

# Parnassia

## The Newsletter of the Liverpool Botanical Society



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## **2010 Part 1**



## Editorial

This newsletter covers the period from November 2006 to October 2009. It covers the articles and field meetings. Indoor meetings will be included in the next newsletter - Part 2 in a couple of month's time. This has been a period of great change for the Liverpool Botanical Society with the death of Vera Gordon Hon. Sec. for over 60 years (as well as spells as President and Vice President) It also saw the death of Keith Watson our Editor (and past President). This has meant a change in officers and council, but also this period has seen a return back to the museum as a venue for indoor meetings. The programme of outdoor meetings has continued and we now have a website [www.liverpoolbotanicalsociety.co.uk](http://www.liverpoolbotanicalsociety.co.uk)



## Obituaries

# Vera Gordon 1918-2006

With the death of Vera Gordon on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2006 the Liverpool botanical community and the North West of England more widely have lost someone who for very many years has been a pivotal figure, just as this society has lost one of its longest-serving vice-county recorders as well as one of its newest Honorary Members.

Born on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1918, Vera was brought up in Liverpool's northern suburbs, first in Bootle and later in Waterloo and continued to live at the same address in the latter for almost her entire adult life. A Liverpudlian to her core, she had all the warmth, helpfulness and lively humour for which the city is renowned, and to these qualities were added the special personal ones of immense physical energy and a tirelessly enquiring mind. Both her parents and her only brother were keen ramblers and through that she was introduced to the countryside at an early age, acquiring an interest in wild flowers during family holidays in the Lake District and North Wales. From primary school in Bootle she won a scholarship to the grammar school there, and she would surely have gone on to university had she been born half a century later.

As it was, her formal education ended at sixteen and she went to work in the accounts department of a local firm of dry-cleaners – only for the Second World War to break out a few months later. Having fondly eyed the Women's Land Army as her way of contributing to the war effort, she was deeply disappointed that her accounts experience proved to have earmarked her inescapably for similar office work in the Royal Ordnance Department. The obverse side of that coin, however, was that she acquired the security of the civil service thereby, which subsequently enabled her to transfer to a career more to her liking as a clerk in the local magistrates' court.

Meanwhile her father's membership of a photographic society had brought him the acquaintance of Dr. C. Theodore Green, the author in 1933 of a second edition of *the Flora of the Liverpool District*, and at the latter's insistence Vera was encouraged to join the city's long-standing Botanical Society. Barely eighteen, she must have found that body initially rather awesome, with its goodly sprinkling of Edwardian veterans who had built up over the years a breadth of expertise quite normal in their day but by then becoming all too rare. The doyen, W.G.Travis, a collaborator in his youth of the by then legendary J.A.Wheldon, was typically as well-versed in bryophyte, lichens and microfungi as he was in flowering plants and ferns, and for thirty years had been compiling on the Society's collective behalf a much-needed Flora of South Lancashire, the densely populated (and so long and heavily-botanized) vice-county 59. A young enthusiast with energy to spare was nevertheless more than welcome, and the very next year she found herself elected to the Society's Council and the year after that one of the two honorary secretaries. Fifty eight years later she was still serving in that second capacity, a record of continuity interrupted only by terms as President and Vice President. Throughout that exceptionally long period she played the principal part in holding that small society together, for without her efficiency and friendly informality it might well have petered out.

In 1950, on the top of a double-decker bus bound for one of the Society's field meetings for which we were the only two to have braved the heavy rain, Vera learned of the recrudescence that the Botanical Exchange Club had undergone in its new guise as the B.S.B.I. In common with many field botanists in the North, the Liverpool ones had long held aloof from the B.E.C. on account of its continuing identification in their eyes with the nineteenth century tradition of reckless collecting;



once Vera joined, however, and began passing around her copies of the new BSBI publications, all the other leading members speedily followed her example.

Thereafter Vera was a frequent attender, and active participant, at BSBI field meetings, enlivening them with her infectious laughter and exemplary persistence in recording however atrocious the conditions. One that proved particularly memorable for her was that in West Cork in 1964. To get there, she had to make a lengthy bus ride on which to her delight she found herself included in inimitable Irish rustic gossip and chatter; then, once the meeting was in progress, her sharp eyes spotted an unfamiliar plant with small white flowers which was to turn out to be another native Sandwort *Minuartia recurva*, new to the British list.

