

B.S.B.I.

SCOTTISH
NEWSLETTER



BSBI SCOTTISH NEWSLETTER

Number 1

Spring 1979

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It is our intention to produce an Editorial feature in future numbers of the newsletter, but for this first issue we have thought it more appropriate to include the following contribution from the Chairman of the BSBI Committee for Scotland, Mr. Brian S. Brookes.

THE BSBI SCOTTISH NEWSLETTER

The idea of a newsletter for the BSBI in Scotland originated from views expressed by members at the time the Committee came into being in the autumn of 1977. A number of members, especially those from outside the Glasgow - Edinburgh belt, felt that as field botanists they tended to be rather isolated. Some certainly felt that there was a need for a way of providing more opportunity for contact with fellow members than is offered by our annual exhibition meeting and field meetings. Thus the idea of a Scottish newsletter, as a means whereby members could keep in touch, was born. This commended itself to the Committee and it was decided to launch the project. We hope that it will fulfil its intended purpose, that those of you who wish help, requests for information or material perhaps, and those who are prepared to offer assistance, may get in touch through its pages. We hope also that it will fulfil a wider role by providing a forum for exchange of views on topical matters, as a means of keeping you informed of the Society's activities in Scotland and by publishing short notes and articles of particular interest to Scottish members.

This first number allows me an opportunity to mention some of the work which is currently being done by your committee in addition to the regular organisation of meetings, running other affairs of the Society, and liaising with other organisations. In particular I would like to draw your attention to our project to produce a Comital Flora or Census Catalogue for Scotland and to publish the results of the CSSF Invernesshire Survey. Both of these projects are under way and will absorb a great deal of our energies for the

next two years or so. The former is being organised by a sub-committee convened by Alan Silverside and the latter by an organising committee for which I am acting as convenor meantime.

Those of you who were unable to be present at the Scottish AGM in November 1978 may not know that copies of the Constitution governing the BSBI Committee for Scotland are available for all members. If you would like a copy I would be delighted to post one to you on request (a foolscap s.a.e. would be helpful). One of the provisions in the constitution is that a third of the members of the committee retire each year. Later this year you will be invited to make nominations for the three vacancies which will arise in 1979. If necessary an election will take place at the AGM on November 3rd. A note calling for nominations will appear in BSBI News nearer the time.

This newsletter is a new venture and we are grateful to Peter Macpherson and Allan Stirling for its production; also to Olga Stewart for her cover illustration of Scottish Lovage.

With the death on 5th April 1978 of Robert (Bob) Mackechnie, Scotland lost one of her most able and respected botanists. More formal tributes and notices have appeared elsewhere and we have chosen instead, by way of in memoriam, to offer the following contribution from Mr. E.C. Wallace of Sutton, Surrey, a close friend and botanising companion of Bob during some forty five years.

ROBERT MACKECHNIE - SOME REMINISCENCES E.C. WALLACE

My first meeting with Robert Mackechnie was in June 1932 at Killin where I was on holiday, my first visit to Scotland. It was a good centre for an introduction to the Scottish mountain flora and I had a good guide in the person of the late J.B. Duncan of Berwick-on-

Tweed, a well-known bryologist who was considerably older than myself, then only 23 years old. Mr. Mack-echnie came for the middle weekend and joined our excursions on the neighbouring hills. It was some time before we used our christian names, but Bob and I became close friends for over forty years and we had a high regard for each other. For six years previous to 1932 we had conducted a correspondence which began in October 1926. On the suggestion of the late C.B. Tahourdin, an orchid specialist, I wrote to Bob asking if he would exchange specimens of pressed flowering plants with myself. The first letter accompanied a specimen of Moenchia erecta from Surrey which he had never seen before. Thus began an exchange of Scottish and English plants which continued for about thirty years until we had observed almost all British plants in the field. Our exchange parcels often contained notes and photographs of the habitats.

In 1933 began a long series of botanical holidays which were annual until 1941, missing 1942 when I joined the RAF, but we managed nine days at Inveroran, Bridge of Orchy, in 1943 when Bob's wife Esther was with us. These annual events were resumed in 1947 and continued intermittently until the 1960's. During the years we explored various parts of Perthshire, and the Braemar district where I have memories of our two stays at Loch Callater Lodge with stalker Lamond and his sister. I remember taking the late H.W. Pugsley up on to Lochnagar to see its special plants, some of which we missed as it was a bad day to descend the 'Spout'. The country around Fort William and Rannoch was visited, and Glen Feshie - a rich area. After 1947 we tended to go to the north-west Highlands of Ross and Sutherland.

