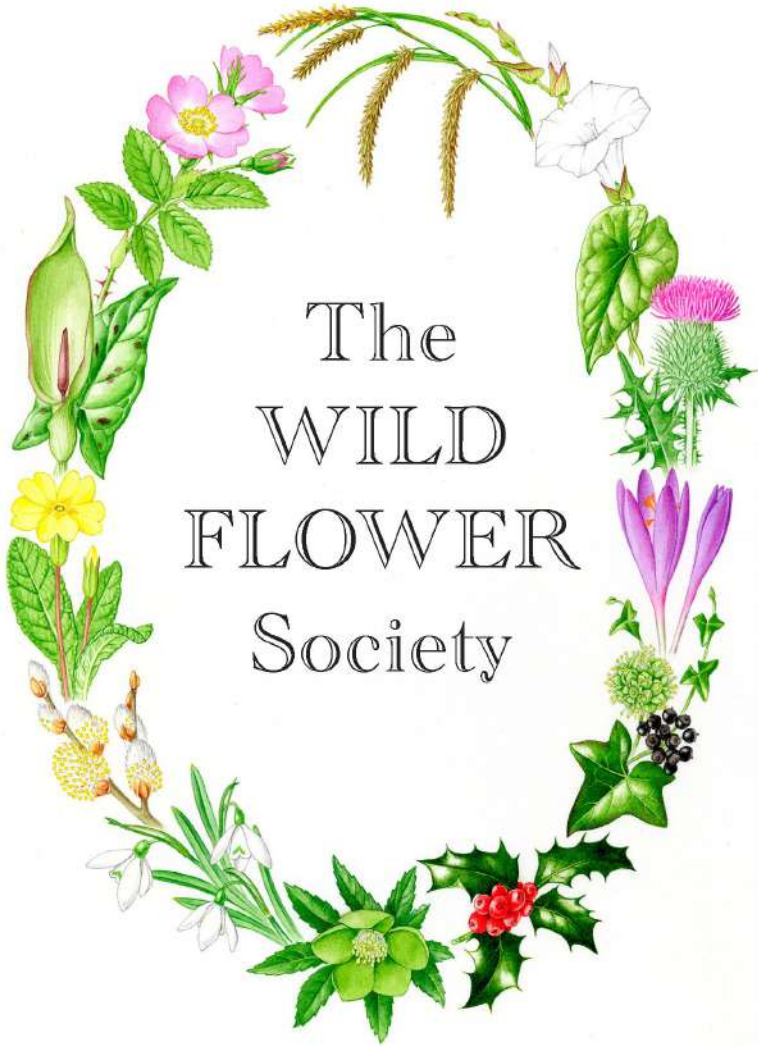


WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE



AUTUMN 2025

WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Regrettably, we have been unable to include a letter from Sir Ghillean in this issue of the magazine.



Some of the members enjoying the WFS meeting at Chobham Common, Woking, Surrey, 13th September 2025.

Photo: 'A kind Passer-by'



Happy WFS members at the Pontresina, Upper Engadine Valley, Switzerland, July 2025. Full report in the next magazine.

For the members 'Diary?

To the current WFS interest in 'self-seeding' to boost the total of UK wild flowers countable for the Diary, may I introduce a keen self-seeder?

Plantago major has an exciting subspecies, 'rosularis', the rose plantain. Popular in Tudor gardens, it is rarely seen now. I first spotted it growing between brick paving at the famous topiary garden at Benenden, and since then it has reappeared every year in my own brick paving at Canterbury.

P. major has a prolific flower spike lined with flowers whose tiny seeds will scatter, getting caught in the interstices of boot-soles: thus, its world-wide name, in various languages, of 'the White Man's foot'. But in this case each flower spike is enhanced by bracts encircling it to resemble a green 'rose', thus '*rosularis*'.

Plantain has been valued as a medicinal plant and features in the Royal College of Physicians' 2018 College Herbal. The accompanying botanical painting here, exhibited at an RHS Show, includes a section through the flower spike showing how leafy bracts extend from the seeds. The photos show the plant's charming habit of enhancing brick paving, though if it gets into the wider garden it can produce larger 'roses'. I once espied it in a row of pots at the Chelsea Physic Garden nursery, but not lately, as the Garden tends to reflect the interests of a current head gardener. And you can find it on Google.

Are WFS members familiar with *Plantago major* '*rosularis*'? Owing to its self-seeding it would contribute usefully to Diary totals. Has any WFS member recorded it?

HELEN AYERS



Helen Ayers' Scan



Rose Plantain

NOTICES

New Secretaries for Branch A (Kent), Branch V (Greater London), and 10km Square (North).

There is a tribute to Jessé Tregale, who was our 10km Square North secretary within this magazine, and a potential successor has been approached [see page.....](#)

Geoffrey Kitchener who has been our Secretary for Kent Diaries since 1990, is retiring from the role, remaining a Wild Flower Society member hereafter. Our thanks to him for giving his time and expertise to this activity for 35 years. Sue Buckingham, currently the Branch V secretary, and lives in Kent, has offered to take the Branch A role, and will pass on Branch V to Jane Lowe. Jane lives within this area and is a regular diarist, and has been asked by Sue to replace her, which Jane is willing to do.

Thank you, Sue and Geoffrey for all that you have done as Secretaries, and for working together with Jane, through a transition period.

The changes will be announced (for formal acceptance) at the Branch Secretaries' meeting and at the AGM. The website will be amended after the AGM.

Please note, if you are ever interested in getting involved as a Branch Secretary, you do not need to live in that "Diary" area.



The 2025 password for the Members' page of the website is [beeorchid77](#)

[Copy deadline: 1st November 2025 for the Winter 2026 magazine.](#)

Uncredited photographs in this magazine are by Ken Southall.

WINTER MONTHS' HUNT 2024-2025

Name	Areas	No. of Sp.	Dec	Jan	Feb
Northern Counties					
Barbara Allen	South Lancashire	69	52	19	35
Julie Clarke	Lancashire	24	11	4	15
Judith Cox	North Yorkshire	59	11	14	53
Brian Gough	Derbyshire	67	57	33	26
Anthony and Rita Grainger	West Yorkshire	49	29	27	30
Dorothy Ross	Lancashire, Merseyside	46	39	13	28
Mary and Claire Smith	Derbyshire	82	70	44	32
Midlands					
Monica Davis	Gloucestershire	38	23	14	25
Jackie Hardy	Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Cambridgeshire	110	90	27	16
Nicki Mottram	Warwickshire	67	48	19	39
East Anglia					
Enid Barrie and Carol Hawkins	Norfolk	133	89	69	66
Anne and Dennis Kell	Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk.	196	133	110	84
	Cornwall visit		88		
Barbara Mathews	Suffolk	96	69	59	55
Gillian Skillicorn	Suffolk	10		6	4
Ken and Sue Southall	Suffolk and Norfolk	77	59	39	31
South and South East					
Helen Dignum	Sussex	134	107	37	38
Maureen Fidkin	Hampshire, Sussex and Dorset	104	89	35	39
Pippa Hyde	Surrey, Sussex, Kent and London	89	73	48	51
Jill Oakley	Sussex and Hampshire	162	122	47	63
Janice Reynolds	Sussex	64	45	34	37

Diana Stroud	Buckinghamshire, Sussex, Surrey, Berkshire, Oxfordshire	108	89	78	65
South West					
Ro FitzGerald	Somerset	148	93	76	89
Suzanne Jones	Devon	33	17	4	12
Sally Maller	Devon and Dorset	132	95	63	83

The winter of 2024-25 felt interminable at times: grey skies, rain, wind, snow and horrible cold. Having the Winter Months Hunt (WMH) to carry out when the weather was slightly better made it feel more bearable. 24 lists came wending their way to me either by email or post and in a burst of enthusiasm I looked at them all, commented and sent them back to the participants, then forgot until July that I had not written the report. I am taking the opportunity to remedy that on a thundery afternoon after several days of baking hot weather.

Seven people sent me lists from the northern counties and very good lists they were too. **Barbara** managed some nice finds during the three months of the Hunt, from Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca* in December to Alexanders *Smyrniololus atrum* in February. **Julie** saw both Greater and Lesser Periwinkles *Vinca major* and *V. minor* plus Dame's-violet *Hesperis matronalis*, which I do not see that often although I know it does grow locally to me. **Judith** visited family in Bristol, where she saw Seaside Daisy *Erigeron glaucus* and, closer to home, Aubretia *Aubrieta deltoidea* in February. **Brian** saw Lungwort *Pulmonaria officinalis* and Creeping

Comfrey *Symphytum grandiflorum*, both very good entries, along with many other good plants. It was a delight to meet **Anthony and Rita** during the WFS Members' Weekend in Norfolk in September 2024 and have a chat with them. They commented about the very cold weather but managed to see four *Crocus* species in February, when things started warming up, and Narrow-leaved Ragwort *Senecio inaequidens*. Well done Rita for going out hunting while recovering from a hip replacement. **Dorothy** found the Hunt a challenge, with the horrible weather and lack of plants. Common Whitlowgrass *Erophila verna* and Grey Field-speedwell *Veronica polita* squeezed in just in time at the end of February. **Mary and Claire** wisely comment that a lack of plants is sometimes down to just not wanting to go out hunting in the cold rather than a lack of them in flower. They saw Stinking Hellebore *Helleborus foetidus* and Mezereum *Daphne mezereum* in December and January but not February, when it was miserably cold.

Moving on to the Midlands (and normally Wales as well, but I didn't receive any lists from over the River Severn), **Monica** commented that it was good to see Daisy *Bellis*

perennis in flower every month. I agree that it is such a cheerful little plant. She said that February had been a struggle but she still did very well, seeing 25 species that month including Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*. **Jackie** sent me a lovely, detailed list of her finds, which included a good number of grasses and ferns, such as Wall Barley *Hordeum murinum* and Hart's-tongue *Asplenium scolopendrium*. **Nicki** commented that her numbers were down on previous years as she had not travelled around as much as usual. She saw both Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis* and Green-leaved Snowdrop *G. woronowii*, reminding me that I must start looking more closely at these next winter.

On to East Anglia. **Enid** and **Carol** hunted together, with two sets of eyes being better for finding those elusive flowers. I liked their records for Hollyhock *Alcea rosea* and Borage *Borago officinalis*, both pretty plants and pleasing to see. Carol also had some trips out with Nick Aston and saw Pale Speedwell *Veronica cymbalaria* during one.

