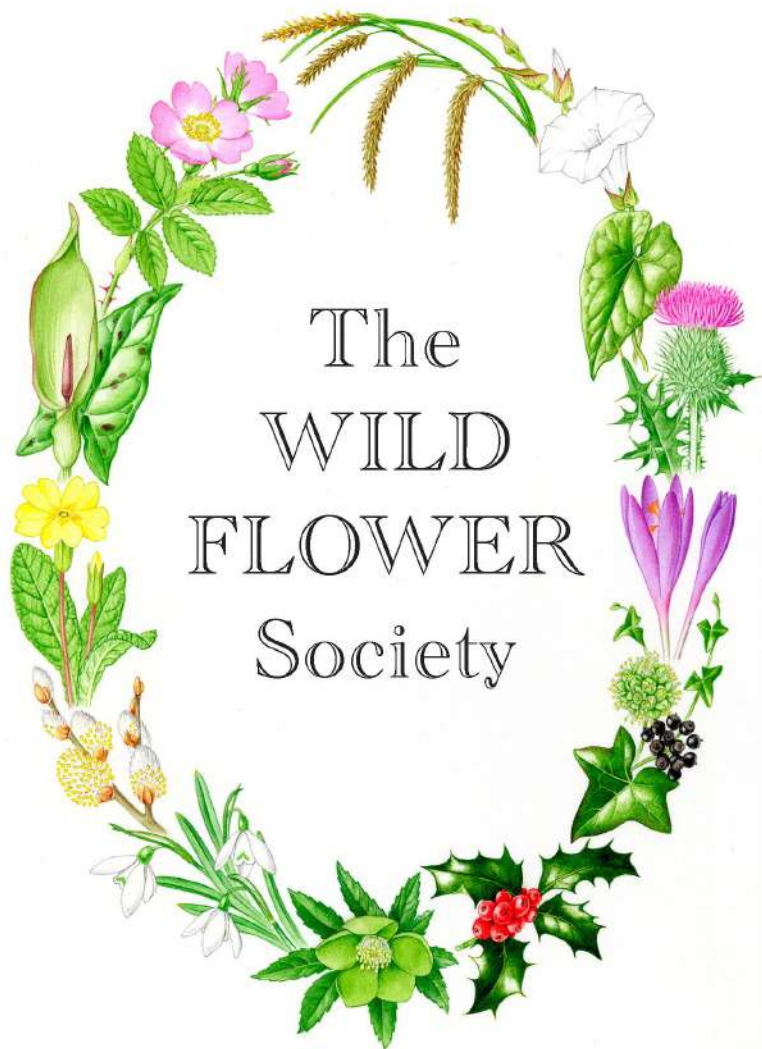


WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE



SPRING 2026

WILD FLOWER MAGAZINE

Published four times a year by The Wild Flower Society

Presidents:	1886-1948	Mrs E.V. Dent, O.B.E.
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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I would like to take this opportunity on your behalf to thank Sir Ghillean Prance for having fulfilled the role of WFS President for the last twenty-two years. He has shown us in his letters that he had retained a knowledge and enthusiasm for the British flora, but at the same time reminded us of the wonders of the rest of the world and the necessity to fight for the conservation of this diversity wherever we live. I feel I have a hard act to follow but was delighted and surprised to be invited to take on the role. I am particularly pleased to be following in the footsteps of another predecessor, David McClintock, who for so many years was a guiding force in the Society and became a good friend and mentor.

My involvement with the WFS began in 1968 when I was at Sherborne School in north Dorset and was introduced by my biology master Rob Lloyd to an elderly couple living in the town, Godfrey Latham and his wife. They were keen WFS members and soon persuaded me to join as well, taking me out at weekends to see many of the classic sites and plants in neighbouring Somerset. I was soon enthusiastically filling in a Diary and taking part in other competitions, especially the Last Day Hunt and Winter Months Hunt. In my first year I won the Dent Memorial Prize and still have a copy of the BSBI Atlas of the British Flora with a Dent prize bookplate signed by the then President Violet Schwerdt. I was already making new county records in and around Sherborne, with the

grasses Bulbous Meadow-grass *Poa bulbosa* and Slender Cock's-foot *Dactylis polygama* being two that I still recall with great satisfaction. With both my parents, Julia and Peter Leslie, sharing an interest in botany (and ornithology) we were soon chasing all over the country from home in Surrey looking for new plants and it was not long before we became involved with what was then the Surrey Flora Committee. Many years later I was entrusted with the production of a Supplement to Ted Lousley's 1976 *Flora of Surrey* including an historical Checklist for the county and this was published in 1987. In the early 1970s my mother and I led a number of WFS meetings, usually with the help of Eric Clement, who has remained a lifelong friend, and I have vivid memories of trailing convoys of cars around the Surrey countryside, all with WFS stickers on their front and back windscreens! There were no satnav or mobile phones at that time.

For more than six months, after leaving school in 1971, I worked in the Botany department at the RHS Gardens at Wisley, a period which did much to cement my life-long interest in both wild and cultivated plants, an enthusiasm I shared with David McClintock. I then spent six years in Cambridge, first as an undergraduate (ultimately studying Botany), and then undertaking a PhD on the taxonomy of the Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* under the supervision of Max Walters, work which finally saw some

published outcome in Sell & Murrell's *Flora of Great Britain and Ireland* in 2018. In 1978 I returned home to Surrey and to the RHS at Wisley where I was employed for the majority of my career, involved principally with horticultural plant nomenclature.

In 2005 I was able to move back to live in Cambridge where I continued to work for the RHS from home until retiring in 2018. In recent years I have led individuals or groups of members on walking tours round the botanical treasures of Cambridge city, a city whose alien flora seems exceptional, as well as over areas such as the Devil's Ditch and Chippenham Fen. For a large part of this period, I was also the BSBI's joint Recorder for Cambridgeshire and soon after my arrival back in the city I floated the idea of a new Flora for the county. The gestation period was extended but the work was finally published (by the RHS) in 2019, and I was more than delighted to be awarded the BSBI/WFS Presidents' Award for the *Flora of*

Cambridgeshire in 2020.

I have served as a secretary to a number of WFS Branches over the years starting with the Winners Branch H2 (1976-1985), Branch R (Surrey and Sussex) from 1983-1987, and then three stints in Parnassus (1987-1995, 2001-2006 and again from 2022 to the present day). My own Diary recording has been maintained throughout this whole period and last year I had a cumulative total of just over 3600 and I have not yet given up hope of catching Julie Clarke! I continue to find a great deal of pleasure in this mildly competitive chase and seeing the new plants, people and places which this involves, not forgetting that novelties will still keep cropping up locally if you keep looking for them. I look forward to acting as your President and would always be happy to hear from members or to show visitors the botanical attractions of the Cambridge area.

ALAN LESLIE

EDITORIAL

My fifteenth issue of this magazine has caused me quite a lot of problems. Fortunately, and with grateful thanks to a 'Tech' family expert, these have been ironed out. Most of those problems involved Microsoft's update downloads, which caused the computer being unable to 'refresh' and 'start up' again.

Further, Microsoft in their wisdom decided to 'retire' their Publisher software from October 1st 2026, leaving me and countless other

Publisher users in a very difficult situation. I am still working on that problem and hopefully will be able to find a solution well before the finish date.

Throughout this current issue, you'll notice more pictures than usual. This is due to the lack of copy material and the desire to keep to the usual number of pages. I hope you'll enjoy these additions.

KEN SOUTHALL

NOTICES

Please note my mistake on page 30 in the Winter 2026 (Issue 534) magazine. The picture by Janet John should have been noted as Marsh Helleborine and not Lindisfarne Helleborine. Please accept my apologies, Ken Southall.

Please also note Julie Clarke's correct email address in the 2026 Year Book (page 29) should read colin.julie9@gmail.com (note the 'dot' between colin and julie).

Copy deadline: 1st May 2026 for the Summer magazine.
The password for the Members' page in the website is **mayweed8a**

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The Photographic Competition is open to all members of The Wild Flower Society. Winning entries are displayed at the Society's AGM.

