

Anglesey Plants and the Flora Group in 2013 : Ian Bonner

Note: The main text below appeared in BSBI Welsh Bulletin No.93 in January 2014. Following on are some additional notes on 2013 and early thoughts about 2014.

This year the Flora Group started with an indoor meeting at Treborth in March when 15 of us talked through recording possibilities for the year, concentrating on the next Atlas and monad recording towards a future county flora.

Atlas 2020: although the BSBI has not yet decided on content we assumed that post2000 records for each hectad would be required. We were able to show that for the 16 hectads covering Anglesey we had rerecorded between 63 – 85% of the taxa in the previous Atlas (average 78%). It was agreed that our general monad recording should continue to aim to improve on this. Spreadsheets were produced highlighting the “missing” species and, that apart from SH68 (with the 63% figure), no special effort would be made in 2013.

Rare Plant Register: we would continue to check old records and generally keep the Register as up to date as possible.

Towards a future **Anglesey Flora:** a map had been prepared showing the total number of records (mainly post 2000) from each of the 800 monads covering Anglesey. This made it easier to spot the areas with few records which would form the focus for the field meetings for 2013 - with the eventual aim of securing a reasonable list from at least one monad in each tetrad.

The first field meeting on the 8th April, based on Llanerchymedd, was on a very chilly day and with the generally late spring made for a rather unrewarding day, but resulted in basic lists for six previously 'empty' monads.

In early May our second meeting covered the four monads around the Tre Ysgawen Hotel, Capel Coch, in more spring-like conditions, but with no notable discoveries.

Jane Rees and others have continued with road verge surveys and during May have spotted ***Ficaria verna*** subsp. ***verna***, (the Celandine with bulbils in the leaf axils) from six additional monads. All were from road verges close to habitations and Jane was picking the patches out at a distance by their larger leaves and matt green colour.

On 1st June the Flora Group met at Carreglwyd, Llanfaethlu, making good basic lists from the four monads around the estate, but failing to refind the 2008 record for *Torilis nodosa* (Knotted Hedge-parsley) previously recorded from the remains of the former Telegraph Station, which was now being used as a livestock feeding station.

In mid-June Anglesey hosted the BSBI AGM and Welsh Regional AGM, with some 19 groups visiting 11 of the best and most accessible botanical localities on the island. During the visit to the Butterfly Orchid field at Plas Newydd, SH51.69, Tim Rich and others spotted a single ***Dactylorhiza praetermissa*** (Southern Marsh-orchid) flower spike. This was confirmed by Ian Denholm and is the first definite record for Anglesey, though the species has been known for some years from the Parc Menai area of Bangor, just the other side of the Menai Strait. A fuller report on the AGM excursions will appear in the 2014 Year Book.

Martin Rand kindly undertook some extra monad recording during his visit and noted ***Vicia tetrasperma*** (Smooth Tare) near a farmyard at Bryntwrog, SH41.79. This is the first record since J.E. Griffith recorded it from Beaumaris in his 1895 Flora of Caernarvonshire & Anglesey.

On 8th July the Flora Group met at Cemlyn and, with the agreement of the National Trust and their farm tenants, recorded from several of the monads surrounding the nature reserve.

Although extensive lists were made, especially from the diverse habitats around Tyn Llan to the west of Cemlyn the most notable species was the reconfirmation of *Typha angustifolia* (Lesser Bulrush) beside the pool in SH32.93.

In early July Anglesey benefited from a visit by Richard Lansdown looking at aquatic plants on the RSPB reserves. He quickly spotted *Lemna turionifera* (Red Duckweed) on water courses at both Malltraeth Marsh (SH46.72) and Valley Lakes (SH33.76). These make the 1st and 2nd v.c. Records and since then we have been able to identify this duckweed elsewhere on the Malltraeth marshes. The assumption seems that is not a new arrival – it is just that we have not known about it before!

Richard's visit to the Criugyll part of the Valley Lakes reserve (SH334.764) added a locality for *Carex vesicaria* (Bladder sedge), an uncommon sedge with only seven current sites, and also the first record for the hybrid between *Carex rostrata* (Bottle sedge) and *C. vesicaria* = *Carex x involuta*, the specimen being confirmed by Arthur Chater.

