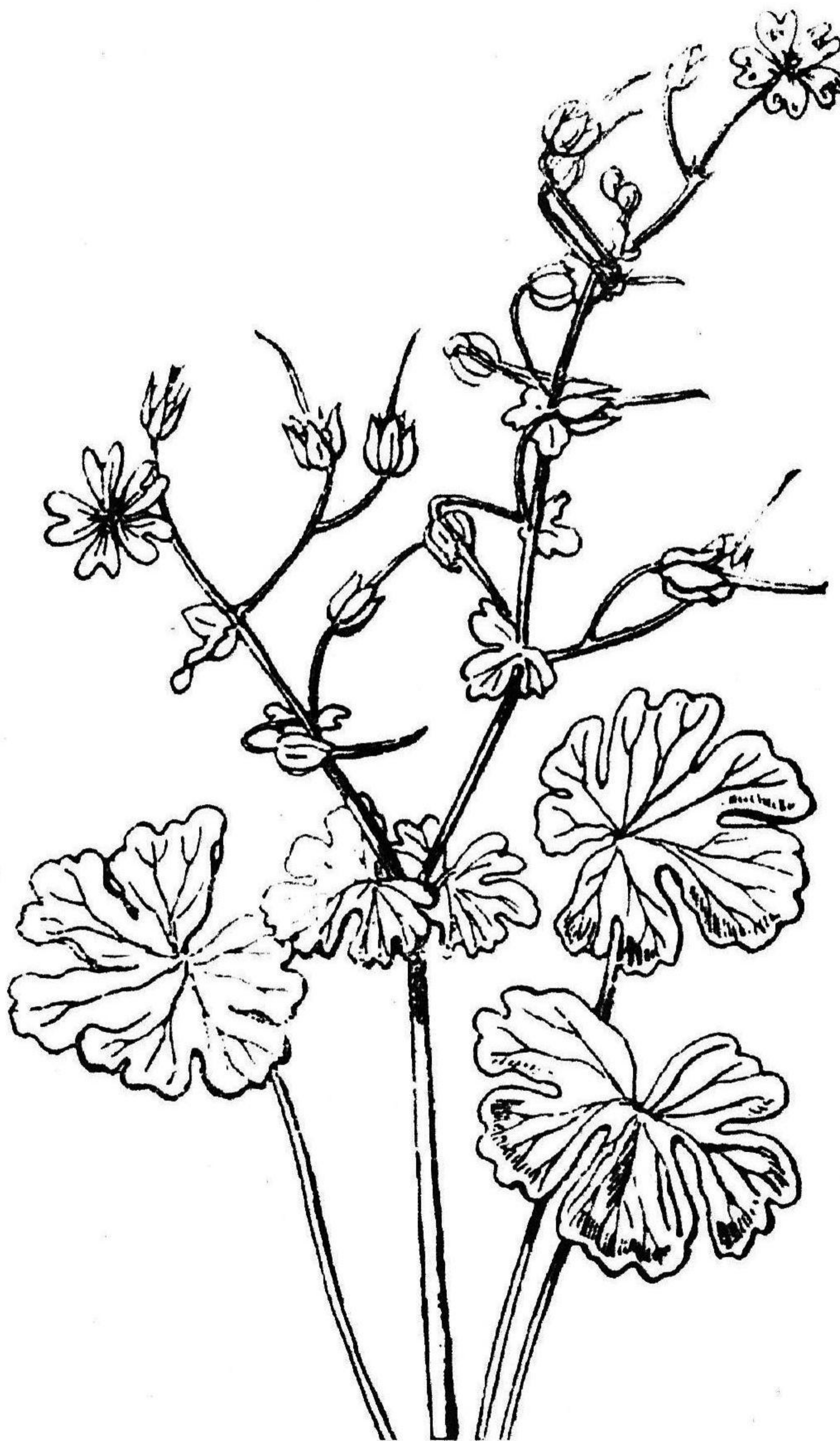


Parnassia

The Newsletter of the Liverpool Botanical Society



Hedgerow Crane's-bill, *Geranium pyrenaicum*

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Editorial

Hello fellow plant people and welcome to the spring/ summer issue of Parnassia.

Firstly we would like to give our sincerest apologies for the extreme lateness of this issue of Parnassia. In defence of our general tardiness we can cite the excuse of one of our editors, Leander Wolstenholme, changing employment as we were about to publish this issue. You may or may not know that Leander has moved on from his post at The University of Liverpool, to take on the position of Ecologist with The Environment Partnership. I am sure that you will join me in wishing Leander all of the best in his new venture, I will miss him as a work colleague, but will be constantly reminded of his time spent here every time I view the 'Floral Clock' that he left as one of his many legacies at Ness.

Now the dust has settled on the upheavals of the last few months, normal Parnassia business can hopefully be resumed. Any articles can be sent to myself at Ness Botanic Gardens via post or e-mail, to Judith Riley at Liverpool Museum or e-mailed to Leander. Full contact addresses are given at the back of each issue of Parnassia. Whilst on this point can I please re-iterate our perennial appeal for contributions and suggestions for future editions of Parnassia. Anything, no matter how trivial it may seem to you, may be of great interest to your fellow LBS members. So don't be bashful, please put pen to paper or finger to keyboard and bombard us with your thoughts and ideas. Have a good Christmas and New

Year, and join us again in the autumn for the indoor meeting and the field trips

Keith Hatton
December 2000

Liverpool Museum News

Since I last wrote, the pace of change here at the Museum has increased considerably.

My new job is proving exciting and interesting. Plans for the new galleries and the re-opening of the enlarged museum in 2001 are well underway, and I have been involved with several of the planning committees. It really is going to be very splendid!