By then her BSBI involvement had been substantially extended by her appointment as Recorder for South Lancashire, in which increasingly onerous capacity was to serve for thirty-six years. Additionally, when a short-lived tier of "District Secretaries" was introduced in 1960 to deal with the growing flood of enquiries of a less strictly scientific nature, she willingly shouldered responsibility for that secondary task in the group of vice-counties that made up Watson's "Mersey" Province. Around the same time the teaching of plant taxonomy at Liverpool University experienced a marked revival, consequent upon the appointment to the staff of Dr. Vernon Heywood and his active involvement in the massive *Flora Europaea* project. This intensified the need for a guide to the local flora for placing in the hands of students, and as a result the long-accumulating *Flora of South Lancashire*, which had been languishing because of the latterly frail health and then decease of Travis, had new life vigorously breathed in to it. Vera was the natural choice as secretary of a new committee that was set up to use the manuscript of that as the basis for a volume of a more modern character that would be a more realistic publishing proposition. To her also fell much of the time-consuming checking of the many post 1939 records and the rounding up of additional ones that were found to be needed, though that formed only one ingredient in the eventually seven years of combined effort out of which the much-modified Flora at last emerged in to print, in 1963, with Vera's name justly featuring alongside those of Heywood and Dr. J.P. Savidge as joint editors.

Such was the ability and care Vera displayed in that prolonged undertaking that the university saw her as the obvious person to revitalise and curate its herbarium, but on being sounded out she reluctantly concluded that, with a non-transferable civil service pension in prospect, such a move involved too great a sacrifice financially. The University was not to forget her, however, for two decades later, in 1987, it conferred on her an honorary *M.Sc.* Legend has it that the University's imposing Daimler sent to her home to carry her off to the degree ceremony created more of a sensation locally than almost anything else.

Further recognition followed. In 2001 the Liverpool Botanical Society elected her to honorary membership, and four years after that the BSBI did so as well – appropriately at an AGM held in Wales, where in the north of which she had spent a great part of her life enquiringly striding. It was as a great walker, indeed, that Vera will be remembered by the greatest number of people above everything else. As the years went by Britain proved too confining for her energies and many parts of the world, as distant as Australia and as remote as the Caucasus, attracted her as well. Often that was with a botanical group, in which her untiring helpfulness and increasingly wide knowledge was ever at her companions' disposal; but botanizing, with its unavoidably slow pace, was not enough to absorb her seemingly inexhaustible supply of energy and she varied those occasions with more arduous challenges such as the famously testing Appalachian Trail. Other favourite outlets were Scottish dancing (at which she was accomplished enough to become a teacher of it at evening class), gardening (alpines were her speciality) and photography, this last an enthusiasm passed on to her by her father and at which, like him, she came to excel.

Alert and reasonably active almost to the end, she was able to attend an indoor meeting of her adored "LBS" as late as six months before her death. Four further months were then spared her before finally having to exchange her house for a nursing home near Ormskirk, where not long after her death took place.



## Geoffrey Keith Watson 1946 – 2008

A member of Liverpool Botanical Society since 1974 Keith held a number of posts within the society including President (2004-7) and editor of the newsletter Parnassia. He died, aged 61, of a heart attack on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2008, having gone to bed with rucksack already packed ready in his room for the next day's trip.

Keith grew up in Scarborough with two younger brothers John and Eric. At the age of 14 he suffered an attack of meningitis that almost killed him, after this he became rather shy and withdrawn. Academically though he did well and went to Newcastle University leaving in 1973 with a Ph.D. in bacteriology. He then moved to the Wirral to work as a researcher for Unilever at Port Sunlight. Keith worked on low-temperature washing powders and toothpaste (and he said it was him who came up with idea of putting in the stripes). During this time he travelled to conferences around the world on behalf of the company.

A keen and knowledgeable natural historian with interests in butterflies and other animals as well as plants. He was a member of B.S.B.I. as well as various other natural history societies. A keen photographer he illustrated many of his talks to LBS with some wonderful images.

He had many other interests including chess, at which he was reckoned to be very good. He was treasurer of the Wirral Chess Club for 29 years.

Keith was quiet and never sought the limelight and many were surprised to learn that in the early 1980's he had acted as advisor and guide on the "Life on Earth" series of David Attenborough in Borneo in the finding of open flowers of *Rafflesia*. Holidays were taken in many parts of the world but he was happy recording the plants and other wildlife of Wirral, Cheshire and North Wales. Always helpful and eager to show an interesting find to everyone; but always very meticulous about being sure of an identification as he was never without C.T.W. or Stace in his rucksack.

Many members went to the service at Landican Cemetery on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> to pay their respects. He will be very much missed as we have lost a gentleman, a stalwart of the society and a good botanist.

Steve Cross

## Anthony David Bradshaw: 17<sup>th</sup> January 1926 – 21<sup>st</sup> August 2008

Prof. Bradshaw was one of the great Liverpool people, as was evidenced by him being awarded, shortly before his death, the first ever Liverpool Citizen of Honour Award, by the Lord Mayor. He also received much wider recognition; in 2006, the Environment Agency published a poll of its top 100 eco-heroes of all time. Up with Charles Darwin was the name of Tony Bradshaw, a pioneer of restoration ecology. Tony had made his name as an evolutionary biologist and his work on the evolution of tolerance to heavy metals in plants growing in contaminated soils remains a clear example of evolution in action; Darwin would have approved.



