

Denbs Group 2016 – some recollections.

The year started off on 6th March in the Ruthin Rugby Club for an update of progress and plans for the season, followed by a much-needed look at plants in the Llanfwrog tetrad. Even though it was bitterly cold we set off, but when the sleet and snow took over while we were in the church yard we decided to call it a (very short) day.

Thereafter there were about 15 advertised Denbs Group meetings over the season, plus a few short-term weather dependent arrangements. Add that to several independent recorders who have contributed considerably from their respective tetrads and the total comes to over 20,000 records from VC50 Denbs for 2016.

The main thrust of this year's selection was to visit previously recorded tetrads at a different time of year to ensure best possible coverage. On the whole the weather was kind to us with the notable exception of a day of monsoon scale in June in Pentrellyncymer SH9752. We persevered though and were well-rewarded with new sites for *Sedum forsterianum* Rock stonecrop, *Melica nutans* Mountain Melick, *Vicia orobus* Wood Bitter-vetch, *Carex pallescens* Pale sedge and some lovely specimens of *Araucaria araucana* Monkey-puzzle trees scattered through the village.

On 1st May a visit to the far west of the vice-county to Llanrwst SH7962/3 added 219 new taxa, most noteworthy some lovely estate planted trees such as *Sequoiadendron giganteum* Wellingtonia, *Cedrus libanii* Cedar of Lebanon, *Abies grandis* Giant Fir and *Carpinus betulus* Hornbeam. The origin and history of the trees in this area would merit further study. *Asplenium ceterach* Rustyback fern, although not rare, is always pleasing to find and it is common in these parts in the mortar of walls.

We went south in early June to Moelfre SJ1828, adding 199 new taxa. It was a lovely day in these gentle unspoilt hills yielding *Saxifraga tridactylites* Rue-leaved Saxifrage new to the hectad and *Jasione montana* Sheep's-bit, *Luzula pilosa* Hairy Wood-rush and *Myosotis discolor* Changing Forget-me-not which are not uncommon, just pleasing to see.

A few hardy souls yomped for many hours in July over the Migneint looking for *Carex magellanica* Tall bog-sedge, which we re-found and *Carex limosa* Bog-sedge, which we didn't.

August took us to Nant-y-Rhiw SH8258 where we confirmed two locations for *Carex laevigata* Smooth-stalked Sedge, which is by no means common and where *Aphanes arvensis* Parsley-piert, *Lepidium didymum* Lesser Swine-cress and *Odontites vernus* Red Bartsia were new to SH85. There was a surprising find of *Thalictrum minus* Lesser Meadow-rue doing well in the mortar all over the walls of the old chapel.

Stunning views of familiar places from a different angle made a September meeting to Ty Nant, Dinmael SH9944 enjoyable. We topped up more records for the tetrad, finding *Vicia tetrasperma* and *Chenopodium rubrum* Red-footed Goosefoot, both new to the hectad.

John Palmer organised a successful Bramble recording week-end in July with experts Rob Randall and David and Joyce Earl based in Llysfasi College. A full report will be in the BSBI Yearbook.

The season ended on 30th October along the limestone of Offa's Dyke Path at Llandegla SJ1952/3, adding 145 new taxa and showing promise of a place to re-visit next Spring.

Very many thanks to all those of you who came along and let's look forward to another good year in 2017. If you weren't able to make it this year, there's always next!