On 16th July Ian Sims lead a Flora Group visit to look further round the Afon Criugyll and Plas Bog parts of the RSPB's Valley Lakes reserve. The diverse topography and varied levels of grazing result in a rich flora. The highlight was the discovery of a small colony of *Lathyrus palustris* (Marsh Pea) growing up between a mixture of rush, horsetail and sedge species. Marsh Pea has apparently not been recorded on Anglesey before, yet it seems unlikely that such a relatively showy plant should have been overlooked by earlier generations of botanists.

Also from the Valley area Debbie Evans reported *Cyperus longus* (Galingale) growing round the margin of a marshy field. Another new record for Anglesey, but closer examination showed it had almost certainly spread over the fence from nearby gardens!

Continuing the wetland theme Richard Lansdown's report to the RSPB, following his August 2012 visit, includes two records for *Alisma lanceolatum* (Narrow-leaved Water-plantain), from Llyn Dinam (SH30.77) and Llyn Treflesg (SH30.76). These appear to be the first records since J.E. Griffith's 1895 Flora.

A potentially exciting report this summer was of *Luronium natans* (Lesser Water-plantain) from a shallow pool, recently created along the line of a former ditch, at Cors Erddreiniog (SH47.82). However close examination of a specimen by Andy Jones has concluded the plants were juvenile *Alisma plantago-aquatica* (Water Plantain). Andy has retained a specimen in his herbarium. There were 19th century records of *Luronium* from Llyn Coron, L. Dinam and L. Maelog; but the few records from the 1980s have subsequently been amended to records of *Baldellia ranunculoides* (Lesser Water-plantain).

This shows how difficult it can be to separate non flowering members of the Alismataceae (Water Plantain family) and that *Luronium* still awaits re-discovery on Anglesey!

In August Tim Blackstock lead the Flora Group around the Penmon area, updating records from several monads. It was good to re-find *Erigeron acer* (Blue Fleabane) on a vertical rock face behind the Priory in SH63.80, with *Clinopodium ascendens* (Common Calamint) growing nearby – apparently at the same location as given by Hugh Davies in his 1813 Flora. Arthur Chater confirmed a specimen of *Arenaria leptoclados* (Slender Sandwort) from the limestone, the first post2000 record for this possibly rather overlooked

taxon.

In September Hugh Knott arranged access and lead the Flora Group to visit some of the cut-off river meanders along the former route of the Afon Cefni. In the more open areas we noticed more Red Duckweed, plenty of *Hippuris vulgaris* (Mare's-tail) and both *Bidens cernua* (Nodding Bur-marigold) and *Bidens tripartita* (Trifid Bur-marigold).

This late summer Ivor Rees and IRB have looked at oraches in several coastal localities. Along the Menai Strait shore between Foel and the mouth of the Braint oraches are abundant and caused some confusion! We have a collection of specimens, which included *A. prostrata* (Spear-leaved Orache) and something that resembles *A. glabriuscula* (Babington's Orache), but not like more typical plants from exposed coasts. Arthur Chater kindly looked through our specimens, and has concluded that we have material of both *A. prostrata* and *A. glabriuscula*, but that the majority of our specimens are referable to the hybrid *A. glabriuscula* x *A. prostrata*.

There was also a specimen of the hybrid between *A. glabriuscula* and *A. longipes* = *A. x taschereaui* (Taschereau's Orache). Both the hybrids are first records for the vice-county. However here are no records of *A. longipes* (Long-stalked Orache), one of the parents, from Anglesey.

We would be delighted if anyone reading these notes would like to examine the material and offer confirmation – or indeed alternative determinations!

Continuing the coastal theme – Martyn Stead has sent in specimens of *Elymus athericus* (Sea Couch), complete with ciliate margins to the leaf sheaths, from Rhosneigr, SH32.72. This is the first record since 1998 and the first from the west coast, the few earlier records all coming from Red Wharf Bay and the eastern end of the Menai Strait.