THE COMPETITIVE CLASSES

- 1. Habitat:** A photograph of a plant or plant community within its environment or locality.
- 2. Plant Portrait:** A photograph of a plant that illustrates its uniqueness while at the same time revealing something of its 'character' - whatever that character might be.
- 3. Close-up:** A photograph that reveals, in a more scientific way, the uniqueness of a plant by a close-up photograph.
- 4. Foreign Fields:** A photograph of a plant or plant community that is **clearly seen** to be growing in a foreign country. (The Irish Republic is considered to be within the UK as far as WFS is concerned).
- 5. Human Element:** A photograph that concentrates on botanical personalities and/or their activities. Please ask any person involved for their permission before submitting the picture, which will be printed in the WFS magazine if appropriate. Note, in classes 1-3, the plants photographed should be wild and growing in the British Isles.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Photographs are to be submitted electronically: Please send your entries by email to ken.southall@btinternet.com

Alternatively, if you wish, you can send them by post on an SD card or USB stick to Ken Southall, Aspen Cottage, Nettlestead, Ipswich, IP8 4QT, to be received by Friday 14th August 2026. Each image must be titled and indication made as to which class it is to be entered into. The image will not be eligible without this information. The winning digital entries, i.e. the first three places (if appropriate) and highly commended (H/C) in each class will be commercially printed on A4 size photographic paper and mounted so that

they can be displayed at the AGM. Please ensure that your digital (jpeg) pictures will fit in A4 size (portrait or landscape), which might necessitate some cropping accordingly by the entrant. The photographs will be judged by persons other than the organiser, and the entrants' names will not be revealed to the judges. The winning results will be published in the winter issue of the WFS magazine.

The following article has been included with kind permission from its author Ken Adams who wrote it for *Essex Botany*, in the newsletter (Autumn 2018), of the Essex Botanical Society.

DISTINGUISHING ALIEN FLEABANES OF THE GENUS *ERIGERON* (FORMERLY *CONYZA*).

Although Sell and Murrell, 2006 describe 6 species of alien *Erigeron* (*Conyza*) and several subspecies, they are not in agreement with those in Stace 3, 2010 or the synopsis produced by Bob Leaney, 2017 describing only 4 taxa. The Floras generally concentrate on the leaf hairs and the shape and branching of



Canadian Fleabane *Erigeron canadensis* capitula. N.B. narrow involucre bracts with sparse hairs, of which there are 8-12 at mid-height in side view, and the long white, 'petaloid' ligules.

the inflorescence to identify them, but

I am finding that the most convenient and unambiguous way to distinguish them is by concentrating almost entirely on the capitula using a x20 lens. The capitula are basically of the daisy type, with several whorls of greenish involucre bracts of variable length, around the outside, several whorls of florets inside that bear ligules (equivalent to the white daisy 'petals'), and then numerous disc florets without any ligules. The *Erigerons* are a bit more complicated in that all the species considered here, except *E. canadensis* (L) Conquist, have almost microscopic ligules on their female-only outer whorls of florets that are overtopped by the involucre bracts. The numerous remaining disc florets are of two types: mostly narrowly tubular with three minute apical teeth and female only, the forked stigmas projecting from the top, and just a few central bisexual florets, much fatter and with four or five triangular apical teeth and bright yellow stamens. In *E. sumatrensis* (Retz) E. Walker, for example, there are only 8-12 of these

out of a total of 30 or more disc florets.



Single bisexual disc floret from Guernsey Fleabane *Erigeron sumatrensis* showing five apical teeth to corolla tube, emergent stigma and yellow stamens, plus young achene and pappus.

Most of the bisexual florets of *E. canadensis* have four apical teeth with an occasional one with five in the same capitulum, but the bisexual flowers of the other three have a regular five. In all the taxa the female only stigmas are linear-bifid and project out above their tubular florets. They are initially colourless/translucent but in all except *E. canadensis* they darken to reddish-purple with age. The bisexual florets initially project above the other disc florets and are conspicuously bright yellow in all species. All the florets bear achenes and a pappus of 16-20 plain unfeathered lightly barbed spokes.

I find it difficult to unambiguously separate them on their capitula without a hand lens or microscope. However, they readily separate into two species pairs on examining the involucre bracts with a lens when holding a capitulum up against the sky in silhouette. In both *E. sumatrensis* and *E. bonariensis* the bracts are densely hairy each with 20-30 or more hairs, whereas in *E. canadensis* and *E. floribundus* Kunth

each bract has no more than 2-3 hairs. As can be seen in my close-up images, *E. canadensis* has an initially cylindrical capitulum with very obvious petal-like off-white ligules c.1mm long, and narrow involucre bracts tapering to a point. As the achenes mature the capitula swell at the base and become brandy-bottle shaped. In some forms the whitish ligules are really long and the flowers open out looking like daisies with very narrow ligules.



Bilbao's Fleabane *Erigeron floribundus*; a young and older capitulum. Note sparse hairs and broader strap-shaped, blunt, involucre bracts of which there are 5-6 across at mid height in side view. (Photo left above, courtesy Paul Sterry).

That of *E. floribundus* also starts off cylindrical and becomes brandy-bottle shaped. Its ligules are white and almost microscopic; and the involucre bracts are broadly strap-shaped, parallel-sided and blunt at the apex with very narrow scarious (translucent) margins. In *E. sumatrensis* the involucre bracts are acute tipped as in *E. canadensis*, but they have wide scarious margins and

numerous spiny hairs.

Initially their disc floret tubes and bifid stigma lobes are colourless/translucent, but they soon acquire a dark reddish hue. Unlike *E.*

bonariensis this red/purple colour does not spread to the involucre bract tips however, which remain translucent, and to the unaided eye can be confused with ligules of *E. canadensis*. So always use a lens to be sure.



Guernsey Fleabane *Erigeron sumatrensis*; left: young capitulum squashed to show narrow pointed involucre bracts (of which there are 8-10 across at mid-height in side view), with wide scarious margins and numerous hairs, and outer disc florets with emergent translucent, bifid stigmas. Central: showing bifid stigmas becoming purple/red, and right: with disc floret tubes also changing to reddish/purple.

Finally we come to *E. bonariensis*, which I last saw in Stratford in the east end of London last century. Unable to locate present day specimens, I have therefore had to use images from the internet. Note that the capitula are initially squat and

barrel-shaped, becoming brandy-bottle shaped when maturing, and from an early stage acquire red tips to the involucre bracts, in addition to eventual reddening of the disc florets.

As in *E. sumatrensis* the involucre bracts are densely hairy and acute tipped. The florets are reportedly all white in colour initially. The capitula of *E. bonariensis* are much wider than in *E. sumatrensis*, 6-11mm as opposed to up to five mm in diameter.



Argentine Fleabane *Erigeron bonariensis* capitula; left – young with c.8 emergent yellow bisexual disc florets, and acute very hairy involucre bracts (10-14 across at mid level) that are beginning to redden. Right – further reddening of involucre bracts and disc florets turning pink.

Returning to the other three that you are most likely to come across, their overall inflorescence shape can give an initial clue. In *E. canadensis* the inflorescence is cylindrical, and it's usually a delicate plant less than 1m high. Its stems are clothed in low, dense, fine bristles, the leaves are pale yellow-green and long-stalked

with seldom more than two lobes/teeth per side, the margins having numerous hairs that stick out at right angles near the base but begin to curve forwards towards the tip. Common on waste ground, wall bases, pavement gaps, and in gardens, but seldom in arable. Populations are usually rather small or solitary, less common than formerly and often growing with *E. sumatrensis*.

E. sumatrensis is now the most widespread and abundant species. It produces bulky plants with a pyramidal, much branched inflorescence, often to 2m high, and can occur as vast populations in fallow arable, looking just like a crop, also in streets at the base of walls, in pavements gaps, in gardens and on waste ground. Close up the leaves are bright green, but to the naked eye they are grey-green due to a covering of short, fine, appressed, transparent, forward-pointing hairs, evenly but not densely spaced on veins and lamina surfaces both above and below. The margins have a few hairs at right angles (patent) at the base, but most are forward-pointing and curved. The stems are deeply grooved with pale rounded ribs, densely hairy with fine, short upward pointing appressed hairs.

The next in terms of occurrence and abundance is *E. floribundus*. Once seen, it is an obvious plant with very numerous leaves of a range of sizes,

dark green, rather thick and shiny, somewhat crinkled, with up to five marginal teeth on each side. The margins have tiny, transparent, stiff bulbous-based hairs, sticking out at right angles at the base and curving forward further up, with longer, patent, bulbous-based hairs on the veins above and below. The inflorescence is dense, leafy, much branched, and oval in shape. A course, robust plant to 1.5m or more, so far only found on waste ground and not yet in arable.

Regard this account as an interim one to enable us to get on with recording the alien *Erigeron* in Essex. There is disagreement as to whether *E. floribundus* is actually two taxa. And indeed, whether there are more taxa out there to be described. You can follow up this attempt at summarising them by referring to the new edition of Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles* edition 4 and Bob Leaney's account in BSBI News 135 p.7-17. And if you really want to be confused, Sell and Murrell *Flora of Great Britain & Ireland 2006* Vol 4 p 456-459.