Anne and Dennis went to Cornwall in December, so included a separate column in their list. They commented on the carpets of Winter Heliotrope *Petasites pyrenaicus* on the cliffs and roadsides, along with garden escapes such as Fuchsia *Fuchsia magellanica*. Closer to home, they found Jersey Cudweed *Laphangium luteoalbum*, once quite the rarity but now increasingly common, along with Green Alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*. **Barbara** found that some of her records were restricted to a single plant in flower. She saw

Wild Clary *Salvia verbenaca* and Aubretia *Aubrieta deltoidea*, both of which I would have been very pleased to find and record. **Gillian** joined the WFS in January 2025 (welcome Gillian!), so did not send in a full list. She saw Goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis* and Winter Aconite *Eranthis hyemalis*, which were good finds. Hopefully she will be inspired to take part in the WMH again. **Ken and Sue** saw Springbeauty *Claytonia perfoliata*, which is a favourite of mine, along with Alexanders *Smyrniolus olusatrum*.

Six people sent lists from the South and Southeast including my own.

Helen took part in New Year Plant Hunts at Pagham and Petworth, seeing Thick-leaved Stonecrop *Sedum dasyphyllum* and Lesser Mexican-stonecrop *S. kimnachii*. Helen says that her best find, however, was White Melilot *Melilotus albus*. **Maureen** is another who did the Hunt for the first time, visiting several other places as well as her home county of Hampshire. She saw Sicilian Chamomile *Anthemis punctata* in Sussex and, closer to home, Fern-leaved Corydalis *Corydalis cheilanthesifolia*. In January I, **Pippa**, attended the memorial service for Rodney Burton in his home village of Eynsford in Kent. What could have been a sad occasion was, for several reasons, joyous to have been part of: meeting Rodney's son Geoff, who was charm itself, finding out what a talented musician and composer Rodney was and the profusion of Maidenhair Spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes* growing on walls outside the church. Rodney, with his wry

sense of humour and gentle smile, will be much missed in the WFS.

Jill hunted locally to her, with excursions further afield, including New Year plant-hunting at Pagham. Perennial Cornflower *Centaurea montana* was a local find, whilst Pagham provided her with Rock Samphire

Crithmum maritimum. I always enjoy receiving **Janice's** list of finds as I know many of the places she visits. Winter Aconite *Eranthis hyemalis* was a good find, as was Stinking Hellebore *Helleborus foetidus*, with the latter seen in flower in all months. **Diana** sent her usual marvellous list with so many plants that it is difficult to know which to pick out to mention. On December 1st she saw Chicory *Cichorium intybus*, which she says she has not seen for several years. She also saw Butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus* every month, a plant which I like. Diana says she is moving to Manchester and fears it will not be as productive for winter-flowering plants so may not continue with the WMH. I hope she will reconsider as I always enjoy her list and the letter accompanying it.

This whistle-stop tour of England finishes in the Southwest. **Ro** returned to the WMH after knee replacements raring to go only for storms to rip every plant asunder. What was left was decimated by the



local council and a ferocious cutting regime. Ro did find Colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara*, however, and was thrilled to do so. Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* was a good find in February; I have not seen that for many years. **Suzanne** is another first time WMH contributor. Tuberous Comfrey *Symphytum tuberosum* and Spring Snowflake *Leucojum vernal* were good ones that I picked out from her list. **Sally** saw Balm-leaved Figwort *Scrophularia scorodonia* growing locally and English Stonecrop *Sedum anglicum*, which she had not seen flowering in the winter before.

It is hard to believe when sheltering from the heat of the sun that the WMH is only months away. It is something I look forward to, however, and judging by the number of lists I receive, other people do too. I shall look forward to hearing about everyone's exciting winter finds next year.

PIPPA HYDE

SPRING HUNT, IPSWICH, 2nd MARCH

It was one of those days when you really felt that spring had arrived. Wall-to-wall sunshine, little to no wind and the feeling of warmth on your back, despite the need to wear a coat



for that little bit of extra comfort. Ten members of the WFS met in the car park off the main street in Maldon and we slowly, in true WFS fashion, did a lap of the car park before heading off down the road to the quay. The town was buzzing with preparations for gig racing on the River Blackwater, families out enjoying the sunshine and a meet of greyhound owners on the front. We spent most of the day scouring the streets, riverside and churchyards

looking for spring flowers. A large number of our finds were the ruderals that you might expect to encounter in such habitats – Common

Whitlowgrass *Erophila verna* providing a white carpet in the gutters, Sweet Violet *Viola odorata* sprouting purple amongst the gravestones and Yellow Corydalis *Pseudofumaria lutea* giving a zing of yellow to the walls. Above our heads, the spring flowering trees had started to bloom, with Cherry Plum *Prunus cerasifera* providing colour, while Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Yew *Taxus baccata* released clouds of pollen when shaken. Even higher up, a Buzzard was circling above. One churchyard yielded a carpet of Snowdrops *Galanthus nivalis* and Primroses *Primula vulgaris*, with the odd Balkan Anemone *Anemone blanda* and Primrose-Cowslip hybrid, False Oxlip *Primula x polyantha*, thrown in for luck. By the end of the day, we had found a grand total of 47 different species in flower.

ANNE KELL

SPRING WEEK HUNT 2025

Name	Area	Total
Ian Green	Moray and Somerset	57
Julie Clarke	Cumbria	30
Barbara Allen	Merseyside	36
Rita & Anthony Grainger	Leeds	47

Karen Fry	Nottingham	33
Nicki Mottram	Warwickshire	41
Steve Clarkson	Suffolk and Essex	55
East Anglia group	Suffolk	47
Barbara Mathews	Suffolk	49
Gillian Skillicorn	Suffolk	16
Jane Lowe (Maldon group)	Essex and London	65
Helen Ayres	Kent	49
Caroline Bateman	East Sussex	42
Pippa Hyde	Surrey	39
Priscilla Nobbs	Surrey	26
Jackie Hardy	Warwickshire	48
Nick Aston and Carol Hawkins	Berkshire to Isle of Wight	120
Monica Davis	Bristol Area	24
Pauline and Richard Wilson	Bristol Area	28
Gill Greef	Bristol Area	11
Ro FitzGerald	Somerset	97
Suzanne Jones	Devon	22
Sally Maller	South Devon	48
Charlotte Attlee and Mary Ashworth	North Cornwall	36
Anne Haden	Jersey	65
Alli Singleton and others	Jersey	63
Paul Green	Somerset	36
Paul Green	Co. Wexford	65
Total number of different species seen		283

Several new people took part in the Hunt this year, so welcome to them. The cold, wet weather in January and February was mentioned by a number of people. Three-cornered Garlic *Allium triquetrum* is now being

found by about a dozen people and has appeared in our parish over the past three years, so I looked back to see how often people were finding it five or six years ago. Although numbers varied, it was seen by

between one and five people. Looking back to paper records from the 1960s, it wasn't even on the list of finds, which I found interesting.

Ian Green spent time in two very different locations. He found Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea lutea* in Scotland, where his favourite plant was Northern Dead-nettle *Lamium confertum*. In Yeovil, he saw Nipplewort *Lapsana communis*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum* and Keeled-fruited Cornsalad *Valerianella carinata*.

Julie Clarke met with a few members of the North-west Branch at an old sandstone quarry in Merseyside on a beautiful day. She then did a bit more hunting around Silverdale, finding Sweet Violet *Viola odorata* on the last day.

Barbara Allen went out four times during the week, all in South Lancashire. Her best finds were Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum* and Broom *Cytisus scoparius*.

For **Rita and Anthony Grainger**, Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem is their signature plant and this year they found some in a new location, with several flowers. Overall, however, the number of species seen was down after a very cold winter with many severe frosts. Green Field-speedwell *Veronica agrestis* was another good find.

Karen Fry reported finding far fewer plants than in recent years due to weather conditions and having less time available. However, the sun bringing out the flowers persuaded

her to get out and have a go. Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis* and Springbeauty *Claytonia perfoliata* were only found by two people.

Nicki Mottram listed 18 plants which she didn't find this year, which was interesting. She did find Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides* and Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, which only a few other people found.

Steve Clarkson's plants were found in Hadleigh, Suffolk, and Maldon, Essex. Sole finds were Ground Elder (Goutweed) *Aegopodium podagraria*, which I think may be new to the Spring Hunt, and Mezereon *Daphne mezereum* at its known site at the Rex Graham Reserve near Mildenhall.

10 members of the **East Anglia Branch** gathered at Maldon for a First Day Hunt on a lovely day, with the warmth of spring to enjoy. They found an early-flowering Dove's-foot Crane's-bill *Geranium molle* and also Parsley-piert *Aphanes arvensis*.

For **Barbara Mathews**, Common Cudweed *Filago germanica* was once again a sole find, as were Henbit Dead-nettle *Lamium amplexicaule* and Sea Stork's-bill *Erodium maritimum*.

Gillian Skillicorn has only just joined the WFS and enjoyed taking part in the Spring Hunt in the Bury St. Edmunds area. She sent photos of the plants she wasn't sure about. Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana* was a very early find, with only one other record.

Jane Lowe was part of the Maldon group but also hunted in London and

around Abberton Reservoir in Essex. She had several good finds, among them Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acris* and Mind-your-own-business *Soleirolia soleirolii*, neither of which have been reported over the last six years. She was also the only person to find Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*.

Helen Ayres said that her total was not as high as last year, but she recorded three plants that were sole finds: Silver Birch *Betula pendula*, Box *Buxus sempervirens* and Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium*, which I love to happen upon.

Caroline Bateman hunted in Rye, Dungeness and Winchelsea but found far fewer plants than usual due to the cold, wet and windy weather. Dove's-foot Crane's-bill *Geranium molle* was an early find and Bush Vetch *Vicia sepium* a sole find.

Pippa Hyde found 20 fewer species than last year. She mainly hunted along a local bridleway and in Leatherhead. This year she actually found a wizened specimen of Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, which was a sole find.

Priscilla Nobbs keeps a spreadsheet record of her finds each year, along, I think, the same route. Her records were down due to the weather, but she did find Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis*, new to her from the last four years.

Jackie Hardy got about a bit, visiting Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire and Cambridge, as

well as hunting in her own area of Redditch. She found English Elm *Ulmus procera*, Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra*, Garlic Mustard *Alliaria petiolata* and Field Pansy *Viola arvensis*, all good records.