One of his books (co-written with MJ Chadwick) *The Restoration of Land; The ecology and reclamation of derelict and degraded land* has been a 'bible' for professional ecologists all over the world since its publication in 1980.

Although being born outside the area, and having an international reputation as a botanist and ecological researcher and practitioner, he remained loyal and dedicated to Liverpool. Tony Bradshaw was born in Richmond, Surrey, he studied botany at Cambridge and then worked on his PhD at Aberystwth. After lecturing at Bangor he came to Liverpool University in 1968 to take the chair of Botany, he has lived and worked here ever since. After retirement, he became Emeritus professor of Botany at Liverpool; he was involved in setting up the first of the Groundwork Trusts, in St Helens, and was an active supporter and major influence on the National Wildflower Centre and was a founder member of the national Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. Locally, his latest enthusiasm was for the ecological restoration and management of St James's Garden, the historic park in the grounds of Liverpool's Anglican cathedral, where he worked until quite close to his death.

It was a suitably mournful grey and wet day on 5<sup>th</sup> September when masses of friends, admirers and colleagues approached the dark bulk of Liverpool Cathedral. On nearing the doors the mood was lightened by the porch strewn with colourful blossoms of cornfield annuals, collected and spread by Tony's friends from the Wildflower Centre. His willow-woven coffin, also decorated with wildflowers, immediately reminded you of Tony's environmental principles and the heart-felt readings, beautiful music and many tributes spoke volumes of the love and great respect shown for him. Tributes from friends not present were read by his three daughters, including great praise and regret at his passing expressed by Sir David Attenborough, epitomising Tony's renown far beyond Liverpool.

P.S. Gateley

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## Knowing Vera

Most of us know her as a brilliant enthusiastic botanist with an abundance of energy, travelling world wide, but I knew all about her other hobbies and interests which I am pleased to share with you.

Vera was a gardener and tended her plants with loving care, keeping her lawns back and front well manicured. Woe betide any cat that ventured in. She adored dogs, especially Pollyanna and Pollyanna reciprocated. She cut the edges of her lawns with a small pair of scissors.

She started baking at a young age and never did she buy a cake of a BISCUIT. She was famous for her scones and Jean Bentley says they were the best she'd ever tasted. She was a GATHERER – apples from Hightown (Vera knew where there was a tree) and blackberries from Fazakerley; the area now built upon. The fruit was always weighed when we got home. She was given plums and damsons and made lots of jam and never bought any. On one occasion when we were travelling between Widnes and Speke Vera asked Douglas to stop the car. There were hundreds of mushrooms growing on the central reservation and we both bent our backs and did them justice. The mushroom was *Agaricus campestris* (Field Mushroom). Vera telephoned me later giving me details of the weight. We spent hours on the shore, especially in the winter or after a storm, filling Tesco bags with coal. I provided the bags. Sometimes I would leave the car by Crosby Baths but mostly we were on foot with a full bag in each hand and a rucksack bulging. She weighed every lump when we got home. So now dear reader when you see me on a field meeting with a bent back, you will know the reason why.



She was outstanding at embroidery, some of her work exquisite. She knitted all her own jumpers and cardigans herself as well as for her beloved friend Ann. Not just plain knitting but complicated Fair Isle patterns and open designs and cable etc. She made all her own clothes and had huge amounts of material from lightweight cotton to heavy corduroy.

She was very proud of her Scottish ancestry, just loved going to Scotland ("nowhere like it in the world Pat") and taught Scottish Country Dancing almost every Monday evening. Vera was a very good artist and enjoyed water colours but didn't have the time!! She had an average of 4-5 hours of sleep a night. I once asked her if she hadn't been a botanist what would she have been, a one word reply- mountaineering. She inherited the love of the great outdoors from her mother and father. The love of her life – her brother Ron.

*Patricia A. Lockwood*

## Vera Gordon and the Liverpool Botanical Society

It was January 1935. The lecture room on the third floor of the Hartley Botanical Laboratories fell silent. Members of the Botanical Society who had been chatting in groups rushed to take up their seats as the sound of heavy footsteps coming up the stairs reached them. The Committee had had their usual monthly meeting in a stylish second floor room and now entered the upstairs lecture theatre as members rose from their seats. The President took his place at the front, the main secretary had a seat on her own and the front row was always left free for the Committee.

On this particular day the President had declared the meeting in session, minutes of the previous meeting had been read and carried and Colonel Theodore Green stood up to say "I am proposing Miss Vera Gordon for membership of the Liverpool Botanical Society". Vera then duly stood up to be introduced to members and this was all recorded in the minutes. One month later the proposal was seconded as required and a further month passed before the proposal could be put to the meeting to be voted on. The April bulletin of that year then recorded that Miss Vera Gordon was a new member of the Society. It was an impressionable experience for a young botanist, still a schoolgirl. Vera had known Colonel Green through membership of the Photographic Society, where her father had described her interest in plants to him.