Days that remain in my memory include a round of Little Craigindal, Ben Avon, Slochd Mor, and Beinn a' Bhuird when we got back to Braemar at 2.45 a.m. Leaving Derry Lodge at 7.30 a.m. we went up Glen Derry, looked over and down at Loch Avon, up Coire Etchachan, over Ben Macdhui and down to the Luibeg, reaching Derry

Lodge again at 11 p.m. Ascending Ben Nevis, reaching the summit via the Red Burn at 5 p.m., descending into Coire Leis and finding a small rich area of rock, climbing again to the cairn at 9.30 p.m. and back to Fort William about midnight. Another grand day, when Bob's friend Dan Livingstone accompanied us, was descending Beinn Eighe, going down a stone shoot into the grand Coire Mhic Fhearchair and back down the Coire Mhic Nobuil glen back to Inver Alligan. Then to Aonach Beag, east of Ben Nevis, when we had a splendid day finding Saxifraga rivularis, Juncus biglumis, Carex lachenalii, Cystopteris montana and many bryophytes never before recorded there. Since then several other rare plants have been found on Aonach Beag including a new locality for Saxifraga cernua which I had found in the Glencoe area in 1949. In Perthshire on the north side of Glen Lyon we found new stations for Erigeron alpinus, Carex rupestris and Carex atrofusca. In 1937 we were joined at Fortingall by Dr. W.A. Sledge and the late P.M. Hall when we had the exclusive use of an annexe to the hotel for our plant pressing activities and packeting of bryophytes which were my special interest.

Bob had lived alone in his flat in Shawlands, Glasgow, since his mother died, and in 1938 he married Esther McCubbin whose home was in Ireland. They had a happy and contented life together, and during the war years and after frequently went on bicycling holidays together, sometimes to Co. Fermanagh. I have plants from the Irish countryside collected on these excursions. On one occasion after the second world war they visited southern England for a British Ecological Society meeting at Southampton and we were able to see the New Forest.

I myself first visited Ireland in 1951 and two years later spent a fortnight touring the west of Ireland from Kerry to Donegal with Bob and Esther and Basil Ribbons. I remember seeing Mount Brandon clear of cloud on our arrival at Clogharne and not seeing it at

all the next morning because of dense mist. Limerick is a pleasant town and nearby was Scirpus triqueter by the Shannon. We looked down at the sea from the cliffs of Moher, explored the Burren, Connemara and Achill Island before reaching Sligo and the Ben Bulbin country - all in good weather enabling us to see most of the special plants of western Ireland.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of Bob's discoveries was that of the Dock Rumex aquaticus, a plant new to Britain, on the shores of Loch Lomond where it occurs in several places, sometimes hybridising with Rumex obtusifolius. Almost equally important was his rediscovery of the Crested Buckler Fern (Dryopteris cristata) in its only Scottish station, made in the company of the late John R. Lee.

When going up into a corrie Bob always preferred to follow a burn to the rocks above, looking for alpine willowws and sedges by the water. A pair of field glasses were always carried and used to look at plants to see if it was worth the effort to climb up to them. He was good on rocks and cliffs and together we have climbed up many seemingly impossible places, some of which I remember on the Cairngorms and elsewhere. Caenlochan Glen is just such a place, and there we rediscovered Primula auricula and the Myosotis supposed to be alpestris, both known to have been planted there in the latter part of the last century together with Aquilegia alpina, since shown to be A. pyrenaica. Perhaps the Myosotis came from the Pyrenees for it is obviously not identical with the Ben Lawers plant. We did not see the Aquilegia on our visit in 1934 but did find Thlaspi alpestre, Gnaphalium norvegicum and Cicerbita alpina. Away in the north-west of Scotland on the Fannichs and the mountains around Beinn Dearg (Braemore) we again saw Gnaphalium norvegicum and made many new county records, especially of bryophytes, some on ground botanised by G.C. Druce fifty or so years earlier. We discovered how rich is Seana Bhragh with its outcrops of basic rock and mossy flushes, and subs-

equently I advised Dr. Derek Ratcliffe to visit the area with the result of more good records as he had gone as far as Loch Luchd Coire.

