

# Warwickshire Botanical Report 2012

WARWICKSHIRE FLORA GROUP REPORT NO. 3

APRIL 2013

## OVER THE GARDEN WALL

The following plants, seen for the first time in 2012, have all made their “escape” over the garden wall.

- An established colony of Spring Snowflake (*Leucojum vernum*) at Wootton Court were photographed in February by John Ball who then passed the photo on to Steven Falk for identification
- Steven Falk also sent in news of the unusual Green Snowdrop (*Galanthus woronowii*) that he had seen in Morton Bagot in March



Spring Snowflake (*Leucojum vernum*)



Green Snowdrop (*Galanthus woronowii*)

- In April JW and MW saw some Forsythia (*Forsythia x intermedia*) flowering on the edge of Moat House Covert, Shustoke well away from any nearby gardens. It is surprising that nobody has recorded it previously in the county.
- Another common, but overlooked garden “escapee”, Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*) also made it on to the official list when John and Val Roberts reported it from Hornton Quarry, Edgehill on 26<sup>th</sup> August.
- While researching the flora of post-industrial sites in Coventry and North Warwickshire, Vicki Cooke found Tall Tutsan (*Hypericum x inodorum*). It was fairly widespread and growing on mine spoil (seven sites). A horticultural hybrid, a cross between Tutsan (*H. androsaemum*) and Stinking Tutsan (*H. hircinum*) it is often planted in parks and along roadsides. The first record was from behind Mount Judd, Nuneaton in July. JW and MW also reported it from a hedgerow near Baxterley in October.
- Vicki also found the first “escapee” record of the common garden plant Heart-leaved Elephant-ears (*Bergenia cordifolia*) at Hartshill Sidings in August.
- Whether the Sea-heath (*Frankenia laevis*) from Bidford-on-Avon was of garden origin we may never know. This was reported fully in Newsletter No. 4 and in BSBI News.
- A seedling of Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) was noted from Cress Hill in July by Jon Bowley

Additional species from 2011

- While surveying at Bickenhill Plantation in September 2011, Jon Bowley found some Shrubby Cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*). A rare native of the Northern Pennines, this record is obviously from garden stock and may have been imported in rubble used to construct a pathway.

## TWO MINOR MIX-UPS WITH DATES

On the WFG visit to DM Kineton on 23 June, having seen the species previously in Northamptonshire, Brian Laney predicted that the bund would be the kind of place for Wall Bedstraw (*Galium parisiense*) to grow. Jon Bowley returned for lunch with a probable specimen which Brian quickly confirmed as the target plant, and at that time this find was thought to be a Warwickshire first. Three months later while surveying the Rugby/Leamington disused railway line, Jon came across some more Wall Bedstraw in a similar habitat.

However, at the indoor meeting in April 2013, Brian announced that he had searched through his records and discovered that the first Warwickshire sighting of Wall Bedstraw was actually from the year 2000 when Pete Selby found some plants on the northbound Warwick motorway services (the opposite side of the motorway from the *Poa infirma*). Brian had seen it there himself in 2002 and supplied an accurate grid reference, but the information, for some reason, had not been passed on to the Museum.

On the WFG visit to Warwick Museum in November, Jane O'Dell presented two mounted herbarium sheets that she had found while tidying up! One was a specimen of Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) found by H.A.Roberts in Wellesbourne in 2001, this date being three years earlier than the information given in Steven Falk's book.

The other sheet was of Maidenhair Fern along with a letter from Fred Rumsey of the Natural History Museum. The letter stated that the fern collected in 2002 from a cellar in Portland Street, Leamington Spa was in fact the houseplant *Adiantum raddianum* and not the wild species *A. capillus-veneris*, (also grown in gardens), as it had first been named. Ten years later this fern was seen to be flourishing and spreading when the WFG went on a town walk around Leamington Spa on 30 December. The other rare, exotic, cellar-dwelling fern, Ribbon Fern (*Pteris cretica*) that was growing around the corner in Clarendon Avenue was also doing well.

## WARWICKSHIRE FLORA GROUP SURVEYS 2012

The visit to Bickenhill Plantation was very valuable. This important reserve is situated in the middle of the NEC and contains a sizeable area of bog and heathland. Even though our survey took place quite late in the year we found leaves of the rare Marsh Violet (*Viola palustris*) at one of only three county sites and a small colony of Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*). Other scarce acid loving plants included Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*).



Counting Orchids at Draycote Meadow



Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*)

In May the WFG had fun trying to count the 25,000 or so Green-winged Orchids (*Anacamptis morio*) at Draycote Meadow NR. Val Roberts was happy just counting one frond of Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*). Draycote is the only Warwickshire site for this fern and it had not been recorded there for a few years.

