

## Anglesey Plants and the Flora Group in 2014: Ian Bonner

(As appeared in the Welsh Bulletin of the BSBI No.95 February 2015)

Before the first indoor meeting at Treborth in March Pat Denne used the 9597 records added in 2013 to update the map showing the total taxa recorded in each of the 800 monads. Andrew Dixon made an electronic version of it available for subsequent reference. At the meeting it was again agreed to concentrate effort on collecting monad data toward the Atlas 2020, a future county flora and keeping the Rare Plant Register up to date. Barry Wrightson kindly agreed to take over the circulation of information about recording days and the coordination of bookings.

Over the weekend of 26-27<sup>th</sup> April Professor John Richards and Dr Tim Rich led a **Taraxacum** workshop at Treborth, which included field visits to parts of Anglesey and Caernarfonshire. Some 39 taxa were noted on Anglesey, of which 26 were new VC records and will be published in Plant Records in due course.

This illustrates the need for targeted recording of difficult taxa to back up basic monad coverage in the run-up to Atlas 2020. **Atriplex** species (Oraches) on coastal strandlines come into this category. They featured in the 2013 Report and Paul Green came up in early September to assist and make collections. Based on further work this year, it appears that as well as six species, the Anglesey coast may have a complex of four different hybrids. Material is now with the BSBI Referee for the genus.

**Atriplex portulacoides** (Sea-purslane) is one that is easy to spot. It is now common in many salt marshes, with post-2000 records from 50 monads. This has not always been the case: in 1813 Hugh Davies listed only four localities and in 1895 JE Griffith described the plant as "very rare and local", giving only two localities. Sea-purslane has clearly undergone a dramatic spread around the Anglesey coast since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly a couple of these early records appear to be from atypical rock habitats and a separate note in this *Bulletin* explores this further.

Paul Green stayed on after the **Taraxacum** workshop to accept the challenge of re-finding one of the two species of filmy fern on Holyhead Mountain (last recorded in 1984). Paul was successful and found a small clump of **Hymenophyllum wilsonii** (Wilson's Filmy-fern) amongst boulder scree at SH219.830. Of equal interest, Paul also re-found **Fumaria purpurea** (Purple Ramping-fumitory) on a roadside bank in Menai Bridge, SH553.722, and on the bank of the B4419, near Foel Farm (Sea Zoo), SH475.650. It had been thought to be 'possibly extinct' with the last cluster of records from the early 1930s and a single record from Red Wharf Bay in 1967.

In April Andy Jones found a new population of the Nationally Scarce **Thelypteris palustris** (Marsh Fern) in a boggy hollow near Mynachdy, SH299.919.

A small group visited Cadnant, near Menai Bridge, on 15<sup>th</sup> May concentrating on the grassland and woodland west of the Cadnant Dingle SSSI, but John Bratton visited the Dingle and confirmed **Crepis paludosa** (Marsh Hawk's-beard) still by the Afon Cadnant, SH55.73, its only Anglesey locality.

A day recording "empty" monads south west of Amlwch in May produced an eighth recent record of **Galium album** (Hedge Bedstraw) from a road verge. This is its most frequent habitat on the island and it is difficult to know if it is a true native on Anglesey. The day also strengthened the view that **Ranunculus bulbosus** (Bulbous Buttercup) is quite widespread along road verges, as well as on base-rich semi-natural grassland, but it is only conspicuous for quite a short period of the year.

On 17<sup>th</sup> May the Flora Group met at the Pen-lôn end of Newborough to admire the

luxuriant display of *Menyanthes trifoliata* (Bogbean) and other wetland plants adjacent to Llyn Rhos-ddu and then (following up knowledge from the dandelion workshop) went to see *Taraxacum palustre* (Marsh Dandelion) in several of the dune slacks.

Some of the Group went to Newborough again in August, this time crossing to the tidal flats to the far extremity at Abermenai Point. *Limonium binervosum* agg (Rock Sea-lavender) was found at a new location. As usual there were good shows of *Eryngium maritimum* (Sea Holly) and the diminutive *Centaurium pulchellum* (Lesser Centaury) was found in at least two locations. After the storms of last winter *Cakile maritima* (Sea Rocket) has been especially widespread here and around the west coast of Anglesey this year.

In late May and late July the Group revisited Parciau Home Farm to update the records last made in 1999. A good list was compiled for SH49.84, including a number of species not seen in 1999 such as *Euonymus europaeus* (Spindle) and *Geranium sanguineum* (Bloody Cranesbill). However we were disappointed not to re-find some of the scarcer plants of the limestone outcrops, including *Arabis hirsuta* (Hairy Rock-cress) and *Elymus caninus* (Bearded Couch).

