences in the size of the lateral and central flowers.

Other interesting records of native species are a rather few and far between this year – top of the list goes to *Carex punctata* (Dotted Sedge) from the cliff at the western edge of The Range, SH20.80. A very useful addition to the species list for the RSPB Reserve. This is only the fourth Anglesey record, three on coastal rocks and one, unusually, on a sandy bank under Corsican Pines in Newborough Forest. Arthur Chater again providing confirmation from a photograph of a fruiting spike.

Hugh Knott collected *Symphytum officinale* (Common Comfrey) from just east of Llanfechell, SH38.91, which Bob Leaney confirmed as subspecies *officinale* var. *purpureum* ([Photograph on page](#)). This a distinctly uncommon species on Anglesey with only four post 2000 records and almost certainly not truly native on the island.

Chenopodium rubrum (Red Goosefoot) continues to spread with new records from three additional hectads, SH28, 37 & 38. It was growing in the entrance to a potato field in SH29.80; a road verge in SH39.75; a field in SH33.80 and a road verge in SH34.82. A change from the more usual shore and manure heap habitats. There are now 14 post2000 monad records, whereas only a single locality was given in Roberts 1982.

The Dotted Sedge record highlights another recording issue. There is only a tiny piece of shore in SH20.80 and originally the few records were incorporated SH21.80 to the east. A similar situation exists along the breakwater around Holyhead harbour which extends across three monads containing no other land; and should a botanist visit the refuge tower on Ynys Dulas, off the east coast near Moelfre, any records will be in a new hectad, SH59!

RSPB continue to record the performance of *Tuberaria guttata* (Spotted Rockrose) and *Tephroseria integrifolia* subsp. *maritima* (South Stack Fleawort) at South Stack and nearby Penrhosfeiliw Common nature reserve.

Spotted Rockrose is confined to a single monad at South Stack, where the average numbers of plants from 2000-2016 has been 2432, with 1810 counted in 2016.

The average number of flowers of South Stack Fleawort spread over 4 monads at the two sites from 2000-2016 has been 4408 per year, with only 2746 in 2016. This year's count was low by comparison, but within the observed variation.

Kathryn Birch has provided data on numbers of *Ophrys insectifera* (Fly Orchid) spikes counted on the fens at Cors Bodeilio and Cors Erddreiniog for each year from 2009/10 to 2016. At Cors Bodeilio, 143 flower spikes were counted, compared with 81 in 2009, showing an upward trend, at least over this period.

At Cors Erddreiniog the figure was 92 flower spikes, compared with 33 in 2010, however this is reflective of steep yearly variation over this period with no trend evident at this site.

Thanks to RSPB and NRW for making this information available to the BSBI.

There were a number of new neophyte records, including the first three localised records for *Conyza canadensis* (Canadian Fleabane) from the town centres of Holyhead, SH24.82 and Llangefni, SH45.75 and the Penrhos Retail Park, Holyhead, SH25.81. Looking at the national distribution and the number of records spreading west along the North Wales coastal belt it is quite a surprise that there have not been more Anglesey localities.

Another surprising first record is of *Lobelia erinus* (Garden Lobelia) from a roadside edge in Llanfechell SH36.91. It is such a widespread garden annual and has been well recorded from many other Welsh counties.

There was also the first localised record for *Allium roseum* (Rosy Garlic) naturalised along a woodland edge, by the coastal path at Red Wharf Bay, SH530.814.

A more unusual first record is of *Iris xiphium* (Spanish Iris) found by Richard Birch growing along the high-water mark on the east side of the Inland Sea, SH29.76.

A number of second records include *Lepidium draba* (Hoary Cress) from the top of the beach on Breakwater Road, Holyhead, SH24.83; *Rosa virginiana* (Virginian Rose) from a hedge, at Bwchanan, SH36.90 and *Oxalis exilis* (Least Yellow-sorrel) which was very abundant in the tightly strimmed churchyard at Rhosbeirio, SH391.917.

The BSBI Database now includes some impressive analysis of recording progress towards Atlas 2020 county by county. For Anglesey it shows that over 140,000 records have been added since 2000, with over 10,000 added so far this year..

For the 16 hectads the average % of taxa re-recorded since 2000 is 79% (range 72 – 84) and the average number of additional taxa found in each each hectad is 115 (range 38 – 173).

References

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