In the years 1950 to 1960 Bob and Esther joined forces with Dr. and Mrs. Sledge in Switzerland where they saw Epipogium, the Ghost Orchid. They also visited Norway on the first of the European trips of the CSSF where they saw many of the Scottish mountain plants in great abundance. After a heart attack in the early 1960's Bob had to take things much easier but was able to conduct field courses on Rushes, Sedges and Grasses at Kindrogan Field Centre. He was a frequent attender at field meetings of the Andersonian Naturalists of Glasgow and the CSSF, of which latter body he was for many years the chairman. The last time we were in the field together was on 2nd July 1977 at Carrifran, Moffat Hills, when Allan Stirling drove us down from Shawlands to meet Grant Roger and other botanists from Edinburgh. A sight of Myosotis brevifolia gave Bob considerable pleasure.

In recent years our fortnight botanising holidays in Scotland ceased, mainly I suppose because I was going about the world, having retired in 1972. I visited Glasgow at intervals however, especially for the exhibition meetings and field excursions of the CSSF, and frequently stayed with Bob and Esther. They always made me very welcome and we often talked of the past years. With his passing I lost a very dear friend.

SCOTTISH EXHIBITION MEETING 1978

P. MACPHERSON

This meeting was organised by the BSBI Committee for Scotland in conjunction with the Botanical Society of Edinburgh and the Andersonian Naturalists of Glasgow, and was held at the University of Glasgow on 4th November 1978.

In the morning a meeting of the Scottish vice-county recorders was held. Twelve attended and the meeting was addressed by Dr. Franklyn Perring, Secretary of the

BSBI Records committee. In the afternoon the first Annual General Meeting of the BSBI Scottish members was attended by thirty including Mrs. Mary Briggs, Hon. General Secretary BSBI. Mr. B.S. Brookes, Chairman, gave a resume of the work of the Committee during the first year and outlined future proposals. This was followed by business from the floor. At an ensuing committee meeting the Officers were re-elected.

Mr. E.T. Idle, Regional Officer for South-East Scotland, Nature Conservancy Council, then gave an address entitled 'The Vegetation of Loch Lomond-side'. This was attended by an appreciative audience of 87.

The actual exhibition was open from 12 noon to 17.40. A list of the 21 exhibits will be published in Watsonia. Items included general botanical publications, new flora, identification guide, flower drawings and paintings, herbarium specimens of historical interest and of new records, also fresh specimens in water and pots.

A buffet supper was followed by a show of colour transparencies presented by the following:- J. Bevan - Umbellifers; B.S. Brookes - Skye Field Meeting; Roses and Brambles Course, Kindrogan; R.W. David - Carex species in Scotland; P. Macpherson - Sow of Atholl Field Meeting; Meikle Kilrannoch Plants; Dr. R.A.H. Smith - Forestmuir Field Meeting; A. McG. Stirling - Scottish Alpine Plants photographed in Norway; J. Winham - Barra Field Meeting.

BSBI COMMITTEE FOR SCOTLAND 1978/79

The following is the composition of the Committee until November 1979 :- Chairman - B.S. Brookes; Vice-Chairman - A.McG. Stirling; Secretary/Treasurer - Dr. P. Macpherson; Field Meeting Secretary - R. McBeath; Meetings Secretary - Miss E.R.T. Conacher; Members of Committee - P. Harrold; Mrs. C.W. Murray; Dr. A.J. Silverside; Dr. R.A.H. Smith and Mrs. O.M. Stewart.

NATURE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL HERBARIUM R.A.H. SMITH

There is a small herbarium (c. 3000 sheets) at NCC Scottish Headquarters, 12 Hope Terrace, Edinburgh EH9 2AS. It chiefly comprises material from National Nature Reserves throughout Scotland, some of which is duplicated in other herbaria elsewhere. Material includes that collected by H.A. Fairlie, A. Currie, J.G. Roger, D. McVean, D.A. Ratcliffe, W.J. Eggeling, H.A. Salzen, R.E.C. Ferreira, C.M. Thomson and Dr. Isabel Hutchinson.

This herbarium may be consulted by prior arrangement only with Mr. M. Nelson at the above address.

FLORA OF KINTYRE

We understand that this new work by M.C. Cunningham and A.G. Kenneth, originally scheduled for publication in August 1978, is now in the press and should be available shortly. It will be the first comprehensive catalogue not only of the flowering plants and ferns but also the bryophytes of the vice-county. Both authors reside in the area covered and have studied the local flora over many years.

A NEW TETRAPLOID IVY

ALISON RUTHERFORD

In the course of research into the wild ivies of Britain it has been established that, in addition to the common Hedera helix with 48 chromosomes, another taxon with $2n = 96$ (tetraploid) occurs. It had been known since the 1950's that the Ivy familiar to horticulturalists as 'Irish Ivy' is tetraploid, but the origin of this plant is not known. During the summer of 1978 Dr. Hugh McAllister of the University of Liverpool Botanic Gardens found a remarkable plant in the Isle of Wight. It had the familiar thick waxy foliage, long petioles and aromatic scent of Irish Ivy, but showed all the stages of growth form associated with the polymorphic Common Ivy.