**Below is a list of some of the other important finds from the WFG surveys:**

|                            |                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hampton in Arden           | Crosswort ( <i>Cruciata laevipes</i> ), Meadow Saxifrage ( <i>Saxifraga granulata</i> )                                                         |
| Ufton Fields               | Man Orchid ( <i>Orchis anthropophora</i> ), Greater Butterfly Orchid ( <i>Plantanthera chlorantha</i> )                                         |
| Brandon Wood               | Heath Dog-violet ( <i>Viola canina</i> ), Smith's Pepperwort ( <i>Lepidium heterophyllum</i> )                                                  |
| Wappenbury Wood            | Pill Sedge ( <i>Carex pilulifera</i> ), Pale Sedge ( <i>Carex pallescens</i> )                                                                  |
| Grove Hill                 | Houndstongue ( <i>Cynoglossum officinale</i> ), Common Gromwell ( <i>Lithospermum officinale</i> )                                              |
| Whittleford Park           | Fine-leaved Vetch ( <i>Vicia tenuifolia</i> )                                                                                                   |
| DM Kineton                 | Corn Parsley ( <i>Petroselinum segetum</i> ), Knotted Hedge-parsley ( <i>Torilis nodosa</i> )                                                   |
| Ladywalk/Lea Marston       | Marsh Helleborine ( <i>Epipactis palustris</i> ), Round-leaved Cranesbill ( <i>Geranium rotundifolium</i> ), Water Avens ( <i>Geum rivale</i> ) |
| Walton Estate              | Spreading Hedge-parsley ( <i>Torilis arvensis</i> )                                                                                             |
| Weston and Wetherley Woods | Bifid Hemp-nettle ( <i>Galeopsis bifida</i> ), Sharp-leaved Fluellen ( <i>Kickxia elatine</i> )                                                 |



Pale Sedge (*Carex pallescens*)



Sea-heath (*Frankenia laevis*)

The visit to Middleton Lakes in September also included a walk around the grounds of Middleton Hall, for six years the home of the 17<sup>th</sup> century botanist John Ray. After some discussion and intense study of Poland (the book, not the country!) by Louise Marsh and Geoffrey Hall, two species of bamboo, Broad-leaved Bamboo (*Sasa palmatum*) and Hairy Bamboo (*Sasaella ramosa*) were added to the county list. A possible plant of Duck-potato (*Sagittaria latifolia*), a water plant similar to our native Arrowhead was seen in the lake just in front of the RSPB office. It will be investigated further in 2013.

Our winter walk around Leamington Spa on 30 December found 20 species in flower and a seedling of Wrinkled Viburnum (*Viburnum rhytidophyllum*) growing in a pavement crack in Victoria Park, another first county record.



Bifid Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis tetrahit*)



Knotted Hedge-Parsley (*Torilis nodosa*)

## OTHER NEWS

- In June Mike Poulton sent us a specimen from the SSSI northern section of the Wildlife Trust Harbury Spoilbank reserve. It was the short, early-flowering grass, Mat-grass Fescue (*Vulpia unilateralis*), that likes to grow on bare limestone soil and is a real rarity with just a handful of sites throughout the Midlands. The identification of this first county record was confirmed by Arthur Copping and the material is now in the Warwick herbarium.
- Vicki Cooke found a second county record for Knotted Pearlwort (*Sagina nodosa*) at Baddeley Colliery in July. The only other site for this species in the county is at Sutton Park
- John Bowley discovered some plants of Treacle Mustard (*Erysimum cheiranthoides*) while surveying the Leamington/Rugby disused railway line in August.
- Nik Aspey in Stratford and JW and MW in Kenilworth came across plants of Prickly Poppy (*Papaver argemone*) in the spring.
- After the herbarium meeting in November, Dorothy Evans took us into town to show us Membranous Nettle (*Urtica membranacea*). This still appears to be thriving down the Warwick back alleys six-years after its discovery.
- Michael Senior recorded White Mustard (*Sinapis alba*) as a casual from near his home in Stoke, in Coventry.
- John and Val Roberts and JW and MW visited Burton Dassett Hills CP in August and found a few plants of Rough Clover (*Trifolium scabrum*) surviving on the quarry faces alongside more Knotted Clover (*Trifolium striatum*). Knotted Hedge-parsley (*Torilis nodosa*) was abundant throughout the grassland.

Photos from Steven Falk, John Ball. John Roberts and John Walton.

John and Monika Walton April 2012