The Natural History Centre closed briefly in the Autumn, and moved to its temporary (until 2001!) location, still on the second floor. We re-opened on 23rd October, just in time for half-term. I put together a display on Natural Cosmetics, and The Body Shop very kindly loaned some materials. The temporary centre is bright and welcoming and is maintaining its popularity with visitors. If you haven't found us yet, please do come and have a look around.

Throughout the Autumn, the Botany Department was dominated by thoughts of the move to Bootle in November and we are now planning to move back again. Wendy Atkinson and Alex Caccamo took over from Donna Young (who is now the proud mother of lovely twin daughters, Jodie and Megan). Together we set about parcelling up specimens and books, unearthing lots of fascinating material which hadn't seen

the light of day for many, many years! One item which particularly sticks in my mind was a collection of watercolours of common wildflowers, painted by a soldier from the British army in Flanders during the First World War. He sent them home to his family, and later the pictures found their way into our care. The fact that we don't know what became of the artist adds to their poignancy.

Botany's move finally took place at the end of November 1999, when we joined the Zoologists and Geologists already 'in situ'. The Museum rented accommodation within a warehouse complex at Merseyside Enterprise Park. There is an office suite which is warm and comfortable, and warehouse units where the collections are stored in safe but rather chilly conditions!

I made my first working visit there on 29th November. It was pleasing to find some small evidence of wildlife among the urban streets and vacant lots. Mistle thrushes rattled to each other in the little park, and blackbirds fed on berry bushes in a garden. The old bricks of the railway bridge held a characteristic flora of hawkweed spp., maidenhair and black spleenwort and wall rue.

After some initial reorganisation and shuffling of boxes, we have settled down to work documenting the European herbarium, incorporating some new specimens passed on to us by the University of Alicante, and accessioning some lovely new books for the departmental library. There is certainly plenty to do!

The accommodation which the Museum will be able to offer the LBS for meetings after we re-open will be state-of-the-art. For the time being, we must continue to hold indoor meetings at the Bluecoat Chambers. I do apologise for the occasional lapses in the standards of the equipment: hopefully this will not happen too often!



Wall-rue, *Asplenium ruta-muraria*

Good wishes to everyone for a successful botanical season ahead.

Judith Riley

Vice County News

Thanks to the hard work of the whole band of local recorders, from all over vice-county 59, records for all hectads in South Lancashire were submitted on time for inclusion in the Atlas 2000 project. Despite the map published in the BSBI News of January 2000 there were no gaps in the vc59 coverage. Despite that there is still much work to do at the tetrad level. The hectads (grid squares 10km x 10km) used for Atlas

2000 are far too coarse a recording unit for mapping to the detail required for the proposed new Flora of the vice-county. Though quite appropriate for mapping nationally the local mapping has stepped down from hectad recording to using tetrads (grid squares 2m x 2m, i.e. blocks of 4 1km squares). There are 25 tetrads in each hectad, so 25 sets of data are required for mapping the local flora of each of the 40-plus vc59 hectads, compared to one set of data for the hectad mapping of the national atlas. Fortunately tetrad recording is proceeding well, though there are still plenty of squares requiring fuller recording. Help in recording the further flung corners of the vice-county will be most welcome!

Peter Gateley

STOP PRESS: David Earl has been nominated to replace Peter as vice-county recorder for South Lancashire, vc59. Details in the next issue of *Parnassia*.

News from Ness Gardens

A very important aspect of any botanic garden is the conservation of rare plants. At Ness Gardens we have initiated a project to investigate the management and conservation of the British Red Data Book species Limestone Woundwort, *Stachys alpina*. It is one of the rarest and most endangered species in the British Isles. It is listed in the British Red Data Book as ENDANGERED and is listed in Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. Its distribution is reduced to just two populations, one in Clwyd and one in Gloucestershire

It is principally a plant of open woodland, glades and wood-borders, tracks and hedgebanks, growing on thin soils overlying calcareous rocks and usually in sunny and sheltered locations. There are a wide range of associated species including, *Arrhenatherum elatius*, *Geum urbanum*, *Heracleum sphondylium*, *Mercurialis perennis*, *Silene dioica*, *Stachys sylvatica* and *Urtica dioica*. It seems to be a short-lived perennial and observations in the wild and in cultivation show that it is wintergreen and fairly drought tolerant.