KEN ADAMS

AUTUMN WEEK HUNT 2025

Ian Green	Moray, Aberdeenshire, Scotland	122
Dorothy Ross	Northumberland	94
Anthony and Rita Grainger	West Yorkshire	99
Barbara Allen	Ainsdale, Merseyside, South Lancashire	92
Julie Clarke	Lancashire	99
Nicki Mottram	Warwickshire	89
Gill Greef	North Worcestershire	91
Enid Barrie and Carol Hawkins	Wymondham, Norfolk	174
Gill Watkins	Peterborough	55
Barbara Mathews	Felixstowe, Suffolk	105
Gillian Skillicorn	Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk	18
Sue and Ken Southall	Suffolk	83
Anne and Dennis Kell	South Suffolk and North Essex	162
East Anglia Branch members: Stephen Clarkson, Sue and Ken Southall, Jane Lowe, Dennis and Anne Kell	Malden. Essex	88
John Swindells	Tower Hamlets, London	102
Priscilla Nobbs	Salfords, Surrey	71
Sue Poyser	Kent	92
Janice Reynolds	East Sussex	46
Helen Dignum	Emsworth, Havant, Hampshire South Coast	96
Susan Denness	Emsworth, Hampshire, South Coast	82
Jill Oakley	Hampshire	113
Nick Aston	Hampshire	246
Pauline and Richard Wilson	South Gloucestershire	83
Simon Leech	Taunton, Somerset	219
Rosemary FitzGerald	Bridgwater, Somerset	178
Jenny Irwin	Winkleigh, Devon	33
Alli Singleton	Jersey	81
Anne Haden	Jersey	66
Paul Green	County Wexford, Ireland	203

This season, the weather in most parts of the country seemed to be damp but very mild. 29 different plant lists were sent in, involving at least 34 named participants. They found a total of 561 species, an increase of ten compared to 2024.

The top five comprised Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*, Common Chickweed *Stellaria media* and Nipplewort *Lapsana communis*. This season there were 17 different species only listed by one person. Examples include Shepherd's Cress *Teesdalia nudicaulis* (Ian Green), Crown Vetch *Securigera varia* (Anthony and Rita Grainger) and Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* (John Swindells).

Ian Green managed to look for flowering plants each day of the Hunt, mostly in Moray, but also with a visit to Aberdeenshire. The plant that was hardest to check that was still in flower was Allseed *Linum radiola*, as Ian had to get down on his hands and knees, plus use his hand lens. It was well worth it though! He also found Shepherd's Cress *Teesdalia nudicaulis* and Flixweed *Descurainia sophia* at Findhorn.

Dorothy Ross was on holiday in Northumberland this year, which was new territory for plant-hunting. She was near the coast and found Sweet Alison *Lobularia maritima* and Sea Couch *Elymus athericus*. Dorothy was pleased to discover both Musk-mallow *Malva moschata* and Dwarf Mallow *M. neglecta*. She also found Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare*,

Dame's-violet *Hesperis matronalis* and Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*. Dorothy enjoys finding plants in urban areas, of which her favourite was Wormwood *Artemisia absinthium*, growing profusely at the edge of a car park in Alnwick.

Anthony and Rita Grainger, from West Yorkshire, have been very active this year, visiting Holy Island, the AGM in Taunton, Cheltenham and the Avon Gorge. They also had a week on the Gower Peninsula, partly with the Bradford Botany Group. The other new place that they went was Kirkstall Abbey, Kirkstall, Leeds, where they found three flowers on a Californian Honeysuckle *Lonicera involucrata*. Other good finds were Caucasian Campion *Silene schaffa* in Horsforth, Leeds, Dame's-violet *Hesperis matronalis* at Kirkstall Forge, and Purple Toadflax *Linaria purpurea* 'Canon Went', the pink form which seems to be abundant in Horsforth.

Barbara Allen attended the WFS



Autumn Hunt meeting in Ainsdale, where she was able to see a good number of species still in flower, including three new plants: Darwin's Barberry *Berberis darwinii*, growing out of the sea wall, Chicory *Cichorium intybus*, along the old railway line at Union Bank, St. Helens, and, the biggest surprise of all, Green Nightshade *Solanum nitidibaccatum*, in a fallow field in which Canary-grass *Phalaris canariensis* had been grown.

Julie Clarke included three different *Campanula* species in her list: Trailing Bellflower *Campanula poscharskyana*, Adria Bellflower *C. portenschlagiana* and Harebell *C.*



rotundifolia. She also found Borage *Borago officinalis* and Slender Borage *B. pygmaea*. One plant, Lawn-lobelia *Pratia angulata*, is present in her lawn as a persistent weed.

Nicki Mottram enjoys looking for plants as she cycles and stopped off to check some on a heap of sand by some playing fields. She was surprised to find some unusual species and checked them out at

home. Nicki was one of three people to include Green Nightshade *Solanum nitidibaccatum*, later confirmed by John Walton. Other good finds included Equal-leaved Knotgrass *Polygonum depressum*, Green Field-speedwell *Veronica agrestis* and Heath Speedwell *V. officinalis*.

Gill Greef found most of her plants on three long walks in North Worcestershire and some locally in Bristol. She was surprised to find Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana* growing in a suburban front lawn in Stourbridge. She also managed to find Garlic Mustard *Alliaria petiolata* with some flowers in central Bristol.

Enid Barrie and Carol Hawkins compiled their list together around Wymondham in Norfolk. They felt very fortunate that the mild weather had allowed plants to keep growing, though found it a challenge to seek out areas that the council had not mown, or the townsfolk had not 'tidied up' for their Wymondham in Bloom competition. Most of their plants were found around town, though Sheep's-bit *Jasione montana* was found at Winterton Dunes. They were short of time this year but pleasantly surprised by the flowers that they found locally such as Hare's-foot Clover *Trifolium arvense* and Thyme-leaved Sandwort *Arenaria serpyllifolia* ssp. *serpyllifolia*. They were the only team to list Common Fiddleneck *Amsinckia micrantha* and only two others found Thorn-apple *Datura stramonium* and Apple-of-Peru *Nicandra physalodes*.

Gill Watkins was able to complete her first Autumn Hunt spending a day

looking around the Peterborough area and was pleasantly surprised to find more plants in flower than she had expected. These included Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata* and Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*. Gill also included Musk-mallow *Malva moschata*, Dwarf Mallow *M. neglecta* and Common Mallow *M. sylvestris* in her list.

Barbara Mathews noted that plants in flower were hard to find this season after the very dry summer, followed by much rain in a short space of time. She was pleased to see Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus* at the edge of a footpath, 50cm tall and in flower. Barbara was the only one to list Common Cudweed *Filago germanica*, while few other people saw White Ramping-fumitory *Fumaria capreolata* and Cockspur *Echinochloa crus-galli*. White Campion *Silene latifolia* was another nice find, all within a short distance from home.

Gillian Skillicorn participated in the Autumn Hunt for the first time and



Bristly Oxtongue

looked around the roadside verges in Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. She found a variety of plants, including Rough Chervil *Chaerophyllum temulum*, Small-flowered Crane's-bill *Geranium pusillum*, Hedgerow Crane's-bill *G. pyrenaicum* and Bristly Oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*.

Sue and Ken Southall's favourite find was Water Chickweed *Stellaria aquatica*, in full bloom along the River Gipping path. They went out looking on three days and plants seen included Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare*, Field Madder *Sherardia arvensis*, Perennial Wall-rocket *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* and Sweet Violet *Viola odorata*.

Anne and Dennis Kell enjoy looking for plants and sent in their own list from walks that they did in South Suffolk and North Essex. Here they found a few different plants including Golden-samphire *Limbarda crithmoides*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and Sea Aster *Tripolium pannonicum*.

East Anglia Branch members **Anne and Dennis Kell, Stephen Clarkson and Ken and Sue Southall**, plus **Jane Lowe**, met for the Autumn Hunt in Maldon, Essex, on 26th October, seeing plants such as Bugloss *Lycopsis arvensis*, Borage, Chalk Knapweed *Centaurea debeauxii*, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* ssp. *carota*, Peppermint *Mentha x piperita*, Red Goosefoot *Oxybasis rubra* and Flixweed *Descurainia sophia*.

John Swindells completed his plant hunt around Tower Hamlets in London. He found two subspecies of Nipplewort, the annual *Lapsana*

communis ssp. *communis* and the usually perennial *Lapsana communis* ssp. *intermedia*. He found four different *Solanum* species, including Green Nightshade and Tall Nightshade *Solanum chenopodioides*, and three *Urtica* species, including Mediterranean



Nettle *Urtica membranacea* and Small Nettle *U. urens*.

Priscilla Nobbs followed her usual route on the roads around her house and found 71 species on a very cold day, compared to 73 last year. Twenty plants were different from last year and Priscilla was surprised to find flowers on Holly but no flowers on Ivy *Hedera helix*. She also included Annual Wall-rocket *Diplotaxis muralis*, Buck's-horn Plantain *Plantago coronopus* and

Tufted Vetch *Vicia cracca* in her list.

Sue Poyser did several local walks around urban areas near Rochester, Kent. She noticed that most of the grass species had dried up after the hot, dry summer, but did find Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* looking fresh in a crack between a wall and pavement. She also saw Pencilled Crane's-bill *Geranium versicolor* growing on some rough ground in the local cemetery.