Indications are that the Irish Ivy of cultivation may be a form of the Isle of Wight plant which achieves the sub-arboreal (semi-fertile) stage directly from the seedling form. This is supported by the fact that the Isle of Wight Ivy has typical Irish Ivy leaves at the second last 'stage', and that seed of the cultivated type produces young plants with Irish Ivy foliage developing directly after the seedling leaves.

Examination of Ivies from various parts of the British Isles has shown that what may be referred to as 'wild Irish Ivy' has a distinctly southern and western distribution. In Cornwall and Devon for example it is very abundant, in places apparently largely replacing the more northern and eastern H. helix. Where this south-western Hedera is found growing luxuriantly in moist sheltered places it can be very readily distinguished from the Common Ivy and the relationship to Irish Ivy is easily discernable, but where it is hard grown (e.g. in exposed situations) it is quite impossible, to the naked eye at least, to tell them apart. The wild tetraploid has been found as far north as south Ayrshire, but in all its Scottish localities it seems to be small and untypical, recognisable with certainty only by cytological examination.

With a microscope of at least 200 times magnification it is possible to differentiate between the two types. The stellate hairs of H. helix have the rays variously directed while those of the western plant have almost all of the rays lying parallel to the leaf surface.

A fuller account of these critical species is being prepared for publication.

Although new vice-county records are regularly published in Watsonia, and BSBI members are expected to send probable new records to the appropriate Vice-county Recorder, no comprehensive census of vice-comital distribution has been published since G.C. Druce's 'The Comital Flora of the British Isles' of 1932. Moreover, the reliability of Druce's Comital Flora is open to question, the basis of a number of records being in considerable doubt. A modern equivalent is clearly needed and the BSBI Committee for Scotland has decided to produce a census catalogue for Scotland.

We envisage a relatively cheap, slim volume listing native species, established introductions and as many sub-species, hybrids and other critical plants as proves practicable, with information on post-1950 status and known extinctions. An Irish Census Catalogue by Miss M. Scannell and D. Synnott, has already appeared on similar lines. Initial contact will be with Vice-county Recorders but in case of difficulty we will be grateful for the co-operation of others with comprehensive regional lists. We would also welcome information from anyone who is working on a critical group and has reliable vice-comital records.

Work is currently being co-ordinated by Dr. A.J. Silverside at Department of Biology, Paisley College of Technology, Paisley, Renfrewshire.

BSBI SCOTTISH MEETINGS 1979

- 6th May EYEMOUTH, BERWICKSHIRE
(Taraxacum - Dr. A.J. Richards)
- 16 - 17th June APPIN, ARGYLL (A.A.P. Slack)
- 24th June BALLINLUIG, PERTHSHIRE (A.W. Robson)
- 30th June GLEN CLOVA, ANGUS (R.J.D. McBeath)
- 7 - 14th July DUNS, BERWICKSHIRE (M. Bräithwaite)
- 22nd July CAM CHREAG, PERTHSHIRE (J. Winham)
- 28th July -
4th August ULLAPOOL, WESTER ROSS
(R.J.D. McBeath)
- 12th August GLENBERVIE, KINCARDINESHIRE
(Mrs. A.H. Somerville)
- 22 - 29th August KINDROGAN FIELD CENTRE
(Willows - R.D. Meikle &
R.J. Pankhurst)
- 3rd November BSBI Scottish AGM and Exhibition
Meeting, EDINBURGH

Further details of the various field meetings may be had on application to the respective Leaders.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The editors would welcome contributions to be considered for inclusion in the Newsletter. These may be notes on topics of botanical interest, letters, requests for information and assistance in connection with projects or investigations, and similar items. Readers' comments and suggestions concerning the content of the Newsletter, BSBI activities in Scotland and similar matters would be similarly welcome. We would appreciate having contributions before the end of November 1979 for Newsletter No 2 due for publication early in 1980.

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CHECK LIST OF DUNBARTONSHIRE PLANTS

A check list of the vascular plants of Dunbarton, vice-county 99, is nearing completion and the writer would like to hear from anyone who has useful records or plant lists relating to the area, preferably with accurate locality reference. Such information will also prove useful towards a more comprehensive Flora which it is hoped to produce in the longer term. Please write to A.McG. Stirling, 17 Austen Road, Glasgow G13 1SJ.