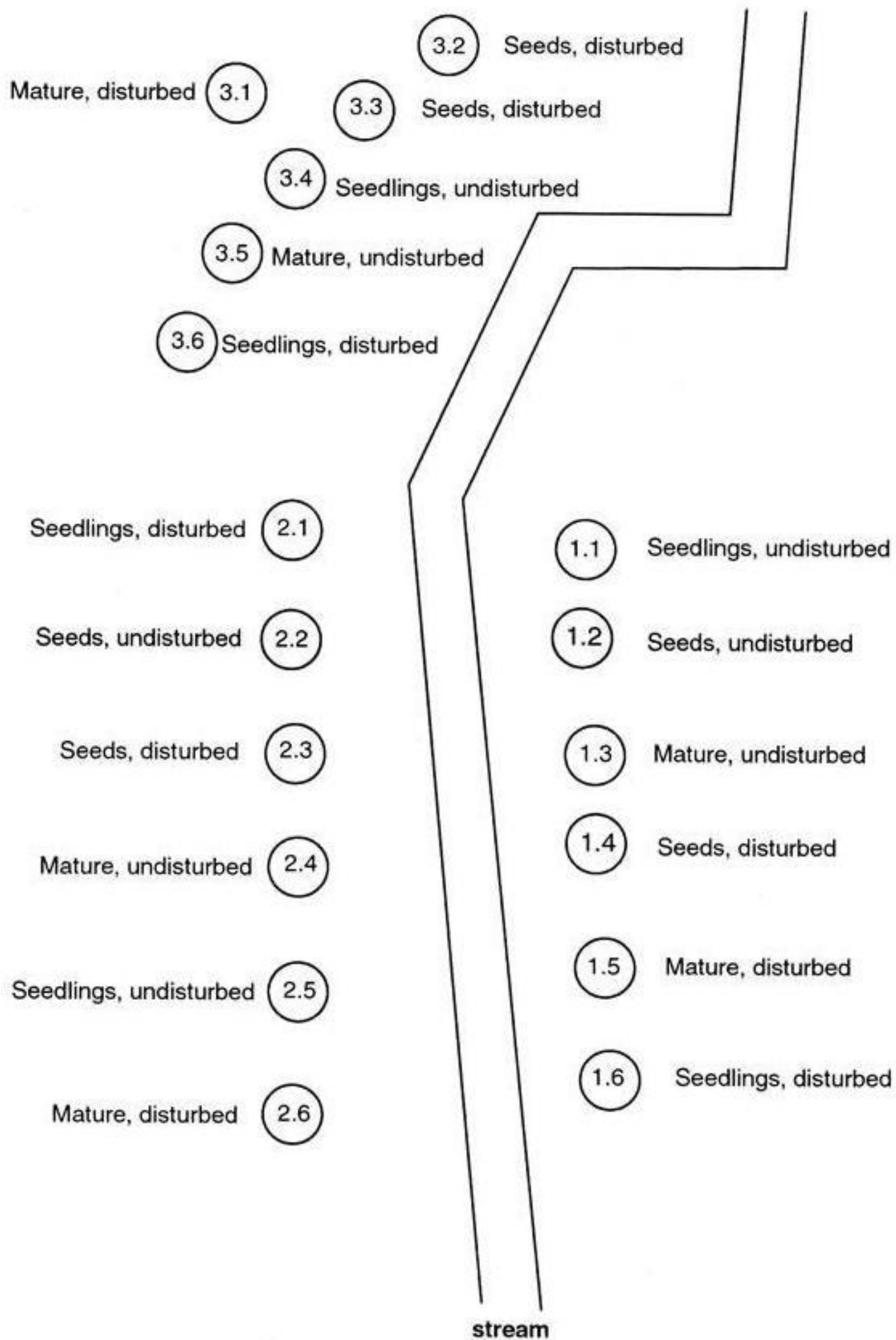
At Ness Gardens, not only do we feel that it is important that a botanic garden is active in plant conservation but it is almost equally important that a botanic garden is seen to be active in plant conservation.

Bearing this in mind we have tried to establish an experiment that deals with actual populations rather than individual specimens and an experiment that has a direct application to conservation work that is currently underway.

The experiment that we have designed for the Limestone Woundwort, *Stachys alpina* was aimed at answering two very straight forward questions: what would be the best way to re-introduce plants into the wild (seeds, seedlings or mature plants) and once established in the wild what would be the best way to maintain that population?

Observations on cultivated populations had suggested that *S. alpina* was a short lived perennial that needed to regularly regenerate from seed to maintain a population. Seedling establishment

Layout of the *Stachys alpina* experiment at Ness Gardens



requires bare soil and therefore it seems likely that soil disturbance is necessary for the maintenance of populations. British woodlands now lack the disturbance that would, in the past, have been made by Wild Boar, Bears, Beavers and Badgers. Therefore, it was felt that, in order to formulate a successful conservation strategy for *S. alpina* it was necessary to assess the impact of various disturbance regimes and their effects on plant populations.

The experiment was placed in a woodland (mostly Beech) called the "Spinney". The woodland is thought to have been planted around 1910 adjacent to an ancient hedgerow on former agricultural land. A stream had recently been opened up (it had previously been piped) that ran through the Spinney and, as a result, there was plenty of loose soil on either side of the stream.

The experiment was set up on this loose soil. The plots are not fenced and are circular in the hope that the experiment will blend into the woodland background. The layout for the experiment can be seen in the diagram. There are eighteen circular plots in total each with various combinations of disturbance or no disturbance and plants introduced as seeds, seedlings or mature plants.

Each autumn the plots that require it will be disturbed simply using a garden fork.

So far it appears that the most efficient way to introduce plants into the wild is to grow them as seedlings in 3 inch pots in a greenhouse and plant them out in spring. The next most efficient method

is to split mature plants (as you would a herbaceous perennial) and plant out the divisions in autumn or spring. The least successful method has been the sowing of seeds in autumn. So far not a single seed has germinated, although some may germinate following disturbance.

This experiment is long term and we expect it to run for at least three years and probably more. Nonetheless the first year's studies culminated with the re-introduction of greenhouse grown seedlings into a site in North Wales in conjunction with the Countryside Council for Wales. We hope that these seedlings will do well.

Leander Wolstenholme

Field Meeting Reports

1999

Hope

17th April

(Leader: Miss Gordon)

A party of 22 met at Hope Railway Station to go along the narrow lane towards Caergwrle. The way was enlivened with common spring flowers, Lesser Celandine, *Ranunculus ficaria*, Greater Stitchwort, *Stellaria holostea*, Ground-ivy, *Glechoma hederacea* and Cuckoo pint or Jack in the pulpit, *Arum maculatum*, most of the latter having immaculate leaves. A low millstone grit wall took the place of a hedge on one side of the lane where Ivy-leaved Toadflax, *Cymbalaria muralis*, was in good flower and even had fruits on curved stalks finding a crack in the wall. In one place there was Lambs Lettuce, *Valerianella locusta*.

A slight detour was made down to the River Alyn to see if the Toothwort, *Lathraea squamaria*, was still in flower. While most were over we were lucky to find some in good flower among leaves and even a flower or two of Ramsons, *Allium ursinum*. On the river bank the flowers of Butterbur, *Petasites hybridus*, were over but it was possible to identify the male spikes from the now slightly taller main female spikes.