Nick Aston & Carol Hawkins spent time in Berkshire, Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight, so covered a lot of ground! Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria* is always exciting to spot. Other good finds were Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*, White Campion *Silene latifolia* and, on the Isle of Wight, Jersey Cudweed *Laphangium luteoalbum*.

Monica Davis said that Colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara* is one of her favourite plants because the flowers are so bright and the Latin name so posh-sounding! Only two people found Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris* in flower.

Richard and Pauline Wilson once again found a few flowering heads of Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*. It is beginning to be our signature plant!



Moschatel

We were only one of two to find Slender Speedwell *Veronica filiformis*, a constant weed in our garden.

Gill Greef found pretty much the standard mix of flowers found by most people on a walk, with one or two other plants in her garden.

Ro FitzGerald describes having a poor total. Nevertheless, she found several species not found by anyone else. Among them were Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor*, Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, Field Penny-cress *Thlaspi arvense*, Tall Fescue *Schedonorus arundinaceus* and Timothy *Phleum pratense*, flowering amazingly early.

Suzanne Jones found mostly the same plants as last year, but a few things normally in flower on the coast had probably succumbed to the cold east winds in February. She was surprised to find Winter Heliotrope *Petasites pyrenaicus* still in flower. Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea* was a good find.

Sally Maller was only able to devote one day to the Hunt and found that plants that had been in flower during the winter had, again, succumbed to the weather. Butterbur *Petasites hybridus* was a surprise, the first time she had seen it in Devon. Goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis* was another surprise, being out so early. Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* ssp. *carota*, Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys* and Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana* were all sole finds.

Charlotte Attlee & Mary Ashworth

are new members and joined the Hunt for the first time from the Wadebridge and Boscastle area of Cornwall. Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* was a very early find. Ramsons *Allium ursinum* and Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca* were only found by a few others.

Anne Haden did a wild flower group walk plus a few walks of her own. Little Mouse-ear *Cerastium semidecandrum* may be a first for the Spring Hunt, found by 2 people. Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum* and Common Vetch *Vicia sativa* were good finds.

Alli Singleton and Sheila Mallet (Madder than ever Jersey group) did well to find Four-leaved Allseed *Polycarpon tetraphyllum*, Field Woundwort *Stachys arvensis* and Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica* and sent some nice photos.

Paul Green found mostly common plants in the Yeovil area but then, back in County Wexford, recorded some more unusual things. Buttonweed *Cotula coronopifolia* was a first for him and was all over a golf club car park which, as Vice-county Recorder, he was surveying. He also found Hairy Whitlowgrass *Erophila majuscula* and was the only person to find Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*.

PAULINE AND RICHARD WILSON

10km SQUARE STUDY (NORTH) 2024

Following the very sad passing of her husband 'Jesse' Tregale, Jesse's wife Rachel has said that he would have wanted this, his last report, to be published.

Name	Hectad	Area	Year	New	Total
Julie Clarke	SD48	Lindale and Whitbarrow	22	10	807
	SD58	Milnthorpe	21	0	588
Anthony and Rita Grainger	SE23	Horsforth and Rodley	14	8	659
	SE24	Otley and Wharfe Valley	14	11	478
Paul Green	S71	Ballyculane, Co. Wexford	1	401	401
	S81	Wellington, Co. Wexford	1	329	329
Peter Jepson	SD61	Bolton (North)	44	2	511
	SD62	Darwen and Blackburn	50	2	880
	SD71	Turton	43	1	459
	SD72	Accrington	49	0	625
Andrew Kafel	SE02	Halifax	18	1	975
	SE12	Brighouse	17	0	672
	SE22	Morley, Dewsbury and Batley	16	1	871
Keith Robson	NZ24	Chester-le-Street	12	19	759
Dorothy Ross	SD31	Southport	6	4	143
	SD32	Lytham	22	5	391
	SD45	Galgate	12	0	299
	SD63	Longridge	37	2	384
	SD64	Chipping	14	0	205
	SD73	Whalley	20	0	308
	SD74	Clitheroe	35	1	382

Table continued next page

Table continued

'Jesse' Tregale	SE13	Bradford	35	15	1895
Sheila Wynn	SD64	Bowland, Lancashire	19	0	237
	SD65	Forest of Bowland	15	0	176
	SD74	Clitheroe	19	9	621
	SD75	Slaiddburn, Gisburn Forest	19	0	242

Julie has added ten new plants to SD48, with English Scurvygrass *Cochlearia anglica* found on the saltmarsh at Sandside. Also at Sandside were Chives *Allium schoenoprasum*, which we still have in Bradford, growing by a roadside drain. On the River Bela, she found the rare River Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus fluitans*, which would have been new to me. The Upright Spurge *Euphorbia stricta* that she found in Shaw Lane, Storth, was another interesting find; we had a nice patch in Bradford for many years.

Anthony and Rita added to both their squares, with six new plants for SE23, including Chives and the now rare Pencilled Crane's-bill *Geranium versicolor*, on waste ground in Horsforth. They also found Sharp-leaved Mint *Mentha x villosa* on King Edward Avenue, Horsforth, and Great Lettuce *Lactuca virosa* in the car park at Homebase, Moor Allerton. I have not seen Great Lettuce in Bradford for quite a while; it appeared for a couple of years and then just disappeared. In SE24, they found Giant Bellflower *Campanula latifolia* by the River Wharfe near Rougemont, always a spectacular plant to find. There was Pellitory-of-the-wall *Parietaria judaica* at Yeadon and Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare* on waste ground by Golden Acre

Park, Bramhope. White Mustard *Sinapis alba*, which they found at Rodley Nature Reserve, is surprisingly rare this far north but it is possible that it came in with wild bird seed. Another almost certain introduction was Fodder Burnet *Poterium sanguisorba* ssp. *balearicum*, found in a field at Weeton. What is surprising is how long it can persist and spread; it arrived in Bradford over 20 years ago and is still on the same roadside.

Paul last sent me an Irish list in 2005 but this year I received two lists for County Wexford. In S71, a rather substantial list contained some choice plants from Ballycullane, including the alien New Zealand Bitter-cress *Cardamine corymbosa*, in a field gateway, and two nice natives, Little-Robin *Geranium purpureum*, on the bank of the disused railway, and Pale Flax *Linum bienne*, by the disused railway station. Honey Spurge *Euphorbia mellifera*, which he found in a hedge at St James is an increasing self-seeded alien. I have seen it self-sown in Halifax, the Isle of Man and the Isle of Wight. Another rapidly spreading alien was Water Bent *Polypogon viridis*, which is common as a pavement weed around Bradford, though I have yet to see it anywhere near water. Another of Paul's records was Mackay's Horsetail *Equisetum x trachyodon*,

which he found on a roadside at Ballykeerogemore. This rare plant seems to be well-established in Ireland, Paul finding it here in the southeast, while I know it well from several sites in Leitrim in the northwest. Finally, from Tintern, Altarlily *Zantedeschia aethiopica*, a nice patch in a roadside ditch. In S81, Paul found Wild Leek *Allium ampeloprasum* var. *ampeloprasum* at Coolishall and the rare Kattegat Orache *Atriplex x gustafssoniana* on top of the strand at Maudlingtown. He also found several clumps of Hay-scented Buckler-fern *Dryopteris aemula* in a wood at Arklow and was pleased to find Twigg Mullein *Verbascum virgatum*. Other finds were the rare Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine* in a disturbed field at Yoletown and, finally, one plant I had not heard of before, the alien Least Pepperwort *Lepidium virginicum*, on a grave at St Leonard's.

Peter has been busy, with most of his time spent on conservation work, but he did find a few new plants. In SD61, as he stepped out of his car, he found three plants of the uncommon Green-flowered Helleborine *Epipactis phyllanthos* in Riverton Park and the rare Pale-bracted Dandelion *Taraxacum subnaevosum* in species-rich grassland at Conyries Pastures, Tockholes. In SD62, he decided to record the White Sorrel *Oxalis magellanica* which has been in his garden for over twenty years, and which he has been unable to prevent from appearing in his lawn yearly. Dean Meadow, Darwen, suffered damage as a result of engineering work on the adjacent reservoir and

after several years without cutting, the Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor* there was lost. Peter collected seed from local meadows to repopulate the field and help restore it but unfortunately, he mixed in some Greater Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus angustifolius* seed and this year, the third year after seeding, he found 80-100 plants of Greater Yellow-rattle clearly flourishing. In SD71, he found Pyrenean Valerian *Valeriana pyrenaica* growing on the hedgebank and in woodland on Kay Street in Chapeltown.

In SE02, **Andrew** managed to find Dappled Hawkweed *Hieracium scotostictum* in the gutter by Exley Gardens, Halifax. In SE22, he found the attractive Blue Globe-thistle *Echinops bannaticus* on the side of a back-alley by Vernon Road, Heckmondwike, another plant found as an escape from gardens.

Keith had an excellent year in NZ24 Chester-le-Street, with some rare natives and unusual aliens. Nice natives included Ivy Broomrape *Orobanche hederaceae*, Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* and Grey Club-rush *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* in Durham and Giant Bellflower *Campanula latifolia* in Cocken Wood. He also found Bur Chervil *Anthriscus caucalis*, rarely found this far north. I have seen it in Bradford only once, over 20 years ago. Aliens which he recorded include Dappled Hawkweed, which Andrew also found. This is a very distinctive garden escape, with black-blotched leaves. Other plants included Yellow-flowered Strawberry *Potentilla indica*, another increasing



Ivy Broomrape

escape, and the double-flowered form of Lesser Periwinkle *Vinca minor* 'Flore Pleno'. This is completely new to me and I will have to look out for it. Finally, Keith encountered the hybrid between Field and Wild Pansy *Viola arvensis* x *V. tricolor* = *V. x contempta*, always nice to find and a plant to look out for when both parents are present.

Dorothy has found new plants in four of her squares. In SD31 Southport, she found the rather spectacular Wild Leek *Allium ampeloprasum* while birdwatching for Pied Wagtails on the local golf course at Hesketh. Also at Hesketh was Water Bent *Polypogon viridis*, found on a verge. This plant has now become common in Bradford, found less than a street away from where I live. In SD32, all

her finds were in Fairhaven, Lytham. She was delighted to find Tassel Hyacinth *Muscari comosum* by the roadside, Rue-leaved Saxifrage *Saxifraga tridactylites* on a pavement edge and Yellow Chamomile *Cota tinctoria* by the dunes. In SD63, she found the alien Green Bristle-grass *Setaria viridis* by a wall in Ribchester; this appears to be getting rarer and it is several years since it last appeared in Bradford. Her other find in SD63 was Himalayan Honeysuckle *Leycesteria formosa* on the edge of moorland near Stoneyhurst. In SD74, Dorothy's only new plant was Buddleia *Buddleja davidii*, in Salthill.