Then as now, the society held winter indoor meetings and summer field excursions, but there were other events too. The annual soiree for example, was organised by the tiny, elderly Miss Warhurst. Since she was Secretary of the Associated Learned Society which included besides the LBS, the Geographical and Geological Societies and the Liverpool Field Club, she was able to organise two joint meetings a year. The L.B.S played a considerable part in these evenings. The treasurer Mr. Routledge for example entertained the group for many years singing solos. Vera's particular contribution was making sandwiches in the University Museum Laboratories. This was clearly before the days of health and safety regulations.

Field meetings often involved coach travel so members needed to book before the meeting. These normally took place on Saturday afternoon, since so many members worked up to lunchtime in those days. The meetings frequently went on as late as 9 o'clock in the evening however. Although over the years, as working practices changed, the meetings gradually became all-day affairs. Even so, members such as Horace Green were most reluctant for any change in practice. Other trends have been a move away from a male dominated Society, when ladies often made up less than one quarter of the L.B.S.

The war obviously had a big effect on the Society. Older members retired and many others moved away from the centre of Liverpool. Vera took over as secretary in 1940, replacing Miss Alborne the



minutes secretary and Miss Fell the bulletin secretary. One of Vera's duties was to prepare the monthly bulletin of the Society. It was then sent to a lady in Birkenhead who was paid for typing with a certain ribbon, allowing the manuscript to be ironed on to a pad known as a cycloskein. Two hundred copies were then made from this. Vera helped by Anne Swinney would then spend two evenings each month addressing envelopes, sticking the halfpenny stamps and finally posting off the bulletins to all members.

After the war Vera played an increasing role in the Society. In 1956 when several members of the Society decided to help Mr. Travis with his Flora, Vera took on the enormous task of checking old records, collecting new ones and acting as secretary to the Flora Committee. Thanks to her and others, details of Vice County 59, the only English vice County without a Flora at the time, was now described in *Travis's Flora of South Lancashire*, published in 1963.

It is not always realised how many institutions immediately requested this Flora. Universities across the U.K., in North America, Europe and Australasia together with famous Botanic Gardens in St. Louis, or one of Europe's oldest surviving Gardens that of Leiden, Holland etc. all making up an impressive total.

Present members will no doubt think of Vera as a most knowledgeable and enthusiastic leader on field trips. There can be few paths anywhere in this area which she had not walked and enjoyed. Regular members will have many memories of early spring visits to Caergwrlle or Loggerheads, summer along the Lancashire coast sand-dunes, or fungal forays in Freshfield or Erddig with occasional trips further afield like Silverdale. In indoor meetings she shared her world-wide experiences with us, introducing us to the Flora of many countries with the help of her beautiful slides. She has given lectures on many of her favourite spots from Turkey, Greece, Poland, the Dolomites, South Africa, Tien Shan Mountains and many British locations.

Vera's contributions to the botany of this area have also been acknowledged by others. In 1987 she was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Liverpool and she continues to be invited to all their main events and degree ceremonies. Her degree was followed by a half-hour interview focusing on Vera's lifelong interest in plants, broadcast on Radio Merseyside. In 2005 the BSBI finally made Vera an honorary member in recognition of her wonderful contribution as a recorder, describing her as the ideal member due to her work over an exceptionally long period of time, fun to be with on field trips and someone with a real enthusiasm for plants.

Over the years Vera has had an influence on many people. In his retirement interview last year Dr. John Dransfield paid tribute to the L.B.S. for their part in starting him on his career, leading from Cambridge University and on to Kew, where he has long been recognised as a world authority on palms. Letters among Vera's papers include notes from many well-known botanists. One from 1960 in a schoolboy hand describes plants he has found in the Bolton area for instance – a lovely early contribution from Roy Lancaster. Vera's contacts with the eccentric botanist known as "weed king of the north" the Reverend Shaw could certainly form an article in itself.

As secretary of the L.B.S. for 60 years, Vera never abandoned the high standards she brought to the position. Council minutes and every indoor meeting clearly written up, every field meeting faithfully described in the bulletin – either written up by her or collected from the leaders by early December of each year, with assistance given to those who asked for it. With the bulletin reduced to one issue per year, this with the annual programme was always completed and distributed at the January indoor meeting or posted to absent members. This continued until the introduction of Parnassia.

The L.B.S. has therefore seen many changes over the 100 years of its existence. Today we can remember that Vera Gordon has been an active member for just over 70 of those years, as well as a highly respected botanist nationally. It is great to have her here today and to say thank you for such a huge contribution to the success of this Society.

Joan Vincent



# Early Memories of Liverpool Botanical Society

It's probably fifty years since I joined. My friend Betty Hall had taken a part-time job as assistant to the Science mistress at our old school, Marjorie Thornton. Being a member of L.B.S she suggested Betty might like to join. Relatives and friends were welcome to attend field meetings.