Janice Reynolds looked for plants around her local area in East Sussex, which included shops and houses in Seaford and regular walks in Bishopstone. She also explored the local car parks and riverbanks and commented that the hot dry summer had dried everything up. She saw Annual Wall-rocket in Bishopstone and found Cape Daisy *Osteospermum jucundum* and Spanish Broom *Spartium junceum* in Seaford.

Helen Dignum went out for three days. Her main hunt was an extremely wet day in Emsworth with **Jill Oakley** and **Sue Denness**, where she found Rock Samphire *Crithmum maritimum* on a bank above the harbour. However, she also found a few more species in the town car park and on pavements in Petworth, including Wall Lettuce *Mycelis muralis*, and while walking on the South Downs, where she found Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* by footpaths on the chalk slopes.

Susan Denness saw more than 70 flowering plants in Emsworth, with

additional species seen around Storrington, Sussex. These included



Field Pansy

Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor*, Ivy-leaved Toadflax *Cymbalaria muralis* and Gorse *Ulex europaeus*.

Jill Oakley was with **Helen Dignum** and **Sue Denness** on a very wet Wednesday, hunting for plants in flower in Emsworth, where she saw Rock Samphire and Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*. Jill also walked around her home area in Petersfield, Hampshire, and included Yellow-flowered Strawberry *Potentilla indica*, Maidenhair Spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes* and Shaggy-soldier *Galinosa quadriradiata* in her list.

Nick Aston found all his plants in Hampshire. He took the dogs out to a different site and habitat each day, rain permitting, and managed to see

246 species altogether. The star plant of the week was Nottingham Catchfly *Silene nutans*, in pristine flower and looking very fresh, obviously enjoying another bout of growth and flowering. The Hampshire coast seems to be particularly good for late-flowering plants, including Snow-in-summer *Cerastium tomentosum*, Pale Toadflax *Linaria repens*, Hare's-foot Clover *Trifolium arvense*, Golden-



Rock Samphire

samphire and a big population of flowering Eastern Rocket *Sisymbrium orientale*. The chalk downs, too, were very good this year; Magdalene Hill, near Winchester, had a lot of Common Rock-rose and Clustered Bellflower in flower, which was a lovely surprise. He was also pleased to see Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acris* at different sites during the week.

Pauline and Richard Wilson

struggled to find plants in flower around their village of Old Sodbury and local town of Chipping Sodbury, South Gloucestershire, and just over the border into Wiltshire. Highlights included Shaggy-soldier, which was rampant in a neglected vegetable garden. Pauline commented that she had never seen so much. Surprise finds included Caper Spurge *Euphorbia lathyris*, Ground-elder *Aegopodium podagraria* and Blue Fleabane, which was growing on quarry waste, where, a month before, the plants had died off, with the new plants later growing up and flowering. Pauline thought that it might have been the first time she had recorded it.

Simon Leach was able to join the Somerset Rare Plants Group for the day hunt at Taunton. He also looked for plants whilst dog walking within four miles of Taunton town centre. Simon saw Hawkweed Oxtongue *Picris hieracioides* ssp. *villarsii* and Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* ssp. *carpatica* still with flowers, both subspecies previously confirmed by BSBI referees. Coastal flowers include Sea Campion *Silene uniflora* and Yellow Horned-poppy *Glaucium flavum*. Simon's last species for the week was Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* in the rain on a roundabout on the A303 at Ilminster.

Ro FitzGerald had a wonderful list of different plants. She observed that Hairy Rocket *Erucastrum gallicum* was probably the top rarity of the bird seed aliens this year and is waiting to hear the status of the record as it has been quite absent from Somerset since the 1990s. She also recorded

Creeping Zinnia *Sanvitalia procumbens*, a small, yellow, daisy-like bedding-plant which has been coming up in the car park and pavement crevices in Watchet. Ro was pleased to find Meadow Barley *Hordeum secalinum* in coastal grassland, while Crimson Clover *Trifolium incarnatum* ssp. *incarnatum* and Fodder Vetch *Vicia villosa* are usually present and seem to be establishing well in local fields which have been taken out of intensive arable cultivation and now have established 'pollinator' mixes.

Jenny Irwin spent a day looking around Winkleigh, Devon, and was the only person to list Ragweed *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*. This is a neophyte-casual which can occur on waste ground and tips from several sources, including birdseed and oilseed. Jenny also saw Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and was one of two people to find Welsh Poppy *Papaver cambricum*.

Alli Singleton spent her holiday in Portsmouth and took the opportunity to do a plant hunt on the first two days in the small village of Singleton, Sussex, before moving on to Rottingdean, also in Sussex. Here, Alli was delighted to find Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*, White Dead-nettle *Lamium album* and Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* in flower, commenting that these are either very scarce or non-existent on Jersey.

Anne Haden had an interesting hunt to find these lovely plants in flower: Four-leaved Allseed *Polycarpon*

tetraphyllum, Bog Stichwort *Stellaria alsine* and Hairy Finger-grass *Digitaria sanguinalis*. She was also



Weasel's-snout

pleased to include a picture of Weasel's-snout *Misopates orontium* in flower. Anne also listed Alderney

Crane's-bill *Geranium herreræ* and mentioned Blue Lawn-lobelia *Pratia pedunculata*, which had two flowers in a huge patch in her lawn on Jersey.

Paul Green found most of his plants within 6km of his house in Ballycullane. He also went for longer walks on sunny days, exploring the areas around Tintern Abbey and Wellingtonbridge. He was pleased to see Plicate Sweet-grass *Glyceria notata* at a new site, a plant he does not often see. Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua* was also lovely to see in large numbers, flowering down the side of a swede field, as was Small-flowered Buttercup *Ranunculus parviflorus*, in flower at a disused station at Wellingtonbridge and at another site, where Paul only found the rosettes.

JACKIE HARDY

JERSEY 13th to 16th MAY

Day 1: On Tuesday morning we were warmly welcomed to the island by the organisers, Alli Singleton, Anne Haden and Lyn Jones. In addition, we were joined by two other local botanists, Tina Hull and Mary de Carteret.

Our first objective was the 'Orchid Fields', an area of wetlands inland from the coast road, owned and managed by the National Trust for Jersey. We were captivated en route by patches of Western Clover *Trifolium occidentale* and Small Melilot *Melilotus indicus* on a verge which was also covered with Hare's-

tail *Lagurus ovatus*.

Once across the road and onto the fields we found patches of Rough Star-thistle *Centaurea aspera*, unfortunately only in bud.

The main attraction of the fields was the thousands of Loose-flowered Orchids *Anacamptis laxiflora*. Mixed in among those were Southern Marsh -orchids *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and several larger hybrid orchids. The Common Spotted-orchids *D. fuchsii* and Pyramidal Orchids *A. pyramidalis* were not yet in flower.



Loose-flowered Orchid

Two forget-me-nots added splashes of blue, Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor* and Tufted Forget-me-not *M. laxa*. Some time was spent looking at an eyebright which Chris Metherell, the BSBI referee for eyebrights and a member of the party, identified as Western Eyebright

Euphrasia tetraquetra. One of the prettiest plants was the delicate Narrow-fruited Water-cress *Nasturtium microphyllum*, which was found with both flowers and fruits. Slender Marsh-bedstraw *Galium constrictum* and Rough Dog's-tail *Cynosurus echinatus* rounded off the special plants on this site. There were of course many other species.

Looking across the fields, one was struck by a black haze, and indeed the site is called Le Noir Pré (Black Field).

Later in the day we moved to Le Carrère to look at sand dune species. The area was strewn with Wild Asparagus *Asparagus prostratus*. We also found Small Hare's-ear *Bupleurum baldense*, Nottingham Catchfly *Silene nutans* and Tall Nightshade *Solanum chenopodioides*. We were lucky enough to find one Dwarf Pansy *Viola kitaibeliana*, still in flower, such a small and entrancing plant.

FAY BANKS

Day 2: Over 20 of us met at the ruins of Grosnez Castle, on a sunny cliff top on the north coast - a breezy and exposed site with many plants clearly visible. Yellow was the dominant colour, with extensive Broom *Cytisus scoparius* and Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa* in abundance. We saw a few specimens of Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, Sheep's-bit *Jasione montana* and Buck's-horn Plantain *Plantago coronopus*, mostly on a nearby wall. Mouse-ear-hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum* and

Compact Brome *Anisantha madritensis* were also seen.

A short descent past a dried-up pond gave us the leaves of Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and here there was a discussion about a possible Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* hybrid or subspecies. On a little ridge nearby was Spotted Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris maculata*. Disappointingly, this was not yet fully in flower. At this point, there was a search for Huon's Fescue *Festuca*

huonii and John Poland briefed us about its characteristics in relation to Sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*.