I, '**Jesse**', had a surprisingly good year in SE13 Bradford, starting in March by searching out, with Michael Wilcox, David Broughton's Monkey-puzzle *Araucaria araucana*, growing out of the rocks at the top of Shipley Glen, where we also found Noble Fir *Abies procera* self-seeded a few metres away. On a walk from town, I was happy to find Rue-leaved Saxifrage *Saxifraga tridactylites* growing on some waste ground off Harris Street. This appears to be spreading from the Yorkshire Dales, where it is quite common on the limestone, with Dorothy also finding it on the edge of a pavement in Lytham and Andrew in Halifax as a pavement weed in 2021. Some rather nice plants shown to me by Michael Wilcox were Hare's-tail *Lagurus ovatus*, a pavement weed on Thackley Road, Buttonweed *Cotula coronopifolia*, in a new field at Apperley Bridge where they had been building new walls to protect housing from flooding by the River Aire, and, finally, the rather splendid Golden

Calla-lily *Zantedeschia elliottiana*, growing on the edge of a wooded area off Carr Bottom Road.

Sheila added nine new plants to SD74, finding Purple-leaved Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* var. *purpureum* in woodland at Salthill Quarry and Hoary Mustard *Hirschfeldia incana* on the roadside at West Bradford bridge; the latter has been present not far from me in Bradford for over 20 years. Also in West Bradford, she found Butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus* in a hedgerow on Bowland Gate Lane. Sheila also recorded three dandelions, confirmed by BSBI *Taraxacum* referee John Richards

and Dylan Peters: Close-lobed Dandelion *Taraxacum densilobum*, Faeroes Dandelion *T. faeroense* and Selland's Dandelion *T. sellandii*, all found in West Bradford.

I would like to thank all those who sent me lists. Some interesting plants were found, some new to me.

Hopefully we will all have a splendid 2025.

‘JESSE’ TREGALE

10km SQUARE STUDY (SOUTH) 2024

Name	Hectad	Location	Year	New	Total 2024
Gareth Bursnall	TQ23	Crawley, West Sussex	10	11	647
Helen Dignum	SU80	Chichester, West Sussex	1	312	312
José Gibbs	TR37	Margate, Kent	10	33	210
Anne Hercock	S060	West Gloucestershire	4	9	375
Pippa Hyde	TQ15	Leatherhead, Surrey	6	11	366
Steve Mellor	TQ04	Shalford to Ewhurst, Surrey	1	251	251
	TQ05	Woking and Guildford East, Surrey	1	292	292
	TQ14	Mole Valley, Surrey	3	23	513
	TQ15	Bookham and Fetcham, Surrey	2	132	688
	TQ16	Epsom, Surrey	2	29	342
	TQ25	Headley Heath and Walton Downs, Surrey	1	189	189

Ted Phenna	SH57	Bangor and Anglesey	16	0	432
	SH67	Llanfairfechan, Gwynedd	20	1	701
	SH68	Llangoed, Anglesey	11	0	314
	SH78	Great Orme, Gwynedd	44	4	782
Sue and Ken Southall	TM05	Needham Market and Stowmarket, Suffolk	2	115	438

Once again, it was very pleasing to receive the lists for the 10km Square Study South. There is such a good range of habitats in each 10km square that even the botanists who have been recording for many years have been able to add to their totals. The number of submissions of 2024 records for new hectads is very welcome.

In 2024 **Gareth** managed to add eleven species to his impressive TQ23 Crawley list. On waste ground in the spring, he discovered two different Daffodil *Narcissus* varieties: the primrose-coloured 'Lemon Glow' and the orange and yellow, small-cupped 'Altruist'. In February, Garden Celery *Apium graveolens* var. *dulce* was Gareth's most unusual species of the year. On a long walk in August, he had his prettiest find, Orpine *Hylotelephium telephium*, growing on a grassy bank in Faygate. On the same day, he identified a small self-sown plant with cream-coloured flowers on a roadside bank as Smooth Hydrangea (aka North American Wild-hydrangea) *Hydrangea arborescens*.

Helen chose her 10 km square, SU80 Chichester, because it includes her home monad, and many areas that she visits regularly. The hectad has a good range of habitats

including chalk downland, saltmarsh, arable, woodland, urban Chichester, canals and streams. Helen has identified 1km squares within her 10km square that have few or no plant records. She has surveyed 20 of these monads so far and is looking forward to adding more on regular botanical outings; also included in her list are other local finds. With such a variety of habitats, Helen's list



Orpine

includes a good assortment of species, including Thorn-apple *Datura stramonium* growing in a fallow arable field, an enormous specimen of Greater Sea-kale *Crambe cordifolia* on a coastal footpath, the chalk-loving Ploughman's-spikenard *Inula conyzae* and Spurge-laurel *Daphne laureola* in woodland.

José added 33 more species to her TR37 Margate list in 2024, most of which she found in only two monads. In June she led a meeting for the Kent Botanical Recording Group along the cliff tops. This gave her the opportunity to get to grips with grasses and she was able to identify twelve species and one sedge. Other finds along the cliffs included Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa* and Annual Pearlwort *Sagina apetala*. A change of habitat to arable fields yielded Sun Spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia*, Weld *Reseda luteola* and Prickly Lettuce *Lactuca serriola*. In her 2023 records, José reported a colony of Lizard Orchids *Himantoglossum hircinum* at Foreness Point. She is pleased to confirm that they were still thriving in 2024 and had produced a wonderful display of approximately 40 spikes.

Anne already had a sizeable list for her SO60 West Gloucestershire hectad and in 2024 she added still more species. In April, in an old railway area, she saw Three-nerved Sandwort *Moehringia trinervia* growing on a bank amongst coal dust and the following month she found Balkan Spurge *Euphorbia oblongata*

on a grassy roadside edge. Hidcoté Comfrey *Symphytum x hidcotense* was an interesting discovery in an unsurfaced car park surrounded by hedges; it had probably escaped from a nearby garden-centre. Along a harbour footpath in November, Anne spotted a campion with pale pink flowers, the hybrid between Red and White Campion *Silene dioica* x *S. latifolia* = *S. x hampeana*, a very good end to her year's recording

Pippa made some nice finds in her TQ15 Leatherhead hectad. In the spring, she came upon a pretty, blue Spanish Iris *Iris xiphium* beside a bridleway. Then in June, just around the corner from her house, Pippa discovered a plant of Deadly Nightshade *Atropa belladonna*. The plant continued to grow vigorously over the summer and despite being in a favourite spot for mums and children to sit, the County Council was not interested in removing it. Pippa had been hoping to find Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* locally and while she was out for a walk in August she met with success, spotting two plants flowering by the roadside. Later in the year an interesting find was Water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica* growing in a mill pond.

Steve spends a lot of time walking in the countryside looking for plant species, sending his results to Surrey Botanical Records. Along with additional records for his ongoing three hectads, he is now including lists for three additional ones, an astounding total of six! These new squares contain some of his favourite sites so he will be visiting them

again. In 2024 Steve found some interesting new taxa in his home hectad TQ15 Bookham and Fetcham, highlights including discovering new sites for Violet Helleborine *Epipactis purpurata* and Wood Barley *Hordelymus europaeus*. His most surprising finds were made walking across Leatherhead between supermarket car parks beside a busy road, where he spotted some escaped exotics such as Grape-vine *Vitis vinifera* and Duke of Argyll's Teaplant *Lycium barbarum*, together with chalk downland plants such as Hoary Ragwort *Jacobaea erucifolia* and Toothed Medick *Medicago polymorpha*.

Ted has been recording in his SH78 Great Orme hectad for 44 years and in 2024 he managed to add four more species to his already incredibly long list. In September, he came across the striking ornamental grass, Pheasant's-tail *Anemanthele lessoniana*, and in the same month he discovered Trumpet-vine *Campsis radicans* growing as a weed in a lawn. Beside a road in the autumn, he recorded Garden Tree-mallow *Malva x clementii*. In June, in his SH67 Llanfairfechan square, Ted added a variety of Purple Toadflax *Linaria purpurea* 'Canon Went'. In

2025 he is moving to Colwyn Bay and plans to continue botanising in his new hectad.

Sue and Ken added 115 new species to their TM05 Needham Market and Stowmarket hectad during their second year of recording. Some nice spring finds were Star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum umbellatum*, with white bell-shaped flowers, and Abraham-Isaac-Jacob *Trachystemon orientalis*, with blue-violet borage-shaped flowers thrusting out a strong column of mauve stamens. Later in the year, they came upon the striking wine-red-coloured, star-shaped flowers of Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustre*. An interesting discovery was the nationally scarce Sulphur Clover *Trifolium ochroleucon*, with short-stalked globular heads of creamy yellow flowers.

A big thank you to all the botanists who sent in their 2024 records for their hectads - all your hard work is very much appreciated. I look forward to seeing what new species you discover in 2025 and hope that it is an enjoyable botanising year for you.

JILL OAKLEY



2nd place
Winners in the
2025 Photo
Competition.

Left, Yello-
horned Poppy
by David
Caals. Right,
Grass of
Parnassus by
Marvin Smith.



BURY WATER MEADOWS, BURY ST EDMUNDS, SUFFOLK, 29th APRIL

On a beautiful sunny morning in April, we gathered in Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds, to hear all about a project run by the Bury Water Meadows Group, led by Jillian Macready. This Group aims to restore and conserve the rivers Lark and Linnet where they run through Bury St Edmunds. Both rivers are chalk streams, which are globally rare habitats. There is plenty of work to be done. Clearing debris from the river, reducing nettles and thistles, tackling invasive species and monitoring and recording are just some of the activities undertaken by the Group. Our Society members were

interested to look around the 150-acre site to see what grows there. There doesn't seem to be anything rare, but it provides habitat for wild things. In the future, the hope is to control the water level around the rivers so that the meadows can remain wet throughout the year and become a home for wet-loving plants and animals. Hopefully the houses around the area will also benefit by the reduction of the flood risk.