Barren Strawberry, *Potentilla sterilis*

We went up through Caergwrle village to the steep lane on the lower slopes of Hope Mountain. Here were both the Barren Strawberry, *Potentilla sterilis*, and the Wild Strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*, in flower and we were all able to compare them with each other.

Then we saw 3 of our members who had missed our meeting time walking along a path which intercepted ours. They were congratulated upon meeting us as there were half a dozen other paths we could have taken.

Going steeply up the hill we saw a few

early spikes of Bluebell or Wild Hyacinth flowers, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, and plenty of Common Polypody, *Polypodium vulgare*, growing on the walled hedge. A couple of plants were pointed out which had been confirmed as Intermediate Polypody, *Polypodium interjectum*, and the diagnostic characters were pointed out. This is not surprising as Hope Mountain has many bands of Carboniferous Limestone.

We had our lunch in a field by Bryn Yorkin with views east across the Cheshire Plain to Beeston Castle Hill and the Peckforton Hills. Away to the south was the Wrekin.

After lunch we continued along the hillside and saw the Navelwort or Wall Pennywort, *Umbilicus rupestris*, but not yet in flower. By then the plant is not easily seen as tall vegetation on the long acre completely hid it.

On the way down to the village of Cymau, the dominant plant was Shining Crane's bill, *Geranium lucidum* flowering well. Then down to the old gravel workings where there were so many rosettes of the spotted leaves of the Common Spotted orchid, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, that we resolved to arrange a meeting to see them in flower next year.

Down the steep banked lane to the main road was a fine opportunity to see and compare the two Dog-violets, *Viola riviniana*, and *V. reichenbachiana* and also to see the formation of tufa as calcareous water dripped down the bank.

Then to Cefn-y-Bedd along the always wet path where on woodland banks were Primroses, Wood Anemones, more Wood Sorrel and Opposite-leaved Golden saxifrage, *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*. We stopped to admire the Marsh Valerian, *Valeriana dioica*, and then the cone bearing shoots of the Great Horsetail, *Equisetum telmateia*.

Going through the woods to Caergwrle we saw banks of Moschatel or Town Hall clock, *Adoxa moschatellina*, and clumps of Pendulous Sedge, *Carex pendula*, as well as lots of the spring flowers we had seen earlier. At Caergwrle we had to visit the Hornbeam tree by the river though its flowering was almost over. Some Blackthorn was still in flower along the path to Hope Railway Station.

Vera Gordon

Aughton Park to Gaw Hill and Town Green

8th May

(Leader: Peter Gateley)

Due to some unexpected train cancellations there was about a quarter of an hour for the assembling group to explore the sandstone exposures of Aughton Park station whilst awaiting the next service adding a good list of plant records for tetrad SD 40D. In this deep cutting parts of the rock face have large populations of liverworts and mosses, pioneers in the eventual formation of soils on the once bare sandstone. Some small vascular plants are established amongst the bryophytes here, notably the New Zealand Willowherb, *Epilobium brunnescens* which, though

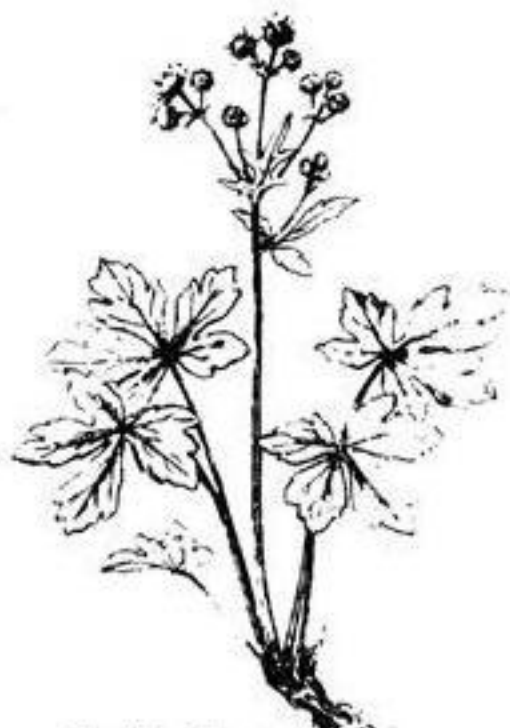
an alien, looks very established here. Ferns are abundant in the damp shady cutting but it was very pleasing to find a large specimen of Hard Shield-fern, *Polystichum aculeatum* above the Liverpool-bound platform.

Leaving the sheltered station the party headed west to the more exposed slopes overlooking the Lancashire Plain west of Aughton. Much of this area is heavily grazed improved pasture though small fragments of acidic grassland were noted out of the reach of stock. Small strips of native plant habitat survive along some of the footpath routes through this generally botanically sparse area, but a larger area available for native plants is found in the nature reserve established on the western slopes of Gaw Hill. This area retains some areas of scrubby Oak, typical of those on other local hills such as Ashhurst Beacon and Parbold Hill, with some good populations of Bluebell. Apart from these scatterings this agricultural area is generally free of tree cover, but it was of some comfort to come across Dog's Mercury along one of the lane verges.

Meandering through the agricultural landscape of tetrads SD30Y and 30X, the group recorded the diversity of species in the remaining old hedgerows and well-established stream and ditch banks, not evident from the local roads. However one feature visible from the road was visited, the fern-rich wall of Birches Brow Farm. The recording trip was well-timed with respect to the mowing regime on the verges of the A59, as there was a population of Bulbous Buttercup, *Ranunculus*

bulbosus in full bloom, this would not have been so readily noticed the following weekend as it was completely cut down a couple of days later.