At midday, a short drive took us to Plémont, famous for its two giant wicker puffins on the cliff top, where some of us posed for photographs. The primary objective here was the rare Broad-leaved Sea-lavender *Limonium auriculae-ursifolium*. This involved a steep descent on a dirt path through brambles, nettles and bracken, past some ruined fortified buildings, so familiar around Jersey, and a narrow cleft, from where we glimpsed an attractive beach. This took us to a rocky inlet, on the far side of which were a few Broad-leaved Sea-lavender plants on the cliff face. With binoculars and good instructions, it was possible to spot the broad leaves, but unfortunately no flowers. A beautiful location with enticing rock pools just below.

Our next venue was the Jersey Pearl Café, or at least the nearby car park as everybody had their own lunch, which was enjoyed under the shade of some large conifers. Just outside this area, we found a patch of the attractive, purple-flowered Tassel Hyacinth *Muscari comosum*, and then Bur Chervil *Anthriscus caucalis*. Nearby, a fungus which initially looked like a puffball turned out to be a False Earthstar. The resemblance to a star becomes apparent when the fungus is mature and the outer layer splits open in a star-like manner.

A short drive then took us to La Saline, where we were shown the rare Longleaf *Falcaria vulgaris*. Surprisingly, this is a member of the



Photo: Catherine and Michael Pettipher

Apiaceae with uncharacteristic, long, strap-like leaves, which have wonderful veined patterning when held up to the light. Nearby there was a large Cotton Thistle *Onopordum acanthium* rosette and the large, bright flowers of Milk Thistles *Silybum marianum* towered over other vegetation.

The next brief stop was at the Sands car park in St. Ouen's Bay. Just south of the car park was an area smothered with Sea Purslane *Atriplex portulacoides* leaves, interspersed with a little Alderney Sea-lavender *Limonium normannicum*, Curved Hard-grass *Parapholis incurva* and Sea Bindweed *Calystegia soldanella*.

The penultimate site was towards La Corbière Lighthouse, near a slipway at Le Grouet. Initially, a rare lichen *Roccella fusiformis* was found on a rock face. Then after clambering over a few boulders, we reached a few specimens of Shore Dock *Rumex rupestris*, leaves only.

Our final search of the day was more demanding than expected, as we got lost! After a phone call to Alli, we

were put back on the right track to a peninsula near St. Aubin, where we took a short walk to find the special Jersey Forget-me-not *Myosotis sicula*. Conveniently, our diversion fitted in well with the staggered viewing of the plants, as we were the last to reach this rather obscure location. This was a fitting finale for

the day, rounded off later that evening by an entertaining talk from Chris and Hazel Metherill on carnivorous plants. Our thanks to the organisers, Alli, Anne and Lyn for an excellent jam-packed day!

CATHERINE AND MICHAEL
PETTIPHER

Day 3: Today saw us forsake the more gentle charms of Jersey for the rugged island of Sark. For some reason not immediately apparent to the group, we were made to check in 90 minutes early for the ferry to get us there, though this did at least give us plenty of time to get to know each other better and patronise the shop for coffee and cake – the latter possibly the whole point of the exercise?

Virtually surrounded by high, rocky cliffs, Sark presents a much more forbidding approach than the other Channel Islands, the village being situated on a plateau in the centre of Big Sark, the main part of the island. We commenced the day's botanising with a Channel Islands endemic, Sark Sea-lavender *Limonium serquense*. Splitters Sell and Murrell distinguish it with full species status, while lumpers Stace includes it under his *Limonium binervosum* ssp. *sarniense* (although you might think that the first three letters indicate 'native to Sark', *sarniense* actually refers to Guernsey, once known by the Romans as Sarnia). It pains me to say it, but I think that the majority of the group found this sea-lavender as impenetrable as most other species/subspecies in the genus:

'they all look the same'. Nearby, we found a small stand of Compact Brome *Anisantha madritensis*, while up the hill, lurking in tall vegetation by the side of the road, Anne Haden showed us a small patch of Greater Hard-fern *Blechnum cordatum*. Also present was the local elm taxon, Guernsey Elm *Ulmus x hollandica* var. *insularum*, identified as such by John Poland.

At the top of the hill, the group split, with a small sub-set of us setting out in search of the fabled Narrow-leaved Cudweed *Logfia gallica*. This archaeophyte annual, never common, was also once found as an arable weed in south-east England but died out there, and has since defied various attempts to re-introduce it. However, it has managed to persist on the floor of a small, disused quarry in the southern part of Sark, not far from the dramatic La Coupée isthmus, which divides the island virtually into two. When my friend David Albon and I went there in 2016, we found one rather weedy specimen. Since then, it has been given a helping hand, with seed collected at the site and then scattered, in the hope of bolstering the population. However, this time it was not to be; the long, hot spring



Narrow-leaved Cudweed

and summer had seemingly taken their toll. (This picture was taken at a different location). As usual, there were lookalikes, with gorse seedlings initially filling us with false hope.

However, our long trudge had not been entirely in vain; on trackside rocks close to La Coupée, we found an unusual subspecies of Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* ssp. *corbierei*, found only on the Channel Islands and in Cornwall and Dorset. Nearby, in cliff-top grassland, we also found a few patches Blue Fescue *Festuca longifolia*, confirmed by Mr Poland, and much to Anne's delight

Day 4: We met at Devil's Hole and walked north-east through woodland out onto the cliff tops. In the woodland we found the rare, native subspecies of Italian Lords-and-Ladies *Arum italicum* ssp. *neglectum*, while further along was Borrer's Male-fern *Dryopteris affinis* ssp. *borreri*

as it hadn't been seen on Sark for quite a while.

A late-in-the-day wander around the village threw up a couple of plants that came into the 'I'm not sure whether that was planted or not' category: Purple-flowered *Cotoneaster atropurpureus*, on a wall opposite the church, and Blue Rock-bindweed *Convolvulus sabatius*, also on a wall on the way back down towards the harbour. Anne later confirmed that the *Cotoneaster* was *bona fide* and had been confirmed by the BSBI *cotoneaster* referee, Jeanette Fryer.

As we made our way back down the hill towards the ferry, we found some ferns on a wall, with some seemingly intermediate between Black Spleenwort *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum* and Lanceolate Spleenwort *A. onopteris*, so-called *A. x sarniense*. It is known to be present on the Channel Islands but none of us had the gall to declare it to be thus. With there being no shop at the Sark end, we had only a short wait for the ferry to take us back to Jersey, after what everyone agreed had been a jolly good day's botanising.

STEVE LITTLE

(syn. *Dryopteris borreii*).

On a wooded slope was a plant of the alien Japanese Shield-fern *Polystichum polyblepharum*, how it came to be growing there is a mystery but it is a striking plant, forming a 'shuttlecock'. The

woodland was home to many ferns. Out of the woodland, passing the Mourier Valley reservoir, we searched on the hillside for Cornish Moneywort *Sibthorpia europaea*. At first, it appeared to have been obliterated by encroaching bracken, but some careful searching revealed patches nestling in damp hollows.

We then walked back up the valley and out on to the clifftop grassland, closely nibbled by rabbits. As well as being nibbled, the plants were rather dry and shrivelled. However, close examination revealed Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus*, Sand Spurrey *Spergularia rubra* and Squirreltail Fescue *Vulpia bromoides*.

Today was a day for travelling, so from here we drove to the Jersey War Tunnels. On the walls above the car park, we found Jersey Fern *Anogramma leptophylla*. This is a small, delicate, yellowish and very attractive fern. Alongside it was Lanceolate Spleenwort *Asplenium obovatum*, one of the parents of the hybrid *Asplenium* that we had searched for the day before on Sark.

Another drive took us over to Longbeach, on the Bay of Grouville. After lunch, we headed towards the

Royal Jersey Golf Course and onto the coastal dunes, on the way passing clumps of German-ivy *Delairea odorata*. The dunes were again very dry but some hands-and-knees botanising revealed Rough Clover *Trifolium scabrum* and Subterranean Clover *T.*

subterraneum. The grasses were rather brown but still allowed us to identify a subspecies of Soft Brome *Bromus hordeaceus* ssp. *thominei* and Crested Hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha*. Sand Catchfly *Silene conica* was no longer in flower but several plants with seed-heads were identified.

Further along the dunes, while taking care not to be hit by flying golf balls, we found further gems: Bastard-toadflax *Thesium humifusum* and two varieties of Small-flowered Catchfly *S. gallica*, a white/pink one and the red-blotched one, var. *quinquevulnera*. There were also several Jersey Thrift *Armeria arenaria* plants. This flowers later than the usual Thrift *A. maritima*, so the plants that we saw were only in bud.

The day concluded with a further walk along the sea wall, passing Sea-heath *Frankenia laevis* along the way and ending at the Jones' Jersey

residence, where we were kindly hosted by Mandy and Lyn to a barbecue, superbly rounding off four wonderful days of botanising. Thanks to all the Jersey botanists for giving us their time and expertise.