A lot of fun was had looking at the plants growing in the grass, with Common Stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium*, Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* and Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys* being amongst some that were discussed. Someone spotted Rustyback *Asplenium ceterach* growing on the wall. It's one of my favourite ferns and not common around here. On the bank there was plenty of Russian Comfrey *Symphytum x uplandicum*, which is probably our most common comfrey now.

We were also given the opportunity to go inside the ruined chapel/charnel house. A few years ago, this was sown with wild flower seeds and some of these are still appearing, including Bee Orchids *Ophrys apifera*, although these weren't showing at the time of our visit.



After the meeting, Ken and I went to look around the ruins of the old priory. To our amazement, there were two seedling trees growing out of the ruins which we identified as Père David's Maple *Acer davidii*. The parent tree was searched for and found a little way off in the formal gardens. This was a new one for me, so I went home very happy from the trip. After reporting it to Martin Sanford, the county recorder, I let

Jillian know, as she had kindly shown us all around. Unfortunately, the seedlings may well have been removed by now as they would eventually have damaged the ruins. Thank you to Jillian for telling us all about this worthy project.

SUE SOUTHALL

PREES HEATH COMMON, WHITCHURCH, SHROPSHIRE, 1st May

Prees Heath Common is a reclaimed site with a military history dating back to the 13th century. Its final military use was as a training airfield in WW2. After the war, the site was ploughed and the heathland destroyed. In 2006 the Butterfly Conservation Trust bought it and a heathland recreation project started. Now the area has sandy grassland, scrub and heathland. A result of this restoration is that Prees Heath is a sanctuary for the Silver-studded Blue butterfly. Sadly, we were too early for this inhabitant and need to return in July.

A group of 11 of us met our leader John Martin on a beautiful, hot, sunny day. At the end of the afternoon my car thermometer recorded an external temperature of 31 degrees!

In his Yearbook description of the site John 'promised' a range of spring annuals, including Shepherd's-cress *Teesdalia nudicaulis*, Early and Changing Forget-me-nots *Myosotis ramosissima* and *M. discolor*, Little



Mouse-ear *Cerastium semidecandrum* and Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*. I can confidently say 'promised' because we found all these species and more! I was happy that I had remembered to bring my

much-neglected hand-lens as we spent a lot of time on our knees studying the differences between related species. We were lucky to find them growing in close proximity to each other, e.g. Sticky Mouse-ear *Cerastium glomeratum* (sepals glandular with long white hairs projecting beyond the tips) versus Little Mouse-ear *C. semidecandrum* (sepals with broad pale edges) and Common Mouse-ear *C. fontanum* (mat-forming perennial); also Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana* (notched spur) and Heath Dog-violet *V. canina* (yellow spur). Many more species, too many to list, deserved examination but I have to mention two highlights: Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus*, whose tiny flowers were truly beautiful under the hand-lens, and Moonwort *B. lunaria*. A colleague of John's had suggested that a bar of

chocolate should be awarded to whoever found the Moonwort but it is as well that John didn't heed the advice as the heat of the day would have liquefied the prize!

Invertebrates were represented by the Green Tiger Beetle, butterflies, bees and the Drinker Moth caterpillar, amphibians by the numerous tadpoles in the pond. I heard and saw more Stonechats in 15 minutes than I've heard or seen in the last 5 years and there were good sightings of Whitethroats.

Many thanks to John Martin for a really fascinating day.

MARGARET REID

HARTSLOCK, GORING-ON-THAMES, BERKSHIRE, 4th JUNE

Roger Heath-Brown, our leader, assembled us in the car park in Goring-on-Thames and we set off along the river towpath heading for the Hartslock, (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust nature reserve), a four-hectare chalk hillside. Some of us got left behind along the way, and a comment was made that we had never walked so fast on a WFS meeting before! We spotted people ahead on the hill so hurried along, only to find that this 'lead team' were in fact a separate walking group, similarly clad, and resting on a bench. Our mistake was finally explained when our real leader

arrived at least half an hour later, having somehow got behind us! We were incredibly lucky with the weather, a perfect summer day. After walking along the river, we branched inland and headed under a busy railway bridge, where we came across a Wild Service-tree *Sorbus torminalis*. Then, further along, we came across Greater Pond-sedge *Carex riparia*, with the male glume tapered to a long point, Goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis*, Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica* and Hairy St. John's-wort *Hypericum hirsutum*. We then entered the reserve and climbed the hill to the wonderful display of Lady/Monkey Orchid

hybrids *Orchis purpurea* x *O. simia* = *O. x angusticruris*, sadly past their best but still very impressive in their

Hybrid Monkey Orchid



Photo: Jules Macauley

only known site in the UK. We had our lunch with a fabulous view over the river valley looking towards Goring. We had various discussions and reference to books regarding the different grasses and sedges that had been collected, including Grey Sedge *C. divulsa*, in which the gap between the spikes is at least twice their own length, Upright Brome *Bromopsis erecta*, with its camel eyelashes on the edge of the leaf, Bearded Couch *Elymus caninus*, Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*, False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, with its 10-20 mm awns, and Barren Brome *Anisantha sterilis*.

After our picnic, we wandered further down the bank once Roger had done a recce of the area, to avoid unnecessary trampling. There, we were directed towards Downy-fruited Sedge *C. filiformis*, with its densely hairy fruit, clearly seen with our hand-lenses. Next to this, Roger found the red stems of Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum*, but there were no

flowers. Along the hillside there was some shrubby Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, in whose leaf, as Roger pointed out as he split one, the sap solidifies, holding the leaf together like fine hairs.

Further along the hill, we were delighted to find Bastard-toadflax *Thesium humifusum*, a rare semi-parasitic perennial. Close by, we came across Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*, Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* in bud, Quaking-grass *Briza media* and Slender Bedstraw *Galium pumilum*, with its narrow leaves in a whorl, with backward-pointing prickles on the margins. At this point, we started to head home via the woodland, where we found the seed-heads of White Helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium* and, in the field below, Spiked Sedge *C. spicata*, with male and female spikelets together in the same spike.

During our walk, we were accompanied by Marbled White *Melanargia Galathea* butterflies, and by the river we saw Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*, Swifts, a few Swallows and House Martins and, of course, Red Kites; we also heard many other songbirds, including Chiffchaff and Whitethroat. On the walk back, we found Rough Hawk's-beard *Crepis biennis*, Round-leaved Crane's-bill *Geranium rotundifolium*, Field Madder *Sherardia arvensis* and Lucerne *Medicago sativa* ssp. *sativa*, a naturalised arable plant.

A fabulous day, and thank you Roger and Janet John for organising it!

JULES MACAULEY

GAIT BARROWS NNR, SILVERDALE, LANCASHIRE, 14th JUNE

Despite an amber weather warning (an utter deluge of rain as soon as I turned off the M6!) and an ailing car, my first WFS outing to Gait Barrows NNR was not something I was willing to miss. Evidently, from the turnout of 18 others, it wasn't just me eager to explore the delights of north Lancashire. The rain had fortunately stopped by the time everyone arrived, and, with the exception of a smattering at lunchtime, stayed away for the rest of the day.

After a warning to look out for ticks, we headed off down the access track towards the limestone pavement that Gait Barrows is famous for. Stone Bramble *Rubus saxatilis* was the first delight, with its soft, almost spineless stems. Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium* was next on my list for the day, then we were diving into the maze of limestone pavement past a sprinkling of Mountain Melick *Melica nutans*. Unfortunately, the Angular Solomon's-seal *Polygonatum odoratum* no longer had flowers and next to it was Lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis* that had also finished flowering. Rustyback *Asplenium ceterach* and Hard Shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum* peeked from between the limestone grykes, then moving on, we saw our first Dark-red Helleborine *Epipactis atrorubens* as well.

My third fern of the day was Lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, unfortunately with two undesirable inhabitants - a pair of ticks which I promptly mashed



Photo: Rowena Tylden-Smith

into the limestone. No thank you! A beautiful Common Centaury *Centaurea erythraea* specimen blushed pink from another limestone gryke, then we were into sedge territory, with Long-stalked Yellow-sedge *Carex lepidocarpa* vying for space against Pale Sedge *C. pallescens*. This was quickly followed by Flea Sedge *C. pulicaris* and Tawny Sedge *C. hostiana*, the latter identified by the silver papery edges to the glumes.

Another flurry of ferns followed: Wall-rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria*, Maidenhair Spleenwort *A. trichomanes*, Hart's-tongue *A. scolopendrium*, Limestone Fern *Gymnocarpium robertianum* and then Rigid Buckler-fern *Dryopteris submontana* as we moved on again. I didn't know botany involved so much roaming! We made our way to spot more Dark-red Helleborines before a break for lunch.

Revived, we continued down towards Hawes Water lake through fields that had sprung leaks with the weather - freshwater springs that bubbled rivers

across the grassland. A carefully marked twig arrow pointed the way to a single Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, sadly missing its tongue!

Then on into the damper habitats bordering Hawes Water, with Ragged-Robin *Silene flos-cuculi* sprinkled pink amongst Cyperus Sedge *C. pseudocyperus*, and the purple hues of Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* and Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara*. Common Gromwell *Lithospermum officinale* marked the end of the boardwalk, then it all became a bit of an excited blur between a field of Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa*, with hundreds of purple-pink spikes, delayed only by the announcement of the plant that had got me into all this in the first place - Deadly Nightshade



Atropa belladonna perched above a limestone crag. Perhaps a little too much glee on my part to finally catch up with this favourite.

Back to pay proper attention to the Bird's-eye Primroses, disrupted by Thick-legged Flower Beetle *Oedemera nobilis*, and Black Bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*. A closer look at the edges of Hawes Water rewarded us with Yellow Oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens*, Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum* (a delicate, white-flowered plant that definitely has fae character) and the saw-edged leaves of Greater Fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus*. Common Twayblade *Neottia ovata* took a moment to find, then they materialised everywhere, a magic eye puzzle suddenly coming into view.

Finally, back up through the fields and along a wooded track to catch Herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, Enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, Wood Melick *Melica uniflora*, Hairy Brome *Bromus ramosus* and finally, the hybrid between Tormentil and Trailing Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* x *P. anglica* = *P. x suberecta*, by which point my brain was completely fried from the seventy-plus species I'd already added to my list for the day so I neglected to properly look at it. Hey ho, so it goes. I'd certainly recommend this as a lovely day out. Thank you to everyone, especially to our leader David Shaw, who made my first WFS meeting so memorable!