For some time Hugh Knott has been interested in the identity of a whitebeam on Church Island, Menai Bridge (SH55.71) and this autumn sent material to Dr Tim Rich at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. Readers of the BSBI Handbook on Whitebeams (Rich *et al.* 2010) will know that taxon 36 is an as yet un-named *Sorbus*, (the Menai Strait Whitebeam), described from the Caernarfonshire side of the Strait at Nantporth, near Bangor. Tim has now confirmed that this Anglesey specimen also belongs to this taxon.

In October we ended the season recording between Pentraeth and Red Wharf Bay, before enjoying scones and tea in Tynyngogl, followed by a brief review of the year and some first thoughts on 2014.

Interesting records of introduced species continue to be sent in. Barry Wrightson noted the first record for *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*, (Ragweed) counting 24 plants growing with *Datura stramonium* (Thornapple) and *Echinochloa crus-galli* (Cockspur) in limestone chippings near Penlon, SH43.65.

Debbie Evans found the first record for *Amaranthus retroflexus* (Common Amaranth) on waste ground at Gwalchmai, SH39.76. Determination was confirmed on a fragment of fruiting inflorescence retrieved from her compost bin – as a second visit to collect a specimen found the plants destroyed in a trench digging operation! However who knows what will come up in the disturbed ground next year.

References:

Rich, T.C.G., Houston, L., Robertson, A. & Procter, M.C.F. (2010). *Whitebeams, Rowans and Service Trees of Britain and Ireland. A monograph of British and Irish Sorbus* L.. BSBI Handbook No.14. Botanical Society of the British Isles, London.

Additional notes for 2013

On the down side this year it was a poor season for annual gentian species on the coastal dunes. At Aberffraw there were no early flowering plants of *Gentianella campestris* (Field Gentian), the few rosettes in June failed to flower, mostly drying up in the hot weather; but more plants did appear later in August and September

At Tywyn Trewan *Gentianella amarella* (Autumn Gentian) numbers were well down on 2012 and Ivor Rees only found one of the white form and none of the cream form.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed records this year, with special thanks to John Bratton and to Debbie Evans who has made an impressive start recording some of the "empty" monads around Bodedern.

The Group is very grateful to Joanna Robertson for organising Flora Group events over the last few years – thank you very much Joanna.

However, as you know, Joanna wishes to retire from this role as from our 27th March 2014 meeting – so we urgently need a volunteer to take over the 'non-botanical' side of the Flora Group.

There is some interest in some plant identification workshops over the winter, also a pre-season meeting at Treborth in March – for which updated information on monad and hectad progress will have been prepared. Details will be circulated to all those on the mailing list held by Joanna.

2013 Summary - Flora Group 9 meetings

Treborth (indoor)

Llanerchymedd

Tre Ysgawen Hotel

Carreglwyd

Cemlyn

Plas Bog, Valley Lakes

Penmon

Malltraeth Marsh

Red Wharf Bay & Cae Trefor

Some thoughts on 2014

I have added 7472 records to the **Anglesey database** in 2013, giving a total of 94515 records.

The **Rare Plant Register** was made available to NRW in December 2013 in a form for use on their GIS mapping system, I'm grateful to Polly for making this possible.

Atlas 2020: The BSBI is planning to update the *Atlas of the British & Irish Flora* that covered the period up to 1999. The new date class will be 2000-2019.

We should aim for at least comparable coverage as last time. For the 2013 meeting I generated lists of taxa still to be rerecorded in the 2000-19 period in each hectad (10km.square) and I plan to do this again once I am confident all the 2013 records are in. The results so far show no grounds for complacency; but we have 4 or 5 field seasons to improve matters. I will summarise the results when they are available to anyone who is interested.

We hope many of you will adopt hectads and help fill gaps. Remember records must be at least at a monad (1 km. square) level and include basic information, so that they can also contribute to the Anglesey Flora (see below).

Anglesey Flora We would like to both improve our coverage and obtain a more even spread across the island. On the whole the coast is quite well covered; but much of the interior is poorly recorded.