FAY BANKS

Photo: Fay Banks



**Memories of WFS meetings ten years ago.
Guernsey June 2016 (top) and Boxhill, Surrey, September 2016.**



THURSLEY COMMON, SURREY, 24th JULY

When I heard that Jane Lowe was leading a field meeting at Thursley Common, it was enough to convince me to brave the improvement works at the M25/A3 Wisley Interchange (the busiest junction on the M25), which started in 2022 and seem now to have been going on for ever and a day (although by the time that you are reading this they will be finished). I was very glad that I did, as, although I have been to Thursley several times before, it is always rewarding to visit a site such as this with a group, as you often see things that you would have missed had you been on your own, and for me this was indeed the case.

Thursley Common is a National Nature Reserve, a designated Ramsar wetland (a wetland of international importance) and is also part of a larger Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is an area of around 350 hectares, comprising open, dry heathland, with peat bog, ponds, boggy pools and ditches, and both pine and deciduous woodland. It is one of the largest remaining fragments of heathland in Surrey and is managed by Natural England, with support from the Friends of Thursley Common. There are sandy tracks through the woodland and dry heath and over 1.3 km of boardwalks through the boggy areas. Tragically, in 2020 there was a devastating fire, which affected around a third of the reserve and destroyed the boardwalks. Thanks to a huge community fundraising effort the boardwalks were reopened in April 2023.

As usual, Jane had done meticulous advance planning and our group of 15 set off eagerly from the village car park, keen to see what heathland species this special site had to offer.

Before long, we were able to compare the differences between Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Dwarf



Gorse *U. minor*. Jane told us that there was also Western Gorse *U. gallii* in flower. I was very excited about this, but although the rest of the group saw it at some point during the visit, I must have been looking the other way or been lagging behind, because I somehow managed to miss it! Never mind - something to look for on a return trip. Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* are found on the drier areas of heath and Cross-leaved Heath *E. tetralix* in the damper areas

and we saw all three of these. Although it was a bit past its best, we saw plenty of Heath Rush *Juncus squarrosus*.

The first notable species that we found was Small Cudweed *Logfia minima*, which was spotted by a sharp-eyed member of the group growing in typical fashion alongside the heathland track. Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum* was then found nearby, parasitising some Dwarf Gorse, and on the disturbed ground of the track was some Sand Spurrey *Spergularia rubra*. Also seen was Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*.

One of the special species that we had come to see, White Beak-sedge



Rhynchospora alba, did not disappoint, with extensive tight clumps on view in the bog. Those of



us with sharp eyes and/or binoculars spotted a nice Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis* out in the bog and we found Marsh St. John's-wort *Hypericum elodes* around the edge of a dried-up pool. After taking a look at some Bulbous Rush *J. bulbosus* and Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius* it was then on to find another of our target plants, Lesser Bladderwort *Utricularia minor*. This fascinating carnivorous plant was flowering away very nicely in a ditch, the little yellow flowers bobbing on thin stalks above the water. Bladderworts produce small, flask-shaped bladders along their underwater stems and when a tiny aquatic creature touches one of these bladders, a little door opens and the insect is sucked into the bladder, trapped there and digested!

By this time, we were all ready for lunch and Jane had cleverly managed to find a spot where nearly all of the group were able to sit together on a fallen tree trunk.

After lunch it was off to find two more special carnivorous plants on the edge of the bog pools, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and



Oblong-leaved Sundew *D. intermedia*. Both of these trap unwary

insects on their sticky tentacles, then produce digestive enzymes to consume them, allowing them to flourish in the nutrient-poor environment of the bog. Although the majority of the Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, had finished flowering, one plant had kindly hung on for us! We also managed to find a couple of flowers on a lousewort and, after some discussion, we were able to confirm that it was Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*.

It was then on to find our final special plant, the nationally scarce Marsh



Clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata*, plus a bonus Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*.

Of course, although botany was our main focus, we were not oblivious to other life forms. On the way back to



the car park we inspected some oaks and found a variety of galls. We had been keeping our eyes open for Wall butterflies, and on the way back to the car park we were finally rewarded with one, which was so intrigued by us that it even settled briefly on the jacket of one of our group! A few of us then finished off what had been a very successful day's botanising with a celebratory drink in the pub before setting off for home! Thank you Jane for a most enjoyable day.

MOIRA O'DONNELL

Photos in this report are by Moira Smith (except for the group picture).

AUTUMN HUNT, AINSDALE-ON-SEA, SEFTON COAST, MERSEYSIDE, 25th OCTOBER

Eleven members braved the cold wind and met in a lay-by on Westminster Drive. We first looked at plants within the closely-mown lawn in front of Shoreside Primary School, finding Common Stork's-bill *Erodium*



cicutarium in flower. Crossing Kenilworth Road to some sand dunes, there were Hedgerow Crane's-bill *Geranium pyrenaicum*, Intermediate Evening-primrose



Oenothera x fallax, Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., to name a few in flower. However, this area also gave me Lavender-cotton *Santolina chamaecyparissus*, a first, but not in flower. Crossing back over the main road, we followed Westminster Drive, exploring all the vegetated areas and finding both *Galinsoga* species, Shaggy-soldier *G. quadriradiata* and Gallant-soldier *G. parviflora*, along the



roadside. Eventually, an alley led us to more sand dunes behind the housing estate. Here we found both Musk Stork's-bill *E. moschatum* and Sticky Stork's-bill *E. aethiopicum*, which we compared with Common Stork's-bill. Branching off the path, we spied Garden Lavender *Lavandula angustifolia* growing in the gutter. By the path was a Lilac *Syringa vulgaris* bush with several flowers on it. I don't think I have ever had Lilac on my Autumn Hunt before.

We had lunch by the now long-closed Sands Hotel, trying to avoid the wind. Then, looking round the car park, we found two Michaelmas-daisies, Late *Symphyotrichum x versicolor* and Narrow-leaved *S. lanceolatum*. Another non-flowering plant of interest was Slender Sweet-flag *Acorus gramineus* at the edge of Sands Lake.

We were astonished to see a Wall butterfly putting in an appearance in a sheltered spot on this cold, very windy day. Having passed the old Toad Hall, with its artwork of green lizard murals, we found White

Campion *Silene latifolia* and a single flower on a Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. This is where we terminated the walk, with some people continuing on through the dunes finding even more plants in flower, while the rest of us walked back along the road.

It was a most successful and enjoyable day and I would like to thank, on behalf of everyone, our leaders, Julie Clarke and Sheila Wynn, for a most pleasant outing.

BARBARA ALLEN

AUTUMN ONE DAY HUNT, MALDON, ESSEX, 26th OCTOBER

Six of us gathered on a beautiful autumnal morning in the centre of Maldon to see how many plants we could find still in flower. As has become the pattern for the East Anglian Branch Hunts, we set off from the venue of our Spring Hunt and covered much the same ground, starting with the usual trawl of the car park, followed by the local streets. Maldon is at the junction between the Chelmer and Blackwater Canal and the tidal River Blackwater, so we had the advantage of both a freshwater and saline environment. Sadly, however, try as we might, we didn't find much still in bloom on the saltmarsh, despite



Common Cord-grass

analysing a number of glasswort *Salicornia* shoots. Our only find here was Common Cord-grass *Spartina anglica*. By far and away the most profitable habitat were the road gutters and unkempt verges, with several garden escapes, such as Druce's Crane's-bill *Geranium x oxonianum* and Hollyhock *Alcea rosea*, as well as ruderals.

Amazingly, we found a Cherry Plum *Prunus cerasifera* with a few flowers. Spring had come early! In total we found 88 different species in flower, nearly double our tally from the Spring Hunt.

ANNE KELL

For the Diary: *Plantago major* ssp. *rosularis*

In relation to current WFS interest in plants self-seeding to boost the total number of UK wild flowers countable for the Diary, may I introduce a keen self-seeder? *Plantago major* has an exciting subspecies, ssp. *rosularis*, usually known by its cultivar name '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 in Canterbury.

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

medicinal plant and features in the Royal College of Physicians' 2018 College Herbal. The accompanying botanical painting, exhibited at an RHS show, includes a section through the flower spike, showing how leafy bracts subtend 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 spied 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* ssp. *rosularis*? Thanks to its habit of self-seeding, it could contribute usefully to Diary totals. Has any WFS member recorded it?

HELEN AYERS

Plantain has long been valued as a



Plantago major ssp. *rosularis*
Photos and image by Helen Ayers

Message form a proud member of WFS

To say that we were privileged to enjoy the company of a group of WFS members at Chatsworth in June



would be an understatement! It was only our second meeting but boy! What incredible memories we have.

The purpose of the visit was to help ascertain the number of wild flower species growing in various areas of the garden in order to provide baseline data for future surveys.

Our day commenced at 10.00am with a wonderful welcome from Steve Porter, Head Gardener at Chatsworth. He warmly invited the group to partake of delicious tea, coffee and biscuits as he gave us an introduction to/overview of life at Chatsworth, with some history thrown in about various generations of the owners, the Cavendish family.