ROWENA TYLDEN-SMITH

RUFFORD, LANCASHIRE, 21st JUNE

On Midsummer's Day, with a weather forecast of very high temperatures and possible thundery showers, eight of us met in the station car park at Rufford. We were instead blessed with an overcast sky to keep temperatures down and occasional droplets of rain to keep us cool.

The first stretch of our walk took us north on a branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal towards Preston, past the back of Rufford Hall, a National Trust property.

Along the canal, we found many of the waterside plants you would expect to see, including Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, and Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea*, with Arrowhead *Sagittaria*



sagittifolia and Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* in good flower. We saw both Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* and Common Figwort *S. nodosa* and compared their features. Always lovely to find were several

Northern Marsh-orchids *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, some growing out of the very edge of the canal. After leaving the canal to walk a short distance along a hawthorn-hedged road, Stephen Clarkson invited us to look more closely at the hedge, much of which was Various-leaved Hawthorn *Crataegus heterophylla*, which indeed had different-shaped leaves, few or no spines and persistent stipules.

The second part of our walk took us across country, past fields of leeks and wheat in this very fertile region of Lancashire. Most field edges were bare, but we found Scented Mayweed *Matricaria chamomilla*, Common Ramping-fumitory *Fumaria muralis* and Scarlet Pimpernel *Lysimachia arvensis* and, by the entrance to Mere Sands Wood, one of my favourites, Corn Marigold *Glebionis segetum*, along with Bugloss *Lycopsis arvensis*. Mere Sands was originally part of Martin Mere, but after the glass-making industry had finished excavating the sand, it was designated a nature reserve, mostly favoured by birdwatchers, but also for its fungi, dragonflies, bats and flowers. Along the side of the fenced flower meadow, we spotted Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, going over, and a variety of Early Marsh-orchids *D. incarnata*, including ssp. *coccinea*, growing together with Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris* and nearby, one Common Spotted-orchid *D. fuchsii* with Ragged-Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*.

A quick walk through the wood past

patches of Enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* took us to the stream by Rufford Cricket Club. Here a variety of flowers greeted us, some possibly relics of seed thrown down several years ago. Among them were Hedge Crane's-bill *Geranium pyrenaicum*, Corn Poppy *Papaver rhoeas*, Borage *Borago officinalis* and Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*. Most interesting was Julie Clarke's find of Field Woundwort *Stachys arvensis*. The cricketers must have wondered what we found so interesting by the stream, but we did see two catches and clapped accordingly.

A tall plant which we identified as Tree Spinach *Chenopodium giganteum* caused some discussion as the 'Obsidentify App' said that it was *C. x reynierii*, the hybrid between *C. giganteum* and *C. album*. John Akeroyd, the BSBI *Chenopodium* referee, later confirmed that our identification was correct. He wrote 'The large triangular, coarsely-toothed leaves and purple shoot

colouration give it away (although there is another purplish species in the *C. album* group).'

The final stretch of the walk back to the car park was along an initially narrow path by a stream, now totally clogged with Floating Pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*, with a few Water Forget-me-nots *Myosotis scorpioides* showing through.

Those keen to see Tufted Loosestrife *Lysimachia thyrsiflora* made the short trip further up the canal to Sollom, past vast patches of Fringed Water-lily *Nymphaeodes peltata* and two proud parent swans with their six cygnets, to see this shy-flowerer, luckily still showing a few flowers.

A tiring walk, but a happy day and good company.

MARION CHAPPELL

Many thanks to Marion for organising such an enjoyable day!

SHEILA WYNN

KINCRAIG POINT, FIFE, SCOTLAND, 20th JUNE

Before even arriving at the Kincaig meeting point, we were treated to a lovely drift of Dame's-violet *Hesperis matronalis* on the roadside. This was the first of eleven new species for me on the coming day.

Though I'm a relative newcomer to the WFS, it was great to see so many (17) smiling faces, all happy to be meeting up again. During the course of the next 7km, we covered a variety of different coastal habitats, starting in a wet meadow full of very bright

Northern Marsh-orchids *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, then sand dunes, coastal grasslands, saltmarsh, arable field-margins and clifftop heath.

The highlight for me, though, was a patch of bulldozed sand dune, which had been colonised by a kaleidoscope of arable weeds. The poppies, Opium, Long-headed and Oriental *Papaver somniferum*, *P. dubium* and *P. setiferum* set the scene ablaze, ably assisted by glorious spikes of Viper's-bugloss



deliberation, I realised I was looking at two separate new species.

However, more was yet to come, when Henbane *Hyoscyamus niger* was found. Ever since finding Deadly Nightshade *Atropa belladonna* several years ago, I had been hoping to find this cousin in the nightshade family. It's always amazed me that its deadly toxicity is mirrored in its

Echium vulgare, but within all this colour were so many other species. Two which caught my attention were Bugloss *Anchusa arvensis* and Fiddleneck *Amsinkia micrantha*, which were growing right next to each other. Their leaves were superficially quite similar, so at first I thought it was one species with different colour forms. After a little

malevolent appearance. Indeed, I suppose it's been the plant that I most wanted to see and was most unexpected up here in Scotland.

Henbane contains a toxic mix of alkaloids (scopolamine being the main one) which affect the nervous system. The plant has an unpleasant taste so is rarely eaten by animals, though if cut in hay, it might be problematic. Scopolamine has found use in human medicine to treat motion sickness and is historically associated with some high-profile cases of poisoning. Hallucinations are experienced if a sufficient dose is taken. Most famously, Dr. Crippen was accused of murdering his wife with Henbane!

Lunch was on the beach in glorious sunshine, with a flock of 40 plus merganser ducks entertaining us whilst catching fish in shallow water. After lunch, we walked out around Kincaig Point. Much of this path was bordered by a very productive arable field on the landward side, home to three species of fumitory: Common *Fumaria officinalis*, Dense-flowered



Henbane

F. densiflora and Common Ramping-fumitory *F. muralis*.

Just before the final turn back inland we were treated to a very fine male Peregrine Falcon sitting on the cliff, which then treated us to an acrobatic turn on the wing before settling back down on the cliff.

An excellent and very tiring day out with so much to see. Many thanks to Lyn Jones for leading and sharing his local knowledge and all-round botanical expertise.

ROLAND STEVENS

TENTSMUIR FOREST and SAND DUNES, FIFE, SCOTLAND, 21st JUNE

As we assembled in Tentsmuir Forest and Beach car park, there was a general excitement among participants about the prospect of exploring this National Nature Reserve, which is renowned for its rich flora. Led by Lyn and Mandy Jones, we began by investigating the sand dunes, which are an ever-shifting feature of the landscape because of sea storms and flooding. As such, different parts of the dunes are continuously expanding and contracting. One negative consequence is that populations of rare and scarce plants are vulnerable to extinction as the dunes are eroded or washed away. However, one positive outcome is the generation of 'green beaches' that are characterised by an array of plant colonists.

Our first notable plants included Seaside Centaury *Centaureum littorale* and Common Centaury *C. erythraea*. The former was in spectacular bloom, and we were able to compare its characteristics with those of the latter. In the damper areas, we found Knotted Pearlwort

Sagina nodosa, while Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acris* was frequent on the sand. It wasn't long before one person found some Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris* in flower, which pleased many people in the group. Exploring the marshy fringes of the lagoons and dune slacks produced a clutch of interesting plants such as Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, False Fox-sedge *C. otrubae*, Celery-leaved Buttercup *Ranunculus sceleratus* and Tufted Forget-me-not *Myosotis laxa*. The damp hollows were home also to Northern Marsh-orchids *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, which we would encounter again later in the day.

As we ventured deeper into the complex of fixed and semi-fixed dune slacks, Lyn directed us to an enormous population of the rare Baltic Rush *Juncus balticus*, comprising many hundreds, if not thousands of plants. This colony was in fine health and showed promising signs of expanding further. Saltmarsh Rush *J. gerardii* was nearby, enabling us to examine the key characteristics of each. After, we continued our



Baltic Rush

with a mixed carpet of Common Wintergreen *Pyrola minor*, Northern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* and Creeping Lady's-tresses *Goodyera repens*. With some searching, one person spotted a diminutive Lesser Twayblade *Neottia cordata* in flower. This delighted the group, many of whom then became engaged in the challenge of photographing a plant so small. It was in this general area that Coralroot Orchid *Corallorhiza trifida* had been seen in previous years, but Lyn recounted a story of decline due to the drying out of the woodland. Sadly, no Coralroot Orchids could be found on our visit. Still, we made our way through the forest and then back out onto the dunes. There we were rewarded by the sight of Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* sheltering in the vegetation.

progress through the dunes, noting plants such as Hare's-foot Clover *Trifolium arvense* and Intermediate Evening-primrose *Oenothera x fallax*. The brackish parts of the open dunes yielded Long-bracted Sedge *C. extensa*. There were still more plants to occupy our attention, not least a sizeable colony of Sea Pea *Lathyrus japonicus*. Like many plants this year, they had flowered earlier than usual, but several eagle-eyed participants soon found some flowers. After the pleasure of the Sea Pea, Lyn led us to Pale-yellow Scabious *Scabiosa ochroleuca*, an unusual alien that has been recently discovered in this remote part of Tentsmuir dunes.

After lunch, Lyn steered us into Tentsmuir Forest. Before long, we encountered a wondrous woodland

This was followed by another diversion into the forest to see what many of us had hoped to admire: Twinflower *Linnaea borealis*. Although the plant was past its best, many pairs of eyes made short work of spotting a good number of flowers arranged in pairs. After a very welcome rest amongst the Twinflowers, we slowly made our way back to the car park through the forest. The Twinflower was a delicious 'sticky sweet' to conclude the second day of Lyn's three-day Scottish meeting. A very big thank you to both Lyn and Mandy for organising and leading the meeting in Tentsmuir Forest and dunes, and for showing us many of its botanical specialities.

NICK ASTON

LITTLE KILRANNOCH, CAENLOCHAN, PERTSHIRE, SCOTLAND, 22nd JUNE

The site that we planned to visit was a small area of rock at an altitude of 800m in the Cairngorms. We met at Glen Doll car park and, as usual with us botanists, we immediately found Spignel *Meum athamanticum* and Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea* next to the car park. Lyn Jones, our leader, had arranged for us to take cars up a forestry track, saving several miles of walking, and as time was critical, he suggested that we didn't stop on the ascent, marching us up to the top of the hill. For a lowland sassenach this was purgatory, as we passed many interesting new plants with little time to examine them. Our narrow footpath, aka Jock's Road, was blocked lower down by pines felled during a storm which had devastated the plantation. Beyond the pines there were no sheep, and the floral display was breathtaking.