After recording around the ancient church the party took the footpath to the north-west where there was a most surprising find along the eastern side of



Sanicle, *Sanicula europaea*

the track. Alongside a cattle pasture and under the shade of a Sycamore there was a single plant of Wood Sanicle, *Sanicula europaea* right on the path edge. This is usually a species of old woodland on neutral to basic soils so its appearance here was unexpected. After exploring an interesting narrow strip of wet woodland the party reached the built-up residential area of Aughton. However there was still some interesting plants to see and record; as well as admiring a specimen of Wisteria in full flower in one of the gardens there was also a range of gutter and pavement-crack weeds to enjoy! Notable pavement species in the sandy areas of Granville Park included Field Madder, *Sherardia arvensis* and Slender Trefoil, *Trifolium micranthum*. After

refreshing ourselves with tea and biscuits, thanks to the hospitality of John and Hazel Richardson, the group dispersed to the station after a good day's tetrad recording.

Peter Gateley

Ness Botanic Gardens

22nd May

(Leader: Leander Wolstenholme)

Ness gardens encompasses an area of some 62 acres of which about 45 are open to the public. This leaves about 17 acres behind the scenes. These acres are mostly devoted to the experimental work conducted by Liverpool University's School of Biological Sciences. Within this area there are also wild and scrubby areas that most people don't get to see. Yet, they harbour a great diversity of native plants and it was these plants that we set out to see.

We gathered at the entrance and admired some bushes of *Choisya ternata*. Our first port of call was under the Laburnum arch in the herb garden where we looked at Holy-grass, *Hierochloa odorata*, a grass that is found in Scotland and Co. Antrim. This sweet smelling grass was, at one time, strewn over the doors of churches on saints days hence its name, Holy-grass. We then proceeded to the greenhouses. In the greenhouse we saw *Puya alpestris* in flower. We also saw seedlings of the Limestone woundwort, *Stachys alpina* which were being grown for an experiment on the management and conservation of this rare native species. In the greenhouses we also saw a number of weeds including the New Zealand Bitter Cress, *Cardamine*

corymbosa and the bizarre looking liverwort, *Marchantia polymorpha* with its female receptacles that look like spiders on stalks, male receptacles that look like flat umbrellas and the vegetative gemmae cups looking like little green egg cups.

We then made our way to the experimental ponds passing on the way the Hankerchief Tree, *Davidia involucrata* with its large white bracts flapping around like pristine hankies. At the experimental ponds we sat and ate our lunch with spectacular views over the River Dee. The lawns in this area were alive with the pretty blue flowers of the American alien speedwell, *Veronica filiformis*. We saw the control room that controls all the temperatures of the artificial tanks and peered in each tank and saw the three aquatic species that grow there, *Lagarosiphon major* (an African plant), *Elodea nuttallii* (a North American plant) and *Potamogeton natans* (the only native plant).

We then marched further into the wilds of Ness gardens and in the rock cutting known as Robinson's Rake we saw the Giant Knotweed, *Fallopia sachalinensis*, the Allerton Oak, and hybrids between Red and White Campion, *Silene latifolia* x *S. dioica*. We saw some Spindle, *Euonymus europaeus* which had large red fruits. Hugh McAllister says that, as far as he knows, this is just normal diploid material. Further down in the rock cutting amidst the beautiful white flowers of Greater Stitchwort, *Stellaria holostea* we found Rosy Garlic, *Allium roseum*, Navelwort, *Umbilicus rupestris* and Heath Groundsel, *Senecio sylvaticus*

(introduced by Keith Hatton!). Along by the willow collection we saw interesting specimens of Antarctic Beech, *Nothofagus* sp.



Town Hall Clock, *Adoxa moschatellina*

Heading up towards the small woodland called the Spinney we passed a strip of land that is ploughed and harrowed annually to produce a magnificent display of Corncockle, *Agrostemma githago*. Growing along the hedgerows in this area was the Hedgerow Crane's-bill, *Geranium pyrenaicum*.

We stopped briefly by the dipping pond, an old marl pit, and saw the strange, purple, parasitic toothwort, *Lathraea clandestina*. Nearby we also saw the townhall clock, *Adoxa moschatellina*. On the lawn nearby a patch had been left unmown to allow Fritillaries, *Fritillaria meleagris* to grow. A little further down the hill was a magnificent blue haze created by a flowering *Ceanothus* bush.

On entering the Spinney we came across an enclosure containing huge specimens of Giant Hogweed, *Heracleum mantegazzianum* which is kept as an educational feature. Alongside a recently dug stream were plots set aside for the planting of the Limestone Woundwort, *Stachys alpina* seedlings that we had seen previously growing in the greenhouse. In the Spinney we also saw Wood Dock, *Rumex sanguineus* and Wood Meadow-grass, *Poa nemoralis*.

We then headed for the far reaches of the gardens towards the collection of native Rowans. On the way we passed a specimen of *Pterocarya*. We rooted around for labels in amongst the native Rowans and found *Sorbus anglica*, *S. hibernica*, *S. lancastricensis*, *S. leyana*, *S. devoniensis*, *S. bristoliensis* and *S. arranensis*.

From here we made our way to the rock garden passing a pretty little patch of Lady's Bedstraw, *Galium verum*. In the Woodland garden we saw some fantastic specimens of *Roscoea*, a genus named after William Roscoe. We also saw the Pyramidal Bugle, *Ajuga pyramidalis*, and a stunning purple marsh orchid, *Dactylorhiza* sp.

Into the actual rock garden itself we saw the Heath Speedwell, *Veronica officinalis* and a wet meadow with Water Avens, *Geum rivale*.

Leander Wolstenholme

Broad Green

12 June

Leader: (Vera Gordon)

Just as we arrived at Broad Green Railway Station, the heavens opened and we had to stand in a shelter. Leaflets were given out which had been sent by the person who had promised to show us around the National Wildflower Centre at Court Hey Park but he found out that he had another engagement. However the leaflets were very interesting.

After about 30 minutes, the rains ceased and we were able to venture forth to the nearby loop line. Here the path in the railway cutting was more like a swift flowing stream which we had to negotiate for a few hundred yards.