Suitably refreshed, we headed off on our mission and in my hard-to-suppress excitement (child in a sweetshop sort of image!), I wanted to run wild amongst the different species and look at everything all at

once (I'm a newcomer to this incredible world!).

Needless to say, the group reined me in and taught me the discipline of careful observation. My particular thanks go to Sue Southall for her endless supply of patience when I wanted to run off and find more species, even though I had not closely examined the first lot! Sue toiled away and imparted some essential information as to diagnostic features of particular species and got me thinking about them before drawing conclusions as to what the plant was. As first-time students on the BSBI course, we are taught this but somehow, when I am let loose on the world, I want to run amok! Which, of course, is really not helpful when you have a very specific job to do!

As the morning rolled on and blessed with excellent weather, the group tirelessly examined various areas of this huge garden, and we finished the day having recorded over 160 different species of wild flowers happily enjoying their lives on this colossal estate.

It's one day in my life which I won't forget and my most sincere thanks go to the WFS for organising such excellent field days - it really means a lot to a mere beginner to be in the company of such helpful and kind experts.

NOELIN and SIMON MALLATRATT

The following was received in response to a Wild Flower Society grant to Tess Grigor, to study orchids on Uist, Scotland.

Irish Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* population survey by a lochan on Benbecula, Outer Hebrides: Tess Grigor

Uist, the region in the Outer Hebrides that includes North Uist, South Uist and Benbecula, is home to large swathes of machair, a habitat unique to the western coasts of Scotland and Ireland. It lies between beaches and boggy peatland and forms when the prevailing strong westerly winds blow seashell fragments onto the grassy dunes, creating calcareous soils. These, in combination with the traditional, low-impact farming practice of crofting, provide the perfect environment for a rich variety of wildflower species to grow, in turn attracting rare and vulnerable insect populations.

Uist also hosts a sprawling landscape of peat bogs, home to the rare Irish Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* orchid. I was interested in comparing the pollination mechanisms of rare orchids in the machair, particularly that of the Common Spotted-orchid subspecies *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* ssp. *hebridensis* and Narrow-leaved Marsh-orchid variant *Dactylorhiza francis-drucei* var. *ebudensis* (syn. *D. traunsteineroides* ssp. *francis-drucei* var. *ebudensis*), which grow in drier areas, to that of Irish Lady's-tresses, which grows in wetter areas.

The machair's vast array of wildflowers makes it one of the last

remaining habitats for extremely rare bumblebee species. Notably, these include the Moss Carder Bumblebee and the Great Yellow Bumblebee. The pollination of Irish Lady's-tresses in the UK is something of a mystery, but they are thought to be pollinated by medium- and long-tongued bumblebees. I was interested in studying populations of these plants with the aim of identifying a link between these rare organisms. I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of their interactions, as this would assist greatly in conservation efforts for both orchid and bumblebees.

I had planned a three-month data collection period to research orchids with vastly different flowering times and monitor the insect species found visiting these flowers. Unfortunately, this never came to fruition due to unforeseen personal circumstances, and I was only able to arrive on Benbecula in late July. This gave me only three weeks to find populations of the extremely scarce Irish Lady's-tresses and meant I had missed the flowering times of the other key orchids.

With a stretched team covering four projects and only two drivers, finding populations of these orchids proved rather difficult. However, bumblebees

were found in abundance, and I was able to conduct some surveys of machair flowers and the bumblebees found there. To my delight, we found two Great Yellow Bumblebees, the rarest bumblebee species in the UK! We also found many Moss Carder Bumblebees, a sizeable number of which were the island variant, with a vibrant red thorax (see photo below).

After some gorgeous sunny days of bumblebee surveying and orchid hunting, it was only a matter of time before the weather turned. This was Uist after all. Storm Floris came charging through on 4th August, bringing winds of 90mph and destroying one of our tents. Unfortunately, this halted fieldwork for another few days until the winds had died down and it was safe to work again.

The delay caused me to miss the flowering of the final orchid, Irish Lady's-tresses (see picture below). With it being famously difficult to track down, impossible to predict flowering times year to year and no information on sightings on Benbecula, I had almost given up hope. However, one speculative trip out to Loch Mor on a slightly less windy day, and we had found them ! Tiny, pale, green-white

shoots, just poking out of the ground and hiding among grasses along the shoreline. All had gone to seed, sadly, but I spent the remaining week of the trip recording all the orchids found along the shore. We found 16 in total, despite only being able to survey around half of the loch. Having recorded the orchids' height, number of flower heads, distance from the water and pH of the soil, we concluded that the latter two factors had no effect on the former two.

Although the project did not work out as planned, I was thrilled to connect with local people and learn from them. A local informed me that the site that I had surveyed had previously hosted hundreds of Irish Lady's-tresses, but that numbers had declined in recent years. We organised multiple bumblebee safaris, where we went out into the machair, informed people about the importance of both wildflower and bumblebee conservation, helped identify wildflowers and caught bumblebees in pots to give people a closer look. I hope to conduct future orchid surveys and can't thank the Wild Flower Society enough for their help in providing a grant towards this project.



Moss Carder
Bumblebees
and
Irish Lady's
Tresses.

Photos by
Tess Grigor



WINTER HUNT, IPSWICH 3rd JANUARY.



Seven of us braved the extreme cold for our very early winter hunt in Ipswich. We met by the docks in Central Ipswich. With more eyes to scour the ground we were successful in finding 50 different species in flower. Many were those you might have expected to be braving the cold winter weather and are our common species such as Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinalis*, Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris* and Shepherd's Purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*. However,



we did find some more unusual plants with Nettle-leaved Goosefoot *Chenopodium murale* and Eastern Rocket *Sisymbrium*



orientale now growing in the cracks between the paving around Ipswich docks (when they don't spray it off!). The urban heat island effect allowed plants like Shaggy Soldier *Galinsoga quadriradiata*, which is very susceptible to frost, to continue to flower in the centre of town. We

also found some plants that you would usually consider to be spring flowering to be raising their heads earlier than expected including Springbeauty *Claytonia perfoliata*, Common Whitlowgrass *Erophila verna* and Thale Cress *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

ANNE KELL

Identification quiz provided by WFS member Gareth Bursnall.



Identify the plant and its type of fruit; Berry, Drupe, Achne, Acorn-Nut, Seed surrounded by aril or Double samara winged fruit.





Just for fun.



Continued





The Catherine 'Kit' Rob Display

In the last issue of our Wild Flower Magazine, Winter 2026 #534, members were invited by Anna Robson, Associate Collections Curator for Biology, to visit the Yorkshire Museum foyer where Anna has curated a small-case exhibit of the Life and Work of Catherine 'Kit' Rob, a remarkable Yorkshire botanist; featuring some of her Herbarium collection and her WFS Field Diary.

Kit became a WFS member at 17, and was a Branch Secretary for 52 years - retiring from the role in 1971. She was also involved with, and supported the work of the Yorkshire Naturalists, YWT, and BSBI. Kit helped to choose the English names to be used in *The Pocket Guide to Wild Flowers*, some of which thereafter were used in the BSBI's *English Names of Wild Flowers* (1974), which also she co-authored.

On Jan 27th 2026, Anna hosted a meeting of myself and several other WFS members from Yorkshire & Lancashire at the Yorkshire Museum. That day turned out to be very wet and blustery one, but nevertheless, we got there and thoroughly enjoyed looking at the items in the case. We shared information from past WFS magazines about Kit, and Anna described how she had prepared to mount the display from various archived sources.

During our visit, Judith Cox, our Branch Secretary for Yorkshire explained how the Members' Diaries

are kept and checked now. Sheila Wynn and Robin Blades gave Anna some references to articles published in our magazine that mentioned the 'Kit Rob Memorial Gate', which was dedicated on Saturday, 18th November 1978, may still be there at Ashberry, in North Yorkshire, VC 62. [The plaque on the gates reads "This gate was erected by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union and the Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust in grateful memory of CATHERINE MURIEL ROB, F.L.S. 1906 - 1975 who knew and loved Ashberry throughout her life and as an outstanding botanist did so much to create the nature reserve and to further the interests of both organisations".]

Anna is working on conservation of the herbarium in the museum's biology collection, and so hopefully, in the future, more of Catherine Muriel Rob's specimens will feature in a larger exhibition. Kit's diary (which is on loan for the exhibition) and other personal correspondence/information are stored at Borthwick Institute for Archives. <https://www.york.ac.uk/borthwick/>

If any members are visiting York before the 31st May, please do pop in and see this tribute to Catherine Rob. (The museum is in York Museum Gardens and foyer is free to enter, open 10am-5pm Tuesday to Sunday.)