Climbing higher, we left the footpath and made our way up a wet valley, at which point the forecast rain set in. Flushes showed patches of Few-flowered Spike-rush *Eleocharis quinqueflora* and Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*. There was an impressive display of sedges, including Common Sedge *Carex nigra* in various guises, Stiff Sedge *C. bigelowii*, their hybrid *C. x decolorans*, Water Sedge *C. aquatilis* and its hybrid with Stiff Sedge, *C. x limula*. There was plenty of Red Deer poo but no sign of the beasties themselves.

Heading on up into a gale, we

reached the promised land, a surprisingly small area of Serpentine rock on which few plants grew. Those that did, however, were mountain rarities, including Alpine Catchfly *Silene suecica*, Three-leaved Rush *Juncus trifidus*, Mountain Scurvygrass *Cochlearia micacea*, the mountain subspecies of Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum* ssp. *scotica*, Fir Clubmoss *Huperzia selago* and Cyphel *Cherleria sedoides*.

Lunch was eaten in driving rain with but a small overhang as a windbreak. I had insufficient protective clothing and became chilled and started the return walk at pace in order to warm up. Unfortunately, this meant that I missed seeing Mountain Bog-sedge *C. rariflora*, which was spotted by the group behind me, on the descent.



Starry Saxifrage

Back on Jock's Road, the sun came out! As I was now ahead of the pack, I had time to examine and enjoy the plants I had whizzed by on the way up. My highlights were Yellow Saxifrage *Saxifraga aizoides*, Alpine Bistort *Bistorta vivipara*, Oak Fern *Gymnocarpium dryopteris*, Lemon-scented Fern *Oreopteris limbosperma*, Dwarf Cornel *Cornus suecica*, Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica*, Chickweed Wintergreen *Lysimachia europaea*, Bilberry and Bog Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and *V. uliginosum*, Cowberry *V. vitis-idaea*, Crowberry

Empetrum nigrum, Alpine Clubmoss *Diphasiastrum alpinum*, Hare's-tail Cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum*, Heath Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia borealis*, Wood Crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum* and Starry Saxifrage *Micranthes stellaris* to name but a few! In addition, a total of 17 sedge species were noted during the walk.

A brilliant day and all thanks to Lyn, our generous and enthusiastic host and organiser.

JOHN WHEATLEY

AVIEMORE and GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY, SCOTLAND, 24th - 25th JUNE

Day 1: Craigellachie NNR,

Aviemore: First of all, many thanks from all the attendees to Ian Green, who stepped in as leader at short notice as Audrey Turner was unable to lead us as planned. Ian did a brilliant job, considering he had so little time to prepare.

Ten of us met at the car park on a warm but overcast morning and within a few yards after setting off, we came across a **Stingless Nettle** *Urtica dioica* ssp. *galeopsifolia*, which most of us didn't know existed. I for one still haven't been brave enough to test out other nettles, even if the leaves do look similar. However, the following week, in a completely different area, someone did try after I'd told them about it and, lo and behold, it didn't sting! Maybe this sub-species is more widespread than you think. Dare you try to touch?

Very soon, a number of garden escapes were encountered, including Yellow Fox-and-cubs *Pilosella*



Stingless Nettle

impressed by these escapees; others were pleased to have something new and different to add to their diaries.

Habitats explored included mixed woodland, open paths and two sizeable lochans, which were packed with various aquatic plants. The first lochan produced, among other species, Shoreweed *Littorella uniflora*, with flowers, but only where it was out of the water, Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis*, Alternate Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum* and Least Water-lily *Nuphar pumila*.

Back in the woods, we found Intermediate Wintergreen *Pyrola media*, in flower, a white form of Bugle *Ajuga reptans*, Bitter-vetch *Lathyrus linifolius*, the hybrid Grey x Eared Willow *Salix cinerea* x *S. aurita* = *S. x multinervis* and, a nice surprise find, lurking in the undergrowth right next to the path, Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* - the cameras and phones came out very quickly. At the second lochan, we again saw Alternate Water-milfoil but this time with profuse tiny flower spikes standing upright above the water - very tricky to take a good photograph of.

A pleasant spot was found in the woods for a lunch break but typically, no sooner had we sat down than it started to rain! A hasty retreat was made back to the car park but, of course, the rain had stopped by the time we got there.

The second site of the day was nearby on a verge of the B970 known for its colony of Yellow Bird's-nest *Hypopitys monotropa* ssp.

hypophegea. Luckily, a few were emerging from the grass and we got a good look at this strange saprophytic plant. Those on the road side of the fence were very vulnerable to being trampled so a few branches were strategically placed as protection before we left.

With the weather improving rapidly, we then went on another short drive to the very end of a minor road. The site, called Whitewell, is a known location for the Small-white Orchid *Platanthera albida*. Despite everyone looking carefully over a wide area, during which we saw, and smelt, a plethora of Heath Fragrant-orchids *Gymnadenia borealis*, our search was fruitless, or should that be Small-white Orchidless! It was thought that this might be due to changes in the grazing regime of the area.

Fortunately, there was another well-known site not far away so off we went in convoy again. On arrival, and peering over the fence, we could see some flower spikes in the distance, but none close enough to get a good look at. As there were ten of us, and this was a sensitive site, Ian went to seek permission from the owner to enter the field. Permission was duly granted, and in two small groups, we carefully made our way across a botanically-rich pasture, trying our best not to tread on an abundant variety of plants and flowers. We soon found more than enough Small-white Orchid flowers to satisfy everyone before we ended our day, all very weary but looking forward to the next day.

PAUL NIGHTINGALE

Day 2: Nine of us set off from Grantown-on-Spey on a warm overcast morning with a forecast of sunshine to follow. We walked to the edge of town, where grassy areas backing onto gardens offered a good selection of garden escapes. There was Common Bistort *Bistorta officinalis*, Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus*, Monk's-hood *Aconitum*



napellus, Musk-mallow *Malva moschata* and Bridewort *Spiraea salicifolia* agg. to name but a few. Bridewort, which is naturalised in Britain and very common in Scotland, was found growing in dense thickets in some places along the route.

In a shady residential road with a small burn running along the verge, we came across Leopard's-bane

Doronicum pardalianches, Water Avens *Geum rivale*, Wood Crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum* and our first Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* of the day. Some time was spent comparing Northern Dock *Rumex longifolius* and Broad-leaved Dock *R. obtusifolius* and discussing the appearance of their hybrid *R. x hybridus*, which has the spreading leaves of Broad-leaved Dock but, like Northern Dock, has fruiting tepals which lack warts. We went on to admire plants growing high on the walls of a railway bridge carrying the disused line we'd soon be walking on; they included Fairy Foxglove *Erinus alpinus*, Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and a white version of Bush Vetch *Vicia sepium*.

After about a mile's walk along the railway path, where, among other things, we noted the hybrid between Water Avens *Geum rivale* and Wood Avens *G. urbanum* = *G. x intermedium*, we wandered into an adjacent pinewood, where Ian Green, our leader, pointed out Creeping Lady's-tresses *Goodyera repens*. The flowers of Alternate Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum*, growing in a woodland pond, proved a challenge to photograph but it was worth the perseverance. We also found Creeping Forget-me-not *Myosotis secunda*, Marsh Speedwell *Veronica scutellata*, Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*, Ragged Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustre*, White Sedge *Carex canescens* and a handsome specimen of Bottle Sedge *C. rostrata*, with its swollen yellowish-green fruit.

Lunchtime was drawing close as we

entered the grounds of Castle Grant to explore Old Grantown Wood, where One-flowered Wintergreen *Moneses uniflora* grows. We lunched under the trees amid the deep yellow variant of Common Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* ssp. *pratense* var. *hians*, with clusters of Twinflower *Linnaea borealis*, Common Wintergreen *Pyrola minor* and Chickweed-wintergreen *Lysimachia europaea* nearby. After lunch, everybody proceeded with caution as the search for One-flowered Wintergreen began. Keen-eyed members quickly spotted one close by and very soon there were a couple of others to admire. There was also at least one labelled bag of seeds buried in the understorey. This is part of a Plantlife project to help save this plant. Both One-flowered Wintergreen and Twinflower are very rare pinewood species, under severe threat because of population fragmentation due to modern forestry methods. One-flowered Wintergreen seeds are being translocated to increase genetic diversity and vigour at declining sites, whereas Twinflower cuttings are being nurtured by volunteers before being planted in the wild. The project, which is a learning experience for Plantlife, is still in its early stages but results

are very promising so far.

What better way to end a marvellous day than to walk along the River Spey, enjoying a colourful vista of lupins *Lupinus* sp. cloaking the river's edges, with huge threads of River Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus fluitans* floating nearby. Local fishermen do not appreciate the splendour of this spectacle; they want the crowfoot removed because it interferes with their lines. Further along the river, a surprise treat came in the form of Greater Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and there was a botanical break to admire a Dark Green Fritillary *Speyeria aglaja* butterfly feeding on its preferred food plant, thistle – in this case Melancholy Thistle, of course. The day was extended slightly for some by a visit to a nearby Eastern Crack-willow *Salix euxina*, which was a better specimen than the one we had seen on the riverbank.

Many thanks to Ian, who stepped in at the last minute to lead the group with expertise and thoroughness. His enthusiasm and willingness to meet all requests helped make this a memorable visit.

SHEENA PATERSON



2nd place
Winners in the
2025 Photo
Competition.
Left, Shining
Crane's-bill by
Moira Smith.
Right, Long-
flowered
Thyme by
Dave Morgan.



CHATSWORTH HOUSE, CHATSWORTH, DERBYSHIRE 12th JUNE

Chatsworth House is a magnificent stately home in the Derbyshire Dales. It is the seat of the Duke of Devonshire and has belonged to the Cavendish family since 1549. The house stands on the east bank of the River Derwent with extensive gardens and parkland backed by wooded hills. The Duke of Devonshire together with Steve Porter, the Head of Gardening and Landscapes and his team, have an interest in sustainability and biodiversity and hence supported a WFS meeting to the Estate to investigate the wild flowers that were present in some of their different locations.

The meeting got off to a great start. We were greeted with coffee, tea and biscuits in a stunning room in the Stable Block. Steve then gave us a presentation on the development of the estate and gardens over the previous centuries, resulting in the layout and flora of today. Faye Tuffrey, Garden Plant Collection and Learning Manager at Chatsworth, spent the day with us and took us around some of the less visited sites on the estate – such as the gardeners' work area. Always a fruitful area to find wild flowers as they are keen to hitch a lift in plant pots and on tyres of tractors and cars!