*Pyrola rotundifolia* (Round-leaved Wintergreen) is a well known feature of dune slacks and damp hollows at Newborough and Aberffraw, but another wintergreen, *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen) has also been found in Newborough Forest. In 1984 Mr & Mrs Davidson recorded it at two locations in SH41.66. Searches in June 2014 failed to re-find it there, the forest floor being now densely covered in scrub and tall herbs. However Common Wintergreen had also been found more recently near the western edge of the Forest, and here at SH388.651 Jane and Ivor Rees and I enjoyed the spectacle of well over 300 flower spikes in a rather open situation under the Corsican Pines (see photo). It is thought that Common Wintergreen was probably introduced along with the trees in the 1950s. We went on to see the Nationally Vulnerable *Hypochaeris glabra* (Smooth Cat's-ear) which was locally frequent nearby in open sand at the junction of two forest tracks at SH387.651. The maintenance of these open habitats is very important for the Cat's-ear and several other Newborough specialities. Further west in the open dunes there was a stunning display of *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid), with frequent *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid)

In June *Allium sativum* (Garlic) was spotted on the coast and on roadsides near Trearddur Bay, SH243.793. The plants appeared to be well established and this is a first record of it growing wild for Anglesey. The coiled flower stalks are characteristic of var. *ophiosorodon*. A more detailed illustrated note about this find appears elsewhere in this issue. Paul Green, who is the BSBI Referee for *Allium*, was taken to see the Anglesey population of *Allium ampeloprasum* (Wild Leek) (see photo). This, the only site, is on a road bank at Ty Mawr, SH218.816, near South Stack, the plant has been known here since 1970 and this year 80 flower heads were counted in July.

In July Cath Shellswell of Plantlife carried out arable plant surveys of 14 fields on a number of farms in NW Anglesey and kindly sent a copy of her survey results. *Spergula arvensis* (Corn Spurrey) and *Stachys arvensis* (Field Woundwort), listed respectively as Near Threatened and Vulnerable on the Welsh Red List, occurred in all the surveyed fields. The highlight was finding *Kickxia elatine* (Sharp-leaved Fluellen) and *Misopates orontium* (Weasel's-snout) in a field in SH28.76, both of which are very scarce on Anglesey.

*Calamagrostis epigejos* (Wood Small-reed) seems to be becoming more widely recorded with sightings in August and October from just W of Point Lynas, SH476.930 and from the

Rhoscolyn area, SH277.759 and SH282.749. There are now 12 post-2000 records, almost all from around the coast, and in several cases it is forming patches extending over several square metres.

In August Richard Lansdown paid another visit to RSPB's Malltraeth Marsh reserve and discovered the very attractive rayed form of Nodding Bur-marigold ***Bidens cernua*** var. ***radiata*** (see photo) which was locally frequent along ditches near the Tai'r-gors office. This variety was first listed by Hugh Davies in 1813 as being 'very rare' with a single locality. There was a second record from Anglesey by N.D.Simpson in 1926. There have been two records from Denbighshire in 1970 & 2012, but otherwise these are the only records from Wales. .

***Lactuca serriola*** (Prickly Lettuce) was first recorded in 2005 near Valley, SH28.78. The expected rush of further records has not yet been noted, but in August Richard Birch found a second site at Holyhead Railway Station, SH248.820.

A further walk by Holyhead station in October produced two more interesting plants from almost the same locality, ***Erigeron acris*** (Blue Fleabane) and ***Erodium moschatum*** (Musk Stork's-bill). Several plants of both species were found between the railway and the walkway, SH2489.8224. There are plenty of Blue Fleabane records from the sand dunes at Newborough and Aberffraw and a scatter from the limestone at Penmon, but this is the first from such a ruderal habitat. For the Musk Stork's-bill this is the first record since 1992, when it was found by RH Roberts and Mattie Davies on a rock at Tywyn Trewan.

**Correction:** The note in the 2013 Report about the Menai Strait Whitebeam having been discovered on Church Island is now wrong. Following a site visit by Dr. Tim Rich in 2014, he has re-determined the specimens as ***Sorbus aria*** (L.) Crantz. So the un-named Menai Strait Whitebeam is still only known from Nantporth, on the Caernarfonshire side of the Strait.

References:

Davies, Hugh, *Welsh Botany*. London. 1813.

Griffith, J.E., *The Flora of Anglesey and Caernarvonshire*. Bangor. n.d. (1895).

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Photos: *Pyrola minor* at Newborough : Ivor Rees

*Bidens cernua* var. *radiata* at Maltraeth Marsh ; RV Lansdown

*Allium ampeloprasum* and Paul Green near South Stack : Ian Bonner