At my first experience of tagging along with them I met a very pleasant lady, Mrs. Stell. She told me that on the previous months meeting they had found eight things to eat from the fields and hedgerows, and would I like to guess them. I hazarded wild strawberries, hazelnuts and young dandelion, which were right, but I don't remember the others; maybe things like mushrooms, sloes, and perhaps medieval savouries like Good King Henry, garlic mustard and fat hen.

In due course I became a member and some individual meetings stand out in the memory because of some particular revelation. One such one was Ainsdale; on the way to the salt marshes Vera led us through a grassy area to see Moonwort. I'm sure this memory is fixed because of my sheer admiration for her unswerving steps to that one plant.

Likewise, much later Guy Sloman was mooching round the old railway area at Fazakerley and pounced on something totally insignificant among the general overgrowth of docks and thistles.

Other meetings were dominated by a particular plant. Llandudno is forever connected with Nottingham Catchfly, seen for the first time before even going up the Orme and seeing the Wild Cotoneaster.

Terrain in relation to its flowers was always fascinating; Bloody Cranesbill on limestone pavement, masses of fleabane on the Fylde coast, orchids on old industrial sites, the scent of Sea Aster on the shore at Hale.

At least one field meeting became memorable through disaster. A young member called Chris led a party of five or six to the Buxton area. We were first appalled at walking through the moon landscape created by ICI (in plundering limestone), but Chris had wildly underestimated the ground to be covered and the meeting finally turned into a route march of 12 or 13 miles, to a train for Manchester, with no time to look at anything.

You could always depend upon Anne Swinney to call a halt for lunch at a suitable spot. One that always comes to mind was a meeting led by Jan Zawadski, when we were taken to see Tufted Loosestrife. The weather was very showery and there seemed no other sheltered spot except the slope under the motorway. Accordingly we scrambled up the concrete and remained dry there if precariously perched. Whenever I see the old Victorian waiting room at Manchester Victoria and it's present-day splendour I just remember that day when the half-drowned rats dripped all over it's radiators.

*Jean Bentley*



# Field Meetings Reports 2007

The following are based on reports by the leader unless stated otherwise.

21st April 2007 Dibbinsdale  
Leader: Keith Watson

Meeting at Bromborough Rake Station on a cool morning, through it gradually got hotter during the day. Due to Merseyrail delays some members were late, but eventually a party of ten walked down the path into the woods. There were masses of [Wood Anemone](#) *Anemone nemorosa*, [Bluebell](#) *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, and [Dog's Mercury](#) *Mercurialis perennis*. A good spot along the path towards Dibbinsdale Road contained [Sanicle](#) *Sanicula europaea*, [Barren Strawberry](#) *Potentilla sterilis*, [Bugle](#) *Ajuga reptans* and [Primrose](#) *Primula vulgaris*. [Marsh-marigold](#) *Caltha palustris* and [Pink Purslane](#) *Claytonia sibirica* were in flower by the river.

We then crossed the bridge, to Bodens Hey meadow. There was nothing much in flower yet in the grassland but the trees were interesting with fruits on the [Wych Elm](#) *Ulmus glabra*. We also saw [Norway Maple](#) *Acer platanoides*. Then, across the bridges, back into the woods where [Moschatel](#) *Adoxa moschatellina* was found in a damp spot by the Dibbin. After lunch amongst the tall [Hornbeams](#) *Carpinus betulus*, we walked through the tunnel under the railway to Brotherton Park. [Gooseberry](#) *Ribes uva-crispa*, [Black Currant](#) *Ribes nigrum* and [Cuckooflower](#) *Cardamine pratensis*, with an egg-laying, female Orange Tip butterfly were seen.

The path along the bottom of the cliff towards St Patricks well has many ferns, such as Lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, [Soft Shield-fern](#) *Polystichum setiferum* and Hard-fern *Blechnum spicant*. [Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage](#) grows on the tufa outcrops, and there is abundant [Great Wood-rush](#) *Luzula*

*sylvatica*.

At St. Patrick's well there were [Ramsons](#) *Allium ursinum*, [Three-nerved Sandwort](#) *Moehringia trinervia*, Hairy Wood-rush *Luzula pilosa*, as well as the garden escapes *Kerria japonica* and [Cherry Plum](#) *Prunus cerasifera* var. *pissardii*.

Holly Blue butterflies were flying, high in the trees in the sun at Woodslee, as we started our way back down through the woods, through the tunnel again and back to the station.

12th May 2007  
Downham

Leader: David Earl

At Downham we spotted plants of Green Figwort growing along the village brook before moving on to admire the long established plants of [Fairy Foxglove](#) growing on a village garden wall. We were surprised to find another exotic the [American Speedwell](#) growing in a nearby flowerbed, a new record for SD74. Other established plants seen about the village included Garden Rock-cress, Red Valerian, [Ivy-leaved Toadflax](#), Shining Crane's-bill, Spotted Hawkweed, Welsh Poppy, Yellow Corydalis and Slender Speedwell.