Our count of wild flowers for the day was one hundred and sixty-one – so plenty of wild flowers to notice and discuss. There are some that are

always of a particular pleasure to come across, and on this visit I was delighted to come across Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, Common Twayblade *Neottia ovata* and Southern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. We were all pleased to brush up on our



Homage to a Southern Marsh orchid.
Photo: Janet John

common grasses, Barren Brome *Anisantha sterilis*, Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, False Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, Quaking-grass *Briza media*, Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosaurus cristatus*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua* and Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*.

Chatsworth is a stunning location for a visit – for garden enthusiasts as well as keen wild flowerers.



Some of us enjoying lunch overlooking the stunning Chatsworth House

There was plenty to keep us entertained. I think we all came away thinking that we would be back another day to enjoy.

JANET JOHN

The following is in response to a Wild Flower Society grant to Somerset Wildlife Trust for funding a course on woodland plant identification.

REPORT TO THE WILD FLOWER SOCIETY - 2025

Somerset Wildlife Trust is an independent conservation charity that has been working throughout Somerset since 1964 to ensure this beautiful county remains one of the most habitat-diverse and wildlife-rich counties in Britain. We manage 1,700 hectares of land as protected nature reserves within Somerset stretching from the Mendips and Polden Hills through the Avalon Marshes to the Blackdown Hills and Quantocks on the edge of Exmoor National Park.

Our work is supported by over 23,000 members, hundreds of volunteers and many others in Somerset. We work with like-minded organisations, landowners and businesses to protect and connect wildlife sites across the county and inspire local communities and individuals to care for the natural world on their doorstep, with huge benefits to both people and our natural world from connecting with and protecting our local environment.

Introduction to Woodland Plant Identification Workshop.

Thanks to grant funding from the Wild Flower Society, we were able to run this course free of charge to ten participants on Sunday 11th May 2025. The workshop was run at Somerset Wildlife Trust's nature reserve in Thurlbear Wood in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape. The wood is an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and a Site of Special Scientific Interest with wide rides and herb-rich glades.

The workshop was advertised on Somerset Wildlife Trust's website and quickly became over-subscribed. Photos from the event will be used to promote future activities on social media.

The course was led by Ann Fells, Ecologist with Somerset Environmental Records Centre.

The attendees had quite a broad range of experience including people

who had studied botany many years ago and others with little or no knowledge of plant identification. The attendees were guided through key identification features for a wide range of plants growing in the wood using the identification keys in Francis Rose's Wildflower Key and Field Studies Council charts – the latter of these were purchased with the Wild Flower Society grant we were given this year, the former with a WFS grant that we were awarded for a grassland identification course we ran three years ago.

The weather was perfect until we settled down for lunch in a beautiful glade when a shower forced us all to hide under the trees, but the attendees remained enthusiastic and engaged throughout.

Approximately 20 plants were recorded at the site, including early purple orchid, ramsons, wild strawberry, wood avens, herb Robert and common hawthorn.

Objectives of the session:

For those attending to be able to recognise and name features required for plant identification;

For attendees to gain understanding in how to use plant identification keys and be able to identify plants they encounter;

To know where to find expert help;
For attendees to develop self-confidence to the point where they feel able to inspire and inform others about the range and diversity of plant life in Somerset and to develop a desire for further learning.

Feedback highlighting the value of the training:

The purpose of this wildflower training event course was to help build the identification skills and confidence of people that want to help manage their local spaces. Feedback included:

"I had no idea how to identify plants in such a way and feel that I've learned a new skill and will not rely on a phone app because, let's face it, they aren't always correct!"

"A really enjoyable workshop, which not only added to my poor knowledge of how to ID plant species, but gave me the opportunity to notice the differences, and the beauty, of plants which I've regularly walked past but never even noticed. I will now!"

Thank you so much for your continued support and for awarding the grant that made this event possible.

Tania Ord-Smith
Grants Officer
Tania.ord-mith@somersetwildlife.org



Somerset
Wildlife Trust

BOOK REVIEWS

The Cuckoo Calls the Year: Pete Stroh: Merlin Unwin Books (2025): ISBN: 978-1-9131-5982-5 (Hardback): Publisher's Price £14.99.

I love reading memoirs and am so pleased that the WFS magazine is featuring some. Jim Blackwood's profile appeared in the Winter 2025 issue, and a piece which I much enjoyed in preview by Janet Clapton (another Scottish member) is in the present issue. So, it's a real treat to have this whole book by a prominent botanist who has been a friend and mentor to me, as well as having an important influence on our whole botanical community. Pete Stroh was a lead author of the great *Atlas 2020*, as well as contributing to books such as *Grassland Plants of the British and Irish Lowlands* and *Threatened Plants in Britain and Ireland* and writing articles for *British Wildlife*. Many of us will know him as a very important figure in the protection, recording and publicising of our precious flora. What we have not had is a picture of Pete in his home setting - but here it is!

Some botanists are hugely knowledgeable, but poor communicators. Pete is the opposite, and in this charming book we see him getting up from his keyboard when the dog gives him too many reproachful looks, deciding where to walk (or bike) and wondering if some chocolate biscuits found in a pocket are too stale to eat. Then he amalgamates plant finds, meetings with many creatures (grasshoppers and caterpillars were the key to

starting him in early childhood to become a naturalist), the effects of weather and the seasons, and makes a tale which draws one on gently, but always so wanting to read the next page!

The book is structured around what is found in his parish in Northamptonshire, and accounts of particular walks or searches. I have to admit that I'd always rather dismissed that county as dull, but I couldn't be more wrong. In my corner of Somerset, Swallows and House Martins have almost disappeared, and plants like Sulphur Clover are not around, but Pete's days have many such treasures, with hundreds of Swallows whirling over gravel-pit ponds and a rich flora of woods, hedges, water-meadows and arable.

There is an interesting statement in the author's introduction, when he says he is not going to highlight the bad news which haunts all field botanists in this age of losses and destruction of habitats. Instead, he concentrates on what *is* there, and the result is both educative and enchanting. Within the day-to-day story, there is considerable information about the lives, needs and behaviour of birds, insects and mammals, as well as plants, and this information is set in a countryside which soon feels familiar and *real* to the reader. I was as happy to have a vivid description of an Ivy Bee as to know that a local National Trust property has a most odd connection to the Gunpowder Plot!

My rather restless life has made me

feel connected to the Shakespearean character Autolycus in the *Winter's Tale*, who was a 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles', so this book gives me enormous pleasure, with its many curiosities described by a naturalist whom I absolutely trust to tell things as they really are. I often find myself looking for the nearest date (accounts are not daily but written whenever he has time to walk out) to see what was happening to Pete. By chance, today, when I'm writing this, is the 19th June, when Northamptonshire had had heavy rain which just didn't flatten the ripening barley in nearby fields. The crop still stands and can be transformed by the wind into 'a rippling, silky mass in constant motion'. I live among arable fields and also treasure this sight.

After a thoughtful contemplation of the desired balance between biodiversity and food production which affects farming, Pete is drawn on into a dense wood, passing a

birder looking for nesting Hobbies, admiring and describing the Yellow Iris flowers in a wet corner, and eventually having quite a scary adventure in a deep, swampy area, where ancient gnarly Alders are difficult to get through and the floundering botanist 'wouldn't be surprised to see pterodactyls nesting in their canopy'. Getting out of the tangle eventually, he meets a dog-walker startled by his wild, muddy appearance, and responds 'to his audible gasp with a squinting awkward smile, primitive man emerging into the light.'

It would not be fair to quote or describe more - I hope many readers will get this book for themselves. It really provides an achievable template for experiencing and recording the life which surrounds us all - whether in town or country, we still live within a habitat - and appreciating all the creatures and plants which we share it with can only make our own lives better.

***Trees of Britain and Ireland:* Jon Stokes: Princeton Press
WILDGuides (2025): ISBN 978-0-6912-2416-9: Publisher's price £20.00, listed online and Ebook available.**

I always feel lucky when a new book to review arrives - what pleasures and knowledge will it reveal? But when I finish the reading and writing, I'm often not sure what to do with it - nice as it may be, I don't actually **need** it, and the shelves are too full anyway. So, it's an excellent moment when something comes which finds an instant place in my life, and this book has been used almost from the

moment of its arrival. I often suggest that books would be good for members' gift lists - for giving or receiving - but there are very few which I want to label **MUST HAVE**. Well, for all except the most dazzlingly skilful of us, it feels the right label for this one.

I find Jon Stokes' *Trees* really accessible and very useful indeed for making me more comfortable with a group I'm not good with, which is satisfying and a great help with the usual monad recording I do. Trees have shamefully been a blind spot for me, after a lifetime of looking down not up, but this book is converting

me. I'm told that it doesn't really include enough species for use by professional arborists, but for botanists like me, who just panic when faced with unfamiliar trees, it's ideal. Many non-native trees are covered, whether frequently planted or actually naturalised, and difficult native groups like *Sorbus* are given a really good wide selection. I tested it out on conifers, one of my worst bugbears, and found good entries for a whole 11 members of the *Cupressaceae* family (junipers, cedars, redwoods, and even the dreaded cypresses), and to encourage my whole approach, there are the most excellent photo keys of needle and cone characters and helpful mature tree silhouettes. There are introductory keys showing leaf shapes, flowers, fruits and winter twigs (adding to John Poland's invaluable book). Indeed, the whole introduction is pleasant and interesting, covering the question of what constitutes a native species, bits of history, the creatures which depend on woodland, the cultural importance of veteran trees and the

difference management can make to tree growth, as well as general ecological information. Very recently, an unknown mature poplar was found in a local wood which has traces of ancient woodland but also some conifer introduction and rather uninformed management, making it difficult to know the origin of any unusual species. The fine poplar is in a 'good' area and this spring red catkins had fallen round it. Twigs and the shape of dead leaves did show similarities with the 'real' Black Poplar *Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*, which is a speciality of this part of West Somerset. We collected scraps and dared to hope that it was an unrecorded individual, but Jon Stokes' sections on the possible hybrids helped us push away wild hopes and settle for a still-to-be-determined one of the hybrids! This soft-cover book is solid, but certainly possible to carry in the field, or sturdy enough to live as mine does, kicking around in the car! It has become a loyal companion.

RO FITZGERALD