If you wish to contact Anna, her email is anna.robson@ymt.org.uk

Our thanks go to Anna for preparing this fascinating glimpse into the life of a Past Stalwart of the Wild Flower Society and for making us so very welcome,

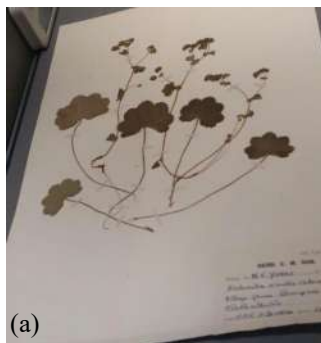
CAROL ARMSTRONG



An open page in Kit's Wild Flower Society Diary.



The wallpaper for the case has been created by reproducing drawings of wild flowers found in Kit's diary.



Botanical Specimen Vouchers collected by Kit from (a) Brompton, nr Northallerton (*Alchemilla*) and (b) from Catton Hall, nr. Thirsk, Yorkshire (*Epilobium*).

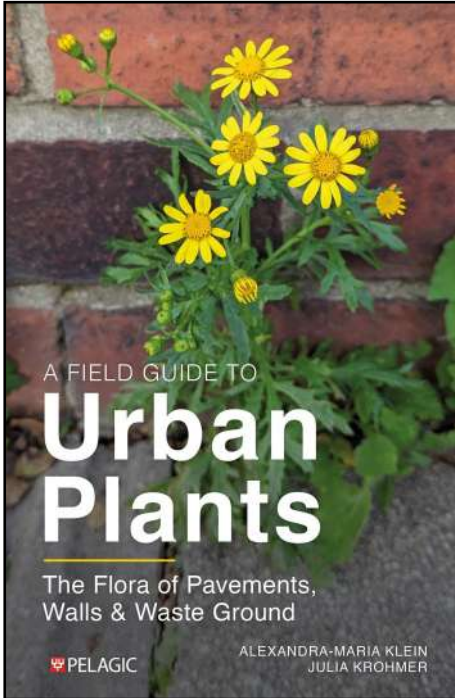
All pictures by Andrew Armstrong



The WFS members visiting The Catherine "Kit" Rob Display at the Yorkshire Museum on 27/1/26 with Anna Robson (far right) Associate Collections Curator for Biology.

BOOK REVIEWS

Urban Plants: Trevor Dines:
Bloomsbury British Wildlife
Collection #15 (2025): ISBN: 978-1-
3994-0749-6 (Hardback) and
E-book available: Publisher's price
£24.



In spite of the shared title these are two very different books, though both have been inspired by the growing awareness of a formerly ignored, neglected or resented group of plants - those which can survive and even thrive in the extraordinarily hostile environment of towns and cities. I'm sure that I share this interest with many members - pouncing on occasional pavement weeds which have seeded from hanging-baskets or window-boxes gives me rare

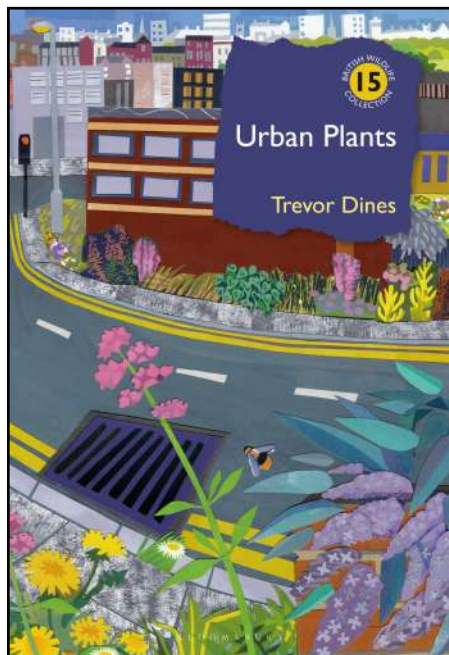
chances to add to my Parnassus diary, now that I've seen most of the available natives within reach of home! However, Trevor Dines' magnificent book takes the subject way further than the curiosities of garden-escapes. The whole subject is actually tied up with the future survival of Homo sapiens and is far more important than me being excited by a clump of Mexican Creeping-zinnia *Sanvitalia pulcherrima* in my local Co-op car park!

The book is beautifully produced, like all in this series, and the many photographs are wonderfully well-chosen - images such as a giant dandelion painted over the side of a whole tower block in Sweden, a Hart's-tongue fern *Asplenium scolopendrium* rooted in a wall crevice, and several pictures of plants growing over graffiti, are sharply memorable. These are necessary to point up the text, because the research involved and reported, and the sheer density of material, take extreme concentration to assimilate. I have had to read the book very slowly, taking bite-sized sections of the text, but believe me none of it is dull. This is a real achievement on the book's part because much of my brain and attention usually switches off when faced with statistics and percentages. There are masses of these, but they all illustrate important and gripping points. Many of us will have met Trevor during his work for Plantlife and through his involvement with the New Atlas, or will be familiar

with his various TV appearances, and this book is unarguably a crowning achievement. There is no way that I can fit my response to it into a conventional review, so I will just try to name some of its essential subjects.

Primarily we live on a crowded island, many of us remote from countryside, and these factors increase every year throughout the planet, exacerbated by climate change. 'Wild' habitats are far from the daily lives of most of us, but Trevor not only defines what 'urban' means (I never knew the precise numerical definition of 'town' or 'city') but also points out the multitude of ways in which the will-to-live of some plant species can ameliorate human existence in concrete jungles. Part One, 'Setting the urban scene', includes a brief history of urban botany and examines our growing interest in it now. Part Two looks at the origin of urban plants and their varied physical environments. Some of the 'most frequent' lists may surprise, but one has to realise that no two towns or cities have the same flora as any other. Part Three is richly fascinating as 'A walk through the streets' draws one along pavements, past walls and waste ground (preferably called 'urban fallow') and the 'grassy bits' of parks and gardens. I will never walk a pavement again without thinking of its construction and materials! Finally, this section looks at street trees and how they figure in the public consciousness, as well as delivering cooling shade, helping water management and increasing the value of your house! Section Four, the final part, looks at the love them/

loathe them questions of our attitude to 'weeds', and the bad press some still get from botanists who value 'nativeness' more highly than any species tarred with 'foreignness'.



***A Field Guide to Urban Plants:*
Alexandra-Maria Klein & Julia
Krohmer, translated by Ian
Macmillan: Pelagic Publishing
(2025): ISBN: 978-1-7842-7474-0
(Paperback): Publisher's price
£17.99.**

Trevor's attitude I find very sympathetic when he says 'This prejudice is deeply unfair, as they are, after all, simply plants that we've brought along with us, trying to grow in the places we've put them. They are part of our own story. They've overcome huge challenges to arrive, escape, survive and spread, and that

alone makes them worthy of our admiration and study'. I absolutely agree, and am happy that the detritus from my car, feet, clothes and general transport of objects might be essential in the spread of some new happy introduction!

The little 'Field Guide' originates in Germany and deals only with the very commonest European urban weeds, the plants included matching Trevor's 'most frequent species' lists very closely. The photographs and descriptions are correct and helpful, even if each name has a curiously twee little tagline under it: 'Eastern Rocket - Arrowheads for leaves', 'Groundsel - Good flyer with a

colourful past', and it would make an excellent pocketbook for anyone wanting to know what is growing on the way to the bus-stop or on their neighbour's wall. As in Trevor's book, ferns get attention, and some common mosses. The translation is fine; the text reads easily. My only concern is its price - nearly £20 for 142 pages of an A5 soft-cover does feel a bit steep, though it would undoubtedly be a good and encouraging starter investment for beginners.

RO FITZGERALD

MEMORIES OF OUR AGM 2025



Saturday 6th September, Roughmoor Pond.



Sunday 7th September, Avalon Marshes.



Answers to Gareth's picture quiz

1	Holm Oak	<i>Quercus ilex</i>	Acorn
2	Bog Asphodel	<i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>	Capsule
3	Pedunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Acorn
4	Horse-chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Capsule
5	Yellow Iris	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Capsule
6	Firethorn	<i>Pyracantha coccinea</i>	Berry
7	Passionflower	<i>Passiflora caerulea</i>	Berry
8	Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Drupe
9	Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i> agg.	Achene
10	Snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Drupe
11	Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Berry
12	Himalayan Honeysuckle	<i>Leycesteria formosa</i>	Berry
13	Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	A collection of drupelets
14	Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Seed, surrounded by succulent aril
15	Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Double-winged nutlet (samaras)
16	Cranberry	<i>Vaccinium oxycoccos</i>	Berry-like fruit
17	Blue Fleabane	<i>Erigeron acris</i>	Capsela
18	Blackthorn/Sloe	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Drupe
19	Lime	<i>Tilia x europaea</i>	Nut
20	Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Nut
21	Black Bryony	<i>Tamus communis</i>	Berry
22	Butcher's-broom	<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	Berry
23	Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Drupe
24	Kangaroo-apple	<i>Solanum laciniatum</i>	Berry