A footpath across a large field lead us to the Fairy Hills where amongst the rock outcrops we found Parsley-piert, Harebell, Spring Sedge, Pignut, [Lady's Bedstraw](#), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Hoary Plantain, Barren Strawberry, Cowslip, [Bulbous Buttercup](#), Lesser Celandine, Salad Burnet, [Rue-leaved Saxifrage](#), Wild Thyme and Common Dog-violet. After a bit of searching we located a few plants of Limestone Bedstraw a plant that is rare in South Lancashire.

After lunch we explored the Ings Beck Valley. Much of our recording was carried out on the north-side of the beck within vice-county 63 (Mid-west Yorkshire). Plants of the woodlands included Bugle, Wood Anemone, Ramsons, [Three-nerved Sandwort](#), Greater Stitchwort, Bluebell, Giant Horsetail, Yellow Pimpernel, Primrose, Goldilocks Buttercup and Crab Apple. In the meadows adjoining the beck we found Lady's Smock, Water Avens, Quaking-grass, Marsh Marigold,



Large Bitter-cress, Lesser Pond-sedge, Meadowsweet, Marsh Horsetail, Marsh Bedstraw, Square St. John's Wort, Green Figwort and a nice population of Marsh Valerian. On the drier slopes and banks plants included Common Lady's mantle, Glaucous Sedge, Carnation Sedge, Crosswort, Bitter-vetch, Rough Hawkbit, Fairy Flax, Lousewort, Mouse-ear-hawkweed and Great Burnet. Another colony of Fairy Foxglove was found on a wall below a farm. Along Twiston Beck we found Intermediate Polypody before starting our return journey back to Downham village along Twiston Lane. Close by to the beck The Special Roadside Verge section of the lane featured Wild Strawberry, Woodruff, Greater Burnet-saxifrage, Sanicle, Black Bryony and a speciality sadly not in flower Wood Crane's-bill. Further to the west Pat Lockwood found Hybrid Hawthorn. In addition to our characteristic wild flowers of the hedgerows other plants along the lane included native Field Maple, Guelder-rose, Giant Bellflower, Bird Cherry and locally abundant Goldilocks Buttercup.

## 9th June 2007 Rimrose Valley Leader: Steve Cross

We met at Seaforth and Litherland Station and a total of 15 members and friends made our way over the footbridge across Princess Way observing Chinese Bramble *Rubus tricolor*, Prickly Lettuce *Lactuca serricola*, Eastern Rocket *Sisymbrium orientale* and Sweet Briar *Rosa rubiginosa* enroute. We then entered the Local Nature Reserve at Brook Vale. Here the planted trees along the railway included Cherry Plum *Prunus cerasifera* and Field Maple *Acer campestre*. The wetland areas delighted us with Floating Sweet Grass *Glyceria fluitans*, Greater Spearwort *Ranunculus lingua*, Galingale *Cyperus longus*, Hemlock Water Dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*) and Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, the latter being ravaged by Iris Sawfly larva, much to the fascination of those present.

The path through some of the drier areas had been seeded with "wildflower mix" and yielded Hedgerow Cranesbill *Geranium pyrenaicum*, Greater Knapweed *Centaurea*

*scabiosa* and Purple Toadflax *Linaria purpurea*. Climbing up out of the wetland on to what was formerly a tip we entered a large grassland area provided a rich hunting ground with Hemlock *Conium maculatum*, Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* and we were able to compare and contrast Black Medick *Medicago lupulina* and Lesser Hop Trefoil *Trifolium dubium*. Further north we found Glaucous Dog Rose *Rosa caesia* ssp. *glauca*, Hairy Sedge (*Carex hirta*) and a yellow form of Rough Meadow Grass *Poa trivialis*. However what was probably the find of the day was the tiny pink flowers of Grass Vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia* at the edge of the track.

A change of habitat was provided by the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and here we came across Gipsywort *Lycopus eoropaeus*, Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* and masses of Fringed Water Lily *Nymphoides peltata*, here too was a large blue Emperor Dragonfly and we also saw quite a few different butterflies. On the day 194 species of plants were listed.

## 15th June 2007 (Evening Meeting) Altcar Rifle Range Leader: Steve Cross

Starting at the Hightown Hotel with Hop growing against the wall we entered the Rifle Range. The range was a mass of orchids (at least 30,000) and other wet meadow flowers with many Southern and Early Marsh *coccinea* Orchids with also some Northern Marsh and Early Marsh *incarnata*. Ragged Robin, Marsh Bedstraw, Lesser Spearwort, Cuckoo Flower and Yellow Rattle were in profusion. Hairy Sedge, Californian Poppy, Bee Orchid and Pyramidal Orchid added to the botanical delights.