Along the drive towards Thingwall Hall the planted Deodar trees, *Cedrus deodara*, looked even more elegant as raindrops weighted down their usual pendant twigs. A real "country lane" with hedge banks shaded by trees led in a few hundred yards to a large neglected field full of Spear Thistles, *Cirsium vulgare*, except in bare patches where Common Poppies, *Papaver rhoeas*, had taken over.

In this residential area a concrete wall borders the M62 and shrubs and trees where planted as well as False Virginia Creeper, *Parthenocissus inserta*, which does not have adhesive discs on the tip of the tendrils as does the true Virginia Creeper, *P. quinquefolia*, so it scrambled over the bushes instead of covering the wall as intended.

Further along, a grassy bank was visited

which had many Bee Orchids, *Ophrys apifera*, and Common Spotted Orchids, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, and Marsh-orchids.

We had our picnic lunches in Court Hey Park after admiring the wild flowers planted there. These included Cornflower, *Centaurea cyanus*, Corncockle, *Agrostemma githago*, Corn Marigold, *Chrysanthemum segetum*, Common Poppy, *Papaver rhoeas*, and Oxeye Daisy, *Leucanthemum vulgare*.

Then uphill to Childwall Woods where in the adjoining field were Common Spotted Orchids and Marsh Orchids. The Oval Sedge, *Carex ovalis*, was almost dominant in some areas. We finished with a walk round Black Wood admiring the old trees and the large patches of Enchanter's-nightshade, *Circaea lutetiana*.

Vera Gordon

Runcorn

26th June

(Leader: Dave Parry)

We walked along the Runcorn branch of the Bridgewater Canal to Norton Priory. The stone work of the canal was a good place for ferns such as Lady-fern, *Athyrium filix-femina*, Male-fern, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Broad Buckler-fern, *Dryopteris dilatata*, and even Royal Fern, *Osmunda regalis*, which was in good form, showing the brown masses of sporangia at the end of the sterile lower part of the fronds. Usual waterside plants included Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, and Skullcap, *Scutellaria galericulata*, and in the

water was some Fringed Water-lily, *Nymphoides peltata*.

At the Priory we walked round the garden, where in the Herb Garden was Sage, *Salvia officinalis*, Apple-mint, *Mentha x villosa*, Chives, *Allium schoenoprasum*, and Lemon-scented Balm, *Melissa officinalis*. After some welcome refreshments we walked up to the road along to Astmoor for a bus back to Runcorn. On the way we saw some blue flowered Comfrey, *Symphytum 'Hidcote Blue'*, and a few of us enjoyed cherries from a roadside planted tree.

Vera Gordon

Hall Road

17th July

(Leader: Vera Gordon)

We first visited one of the places where the Isle of Man Cabbage, *Coincya monensis* ssp. *monensis*, rescued from its threatened site half a mile away, had been planted. It was doing well and in good flower. In many places the alien Broad-leaved Everlasting-pea, *Lathyrus latifolius*, made large splashes of various shades of pink. Wood Small reed, *Calamagrostis epigejos*, rare in South Lancashire was seen in a large colony just inland of the dunes. Frequent suckering bushes of the alien Japanese Rose, *Rosa rugosa*, wafted their scent across.

The Pyramidal Orchids, *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, were difficult to find because they were nearly over. Among plants which had become naturalised since old building rubble was dumped to prevent further coast erosion were Early

Goldenrod, *Solidago gigantea*, *Veronica austriaca*, *V. longifolia* and the Marguerite, *Leucanthemum x superbum*.

Among the dunes where a new slack had been dug out a few years ago and was now nearly dry was a good place to see both the Common Centaury, *Centaureum erythraea*, and the Seaside Centaury, *C. littorale*, growing together. There were plenty of Early Spotted Orchids, *Dactylorhiza incarnata* ssp. *incarnata*, but they were over. We lunched here before going over to a flat sandy field where the Sulphur Cinquefoil, *Potentilla recta*, grows in scattered groups. In other places were a few cushions of Bloody Crane's-bill, *Geranium sanguineum*, and another naturalised species Cypress Spurge, *Euphorbia cyparissias*.

Among the dominant *Salix repens* var. *argentea*, Agrimony, *Agrimonia eupatoria*, was seen in a few places. In similar habitats and in good flower we saw Dune Helleborine, *Epipactis leptochila* var. *dunensis*, and also the Pendulous Helleborine, *E. phyllanthes*. In a damp slack were patches of the larger flowered Marsh Helleborine, *E. palustris*.

In one place on the sandy dunes the Sea Bindweed, *Calystegia soldanella*, still had a few of its large pink flowers.

On the beach, the tide had worn some building rubble into what plants found as good as natural shingle, and we now have a fine colony of Yellow Horned-poppies, *Glaucium flavum*, a few spreading plants of Rock Samphire, *Crithmum maritimum*, and some Sea-

kale, *Crambe maritima*.

Further along on low dunes, Sea-holly, *Eryngium maritimum*, was abundant and the Prickly Saltwort, *Salsola kali* ssp. *kali*, had done better than ever this year.

By the time we got to the salt marsh the tide had covered the Greater and Lesser Sea-spurrey, *Spergularia media* and *S. marina*. Up on the dry Alt bank the Twiggy Spurge, *Euphorbia x pseudovirgata*, was still spreading and as we reached the road we saw Hedgerow Crane's-bill, *Geranium pyrenaicum*, which seems to be spreading in our area.