One aim is to collect a reasonably comprehensive list from 1 of the 4 monads in each tetrad.

I can provide copies of a spreadsheet summarising the number of taxa recorded from each monad.

For 2013 we have marked up a 1:50,000 map of Anglesey using coloured dots to indicate the number of taxa recorded (mainly since 2000) in each monad (1km.square).

Blank squares are uncoloured, 10-70 are ○, 71-140 are ○, 141-210 are ○ and 211 and above are ○.

With the help of 2-3 volunteers I hope we can update the map for the 27th March meeting.

A glance at the map shows the few “hot spots”, the better recorded coast and the many gaps in the interior!.

It is difficult to know how many records might be expected from an “average” 1km. square; but we think 150 -200 is likely. Squares with a good mix of semi-natural habitats will clearly hold more species, often in excess of 300.

Although we would like to continue to improve our coverage of **all** species across the county it could be argued that we probably have sufficient information about the most **common** species.

The challenge is to improve our information about those **species restricted to different semi natural habitats**, eg patches of wetland, unimproved grassland, rock outcrop etc., especially where the habitats are fragmented and do not have public access.,

If we are to continue with Flora Group visits in 2014 it would be good to concentrate partly on unrecorded squares; but mainly for you all to help with access to some of these patches of semi-natural habitat.

As before we hope several of you will also adopt some of the under-recorded squares as your own projects for the year.

Submitting Records I am happy to receive records on paper, on record cards, or on spreadsheets – as you make them during the season, or altogether in the autumn/winter. Remember you can download and print off your own Anglesey recording cards by going to the BSBI website and selecting “Resources”. However each record should be supported at least by a 4 figure grid reference, a date and a recorder's name.

If re-recording the common plants seems too tedious think about just recording those plant that typify semi-natural habitats – see above. Some of these are termed “axiophytes” – desirable plants, and a list of Anglesey axiophytes can also be found on the BSBI website.

Rare Plant Register Some of you send in updated information about populations of our rarer plants, this helps to keep the Register as up to date. I hope you will continue with this important work.

Anglesey Checklist: work has continued on this, it currently totals c.1650 taxa, although weak on critical groups, eg Rubus, Rosa, Taraxacum and Euphrasia. When slightly more refined it is planned to put this onto the Anglesey page of the website.

Threatened Plants Project (TPP) No new taxa have been selected for survey in 2014. However there is lots of scope for checking locations for species from previous years. In particular Smooth Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris glabra*), Small Water-pepper (*Persicaria minor*) and Yellow Bird's-nest (*Hypopitys monotropa*). I can provide more details and the record forms.

Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) One of the conditions of our grant from CCW for the BSBI Welsh Officer is that we should contribute to this scheme. Basically it is using the TPP methodology to check on plant species that feature in the selection criteria for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Last year we did some monitoring on populations of Mountain Everlasting (*Antennaria dioica*) and Spotted Rockrose (*Tuberaria guttata*). We haven't yet had any requests from CCW for this coming year.

Plant Identification We always try to help with identification hints on our site visits; but no special workshop sessions have been planned. If there is a demand for a session on a particular group, e.g. Sedges, we would try to fit it into the programme.

BSBI If you are not already a member please do seriously consider joining. Membership is good fun and value. Details available from any of us.

END of suggested circular.

IRB notes for further consideration:

List possible dates for 2014 for diaries providing volunteers come forward to organise one or more of the events.

Anglesey checklist for website – currently c.1650 taxa. V weak on critical groups, eg Rubus, Rosa, Taraxacum, Euphrasia
What else should be added? Some idea of abundance (hectads) date classes, status

FLORA: Work on Species descriptions drafts compare 1813, 1895, 1963 and current.
Check other data sources DDB, COFNOD
Assemble information for introductory chapters

Bioblitz Cofnod are keen to repeat a joint day with us (to follow up the aborted Cemlyn day last summer). Breakwater Country Park, Holyhead has been suggested; but nothing has been firmly fixed yet.

Training: concentrating on particular groups, eg yellow daisies, ferns, sedges, either with special field meetings and/or indoor sessions.

Social
Other