I Range, an important part of the site, added around about 1000 flowering spikes of Common Twayblade; False Fox Sedge, Brown Sedge and Common Spotted Orchid. Under some pines in Anniversary Wood were some Dune Helleborine Orchids and the ditches had masses of Blue Water Speedwell.



23rd June 2007

## Cwm Idwal, Snowdonia

Joint meeting of the MNA and Liverpool Botanical Society

A cwm, or corrie in Scotland, marks the source of a glacier which has scoured a deep, crater-like hollow in the flanks of a mountain massif. Cwm Idwal is a classic example and has long been popular with geologists, naturalists and climbers. The concept of an Ice Age was first introduced in to this country in the 1840s by Louis Agassiz, a Swiss naturalist. Charles Darwin made several visits and his notes reveal how the evidence was overlooked, scientists just concentrating on the rocks, fossils and structures such as folds and faults rather than the landscape. As in Snowdon's Clogwyn Du'r Arddu the backwall of Cwm Idwal shows a clear example of a downfold or syncline, best seen in winter when a light fall of snow picks out the ledges.

Although the early morning weather had not been promising it brightened up considerably as we approached Llyn Ogwen via Nant Ffrancon. Only a short distance into the walk we encountered Grey Wagtails by the cascading, boulder-strewn Afon Idwal and our first clumps of Parsley and Hard Fern which became prolific at higher elevations. The wetter terrain away from the path attracted attention with its nodding heads of Common Cotton-grass, a fine display of Bog Asphodel, a thin scattering of Heath Spotted Orchid and small cluster of Round-leaved Sundew amongst Sphagnum Moss. The path's edges had a familiar leaf but larger than usual – this belonged to Marsh Violet. One was actually in flower and duly photographed. The reddish, leafless stems and pale lilac flowers of Water Lobelia were common in the shallow margins of Llyn Idwal, their rosettes of leaves being submerged. On the other side of the path a drystone retaining wall produced a much admired rock garden with so many species packed into such a small area – notably Alpine, Fir, Staghorn and Lesser varieties of Clubmoss, the yellowish-green Lemon-scented Fern with its backward-projecting pinnules.

During our lunch break attention was drawn to a Great Crested Grebe diving in the lake, the distinctive calls of Common Sandpipers and a Heron on the far side where later we

saw its food source, namely great shoals of minnows, and frogs. While House Martins from the Ogwen centre skimmed the surface three Choughs flew towards Bethesda. A single Small Heath fluttered by in the swirling wind.

As the path steepened we added Milkwort, Wild Thyme and, along the rocky rivulets descending from Idwal Slabs, numerous butterworts with a good haul of insects. The huge boulders in the scree at the foot of Twil Du (Devil's Kitchen) provided a microcosm of what could be found higher up on the less accessible rock faces and ledges. Mossy Saxifrage was abundant with a little Starry Saxifrage and just one specimen of Alpine or Snowy Saxifrage. The rough surfaces also yielded Mountain Sorrel, Slender St. John's Wort, Welsh Goldenrod and Roseroot while in the deep shade were Wood Sorrel and Oak Fern. More energetic members scrambled up to the Kitchen where blotches of yellow resolved to be Welsh Poppy and the distinctive, aptly named Globeflower. A Raven's deep croaks added to the location with its dark, dripping rock faces, as did the screaming calls of a Peregrine and the surprisingly loud song of a Wren, echoing within the Kitchen.

Back down by Llyn Idwal but on its Northern shore an almost hands and knees job to study some aquatics revealed Shoreweed with its very long stamens and Alwort, so concentrated as to form a kind of sward. Further along the shingle beach were several good specimens of the normally submerged Quillwort. Meanwhile the Afon Ogwen by the visitors centre had its inevitable Dipper while the deciduous and coniferous trees had come up with Spotted Flycatcher, Goldcrest, Siskin and Willow Warbler.

David Bryant

7th July 2007

## Moreton

Leader: Keith Watson

On a fine, sunny, but windy day, a party of 18 met at Moreton Station and transferred by car to the Leasowe lighthouse car park. We walked west along the path towards Meols and notable plants at the pond included [Greater Spearwort](#) *Ranunculus lingua*, [Flowering-rush](#) *Butomus umbellatus*, [Blunt-flowered Rush](#) *Juncus subnodulosus* and



**New Zealand Pigmyweed** *Crassula helmsii*.  
**Buttonweed** *Cotula coronopifolia* was searched for but not found by me on several visits this year, it has become increasingly harder to find over recent years.

The poppies, both **Common Poppy** *Papaver rhoeas* and **Long-headed Poppy** *Papaver dubium* were in fine flower, with abundant **Lucerne** *Medicago sativa* ssp. *sativa*. A new record for me in this area was **Spanish Broom** *Spartium junceum*. Two naturalised garden plants, **Rose Campion** *Lychnis coronaria* and **Seaside Daisy** *Erigeron glaucus* were found, the latter not uncommon on the N Wirral coast.