Vera Gordon

Eastham Rake

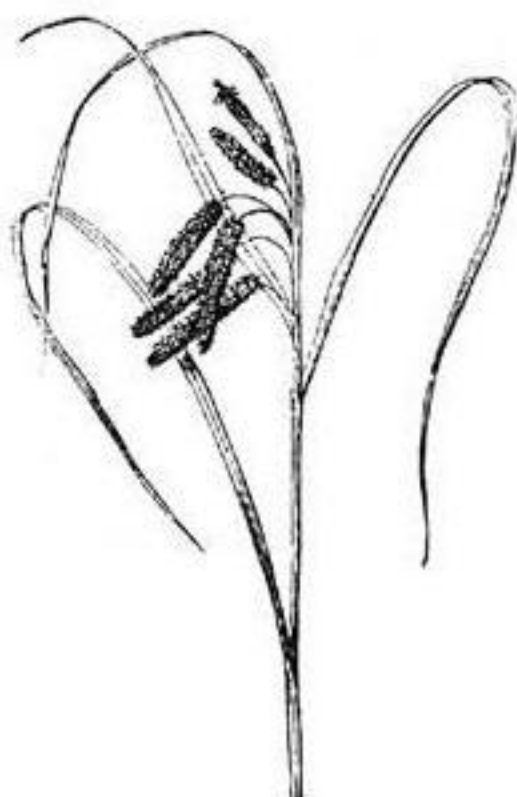
14th August

(Leader: Dr Keith Watson)

A party of 12 met at Eastham Rake station and walked along the path in Lowfields Wood along the Dibbin, with Enchanter's nightshade, *Circaea lutetiana*, Indian Balsam, *Impatiens glandulifera* and Remote Sedge, *Carex remota*. Fleabane, *Pulicaria dysenterica* and Hoary Ragwort, *Senecio erucifolius* were abundant in a meadow before we took the path under the M53 to a good pond.

Amongst floating leaves of Broad-leaved Pondweed, *Potamogeton natans* and Common and Ivy-leaved Duckweeds, *Lemna minor* and *Lemna trisulca* were leaves of Frogbit, *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*. Other interesting plants included Cypress Sedge, *Carex pseudocyperus* and

Common Spike-rush, *Eleocharis palustris*.



Carex pseudo-cyperus

After an early lunch, as rain threatened, we walked through the woods towards Hooton, where a single plant of Broad-leaved Helleborine, *Epipactis helleborine* was found. After sheltering beneath trees near Hooton Station from a heavy thunderstorm the weather cleared, and we walked along Waterworks Lane where Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acer*, Shining Crane's-bill, *Geranium lucidum* and Sticky Groundsel, *Senecio viscosus* were found. Following Heath Lane to the Wirral Way we found Wall-rue, *Asplenium ruta-muraria* and Black Spleenwort, *A. adiantum-nigrum* on a railway bridge, and New Zealand Pigmyweed, *Crassula helmsii*, and Water Fern, *Azolla filiculoides* amongst duckweeds in a small pond. We then followed the new wide path along the Wirral Way, passing several clumps of Tall Ramping Fumitory, *Fumaria*

bastardii, to the old Hadlow Road station. Notable throughout this walk was the abundance of Black Bryony, *Tamus communis* and Wild Angelica, *Angelica sylvestris* in the hedgerows.

After tea break, we took the road through Willaston village, then along the bridle path back to the Wirral Way where Small Toadflax, *Chaenorhinum minus*, Pepper-saxifrage, *Silene silaus*, Wall Lettuce, *Mycelis muralis* and a very fine colony of Broad-leaved Helleborine, (at least 20 plants) were good finds. The walk ended at Hooton station in quite warm sunshine.

Dr Keith Watson

Ainsdale

4th September

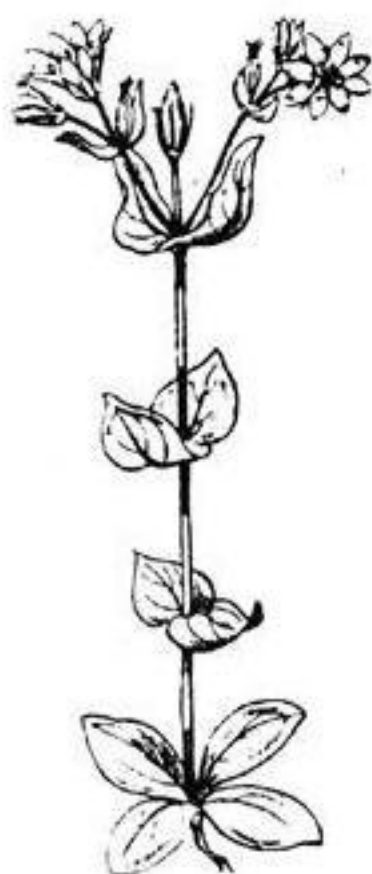
(Leader: Duncan Rothwell)

A number of members were delayed as Merseyrail had staffing problems, but eventually we gathered altogether at Ainsdale station, a happy bunch, numbering 32, quite the biggest party ever.

We were pleased to have Dr. Phil Smith with us and as many of you will know he is the author of "Sands of Time", an introduction to the sand dunes of the Sefton Coast. It is a very good read and a bargain at £8.50.

Our walk started in the dune system at Ainsdale (firstly taking in lots of plants on grass verges and in hedgerows), and we ended up at Hillside. We examined wet slacks and, apart from the flora, there was an abundance of damsel and

dragon flies, also lots of frogs and toads, adults and babies. We had to watch where we were walking.



Yellow-wort, *Blackstonia perfoliata*

The flora of the area is very varied and wonderful and although the season is coming to an end we did see some lovely specimens. I think the following are worth a mention:

Hedgerow Crane's-bill, *Geranium pyrenaicum*, Smooth rupturewort, *Herniaria glabra*, Annual wall rocket, *Diplotaxis muralis*, Parsley piert, *Aphanes arvensis*, Dewberry, *Rubus caesius* (in abundance), Silverweed, *Potentilla anserina*, Broad leaved everlasting pea, *Lathyrus latifolius*, Lucerne, *Medicago sativa*, Haresfoot clover, *Trifolium arvense*, Strawberry clover, *Trifolium fragiferum*, Fairy flax, *Linum catharticum* (in fruit), Large flowered evening primrose, *Oenothera glazoviana*, Wild Carrot, *Daucus carota*, Fool's watercress, *Apium nodiflorum*, Tubular water dropwort, *Oenanthe fistulosa*, Wild Parsnip, *Pastinaca*

sativa, Round leaved wintergreen, *Pyrola rotundifolia*, Brookweed, *Samolus valerandi*, Lesser water plantain, *Baldellia ranunculoides*, Common water plantain, *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, Marestail, *Hippuris vulgaris*, Common Centaury, *Centaureum erythraea*, Yellow-wort, *Blackstonia perfoliata*, Marsh helleborine, *Epipactis palustris* (in fruit), Carline thistle, *Carlina vulgaris*, Blue fleabane, *Erigeron acer*, and all over the dunes, Sea buckthorn, *Hippophae rhamnoides*. The hybrid willows were of particular interest, namely *Salix x forbyana* and *Salix x friesiana*. Of all the plants we saw that day the most magnificent was, of course, Grass of Parnassus, *Parnassia palustris*.

Duncan Rothwell and
Patricia Lockwood

Hindley

25th September

(Leader: Edna Stephenson)

The season's penultimate field meeting took place in the Hindley area, near Wigan, on 25th September. Borsdane Wood itself was disappointing, much being overgrown with Brambles, but Pendulous and Wood Sedges, *Carex pendula* and *C. sylvatica*, were noted, also Tutsan, *Hypericum androsaemum*. The latter, a new record for the wood, was either introduced or bird-sown. Larger fungi were conspicuous by their absence but we did see *Boletus parasiticus* growing on Common Earthball, *Scleroderma citrinum*.

A long-abandoned railway east of the wood proved more productive, with

Fairy Flax, *Linum catharticum*, Marsh Helleborine, *Epipactis palustris*, and both subspecies of Creeping Willow, *Salix repens*, among the flora, and numerous Speckled Wood butterflies, *Pararge aegeria* as a bonus. On a former railway bridge were good fern colonies, notably Black Spleenwort, *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*, and curiously we found two Cockspurs – the grass, Cockspur, *Echinochloa crus-galli* in the station car park, and a Hawthorn at first thought to be Cockspurthorn, *Crataegus crus-galli*, beside the footpath near the working railway line, but later identified, however, as Broad-leaved Cockspurthorn, *Crataegus persimilis*, a North American species.

Edna Stephenson

Hunts Cross

16th October

(Leader: Vera Gordon)

From Hunts Cross Railway Station we were soon on the site of the old Cheshire Lines Railway to Southport now a Sustrans path and bridleway locally called the Loop Line Path. It alternately went between high green banks on each side, through woods, between lower banks, on a high embankment over bridges with lanes, roads and streams beneath and under bridges carrying a railway, roads and a motorway.

In one place we left the path to see an area of heathland of birches, heathers, moss and at this time of year fungi. Fly Agaric, *Amanita muscaria*, the Tawny Grisette, *Amanita fulva*, the Blusher, *A. rubescens*, the Bolete, *Paxillus*

involutus and the Birch Bracket, *Piptoporus betulinus*.

Along the way it was good to see so many common plants still in flower. One less common in our area was the Hedge Bedstraw, *Galium mollugo* ssp *erectum*, in flower on one bank.

A dead tree stump was decorated with Candle-snuff fungus. Other dead wood had Many-zoned Polypore, *Coriolico versicolor*, and some hairy Stereum, *Stereum hirsutum*. Shaggy Inkcaps, *Coprinus comatus*, grew alongside the path in some places and further on a Yellow-staining Mushroom, *Agaricus xanthodermus*, was identified by its smell and by rubbing the pileus.

At Knotty Ash, a silvery leaved shrub attracted our attention. The greenish silvery scaled berries and late tubular flowers with 4 sepals gave clues to it being an Eleagnus. Later it was confirmed as Spreading Oleaster, *Eleagnus umbellata*. It may have been planted there though the other bushes on the bank were just *Crataegus monogyna*.

The sandstone cuttings with a dense canopy of trees above were dripping with ferns. Male Fern, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Broad-leaved Buckler Fern, *D. dilatata*, Lady Fern, *Athyrium filix-femina*, Royal Fern, *Osmunda regalis*, Hart's Tongue Fern, *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, and Hard Fern, *Blechnum spicant*.

At West Derby we went up to the road and got a bus back to the City centre.

Vera Gordon

Articles

Biodiversity in the Millennium

During the last few years of the naughty nineteen nineties, the word millennium was brought into our lives at an alarming rate by the media, namely radio, television, newspapers, magazines, to name but a few, until eventually I (and many others) cringed on hearing the four syllables, so I was relieved when the year 2000 arrived, for our computer buffs Y2K. The relief is short lived however, for now biodiversity is being bandied around on every sentence (now Pat don't exaggerate), well every other sentence then!!! All this nonsense brings me to my topic (bet you're glad) which certainly is diverse. I am interested in collective nouns. If anyone can give me any more, I'd be delighted, so here goes:-

Dissension of Woodpeckers
Paddling of Ducks
Ostentation of Peacocks, also a
Muster of Peacocks
Parliament of Owls
Watch of Nightingales
Lamentation of Swans
Charm of Goldfinches
Unkindness of Ravens
Murder of Crows
Murmuration of Starlings
Deceit of Lapwings
Bevy of Quails
Parade of Penguins
Pandemonium of Parrots

String of Racehorses
Bloat of Hippos
Pace of Asses

Ambush of Tigers
Army of Frogs
Gang of Elks
Tribe of Goats
Clowder of Cats
Crash of Rhinoceros
Skulk of Foxes
Mumble of Moles

*Patricia
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