In the remnant of an old dune slack, home of several Cheshire rare plants, we found **Bog Pimpernel** *Anagallis tenella*, **Southern Marsh-orchid** *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and **Few-flowered Spike-rush** *Eleocharis quinqueflora*.

We had lunch in a sheltered area of the dunes, and then Vipers Bugloss *Echium vulgare* and Sea Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp. *maritimus* were found in the dug areas, provided for conservation of the Belted Beauty moth. Continuing towards Meols, we found two spikes of **Pyramidal Orchid** *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. A clump of about six spikes was known here for several years, but in 2005 it was dug up by someone. It is nice to know it still survives in this area.

Near the Coastguard Station we found the rare rose hybrid, *Rosa x hibernica* (R. *pimpinellifolia* x *canina*). At Dove Point, near the toilets the uncommon **Small-flowered Crane's-bill** *Geranium pusillum* was growing with the common **Dove's-foot Crane's-bill** *Geranium molle*. Then we made our way back towards Leasowe near the sea defence wall, finding seaside plants such as **Sea Spurge** *Euphorbia paralias*, **Sea Rocket** *Cakile maritima*, and **Sea Holly** *Eryngium maritimum*. Butterflies recorded were Small Tortoiseshell and Small Heath. Finally, for me the best plant of the day was near the end of the walk when we found **Pepper-saxifrage** *Silaum silaus* in the grassland near the sea wall.

28th July 2007  
Gisburn Forest, near  
Slaidburn.  
Leader: E.F.Greenwood

A group of sixteen members and friends met at Cocklet Hill car park on a beautiful sunny morning. After a brief discussion most of the group decided to attempt the nine-mile walk round Stocks Reservoir, recently designated an Important Plant Area for its bryophyte flora by Plant Life. However to cater for those that felt the walk was too long shorter stretches of the walk were organised.

On leaving the car park the identity of a large yellow sedge was debated and although not a perfect match it was thought to be *Carex viridula* ssp. *brachyrrhyncha* whilst on the nearby lane side there was a fine patch of *Senecio ovatus*. This is abundant throughout Gisburn Forest. The party followed tracks and footpaths via Brook House Green and Rain Gill to Black House passing a patch of calcareous grassland with *Plantago media* on a trackside bank and a northern hay meadow, Barn Gill Meadow SSSI, which was long past its best but probably contained *Euphrasia arctica*. The path then followed the track of the old railway used to construct the reservoir before descending to cross the dam. Here a number of annual weeds, e.g. *Viola arvensis* and *V. tricolor* not common in the area, were found. The path followed the reservoir to the fishing club's clubhouse where lunch and refreshments were available. Normally at this time of year the water level of the reservoir is low revealing a 'draw-down' zone with several species characteristic of this habitat. Unfortunately for botanists the reservoir was overflowing and none of the species was visible. The next section of the path again followed an old railway track passing boggy fields and flushes until Copped Hill Clough was reached. There, calcareous flushes supported a wonderful flora with an abundance of *Primula farinosa* and *Pinguicula vulgaris*. *Euphrasia confusa*, *E. scotica* and hybrids were seen along with a few plants of *Parnassia palustris* (not yet in flower), *Carex dioica* and *Salix repens* ssp. *repens*. The next section of the walk took the party back to the School Lane car park in Gisburn Forest via the abandoned New



House. On the way a patch of *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* was seen and the differences between this and ssp. *repens* were noted. At School Lane most of the group decided to take a lift to Cocklet Hill whilst the remainder enjoyed the final section of the walk through the forest.

25th August 2007

Cabin Hill

Leader: Philip H. Smith

With permission of Natural England, members and friends visited Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve, Formby, an area of sand-dunes which has been much-modified by past sand-winning. This so weakened the coast-protection function of the dunes that a barrier bank was erected in 1970 as a secondary defence against the sea.

We first crossed an area of grazed dune pasture where bare sandy patches have been colonised by a variety of ruderal plants, including Common and Sticky Stork's-bills *Erodium cicutarium* and *E. lebelii* and their rare hybrid *Erodium x anaristatum*, the latter known only from Wales and South Lancashire in the British Isles. The hybrid is easily identified by its large, intermediately-coloured flowers, vigour and near-sterility. Moving on, we next came to a large borrow-pit from which sand was excavated to make the barrier bank. This created a damp slack, now supporting the best display of **Grass-of-Parnassus** *Parnassia palustris* on the Sefton Coast. The abundance of this charismatic plant, officially listed as "endangered" in Lancashire, was breathtaking.

West of the bank is another, deeper and therefore wetter, borrow-pit which supports a large stand of the uncommon **Blunt-flowered Rush** *Juncus subnodulosus*. Nearby, was the nationally "vulnerable" **Flat-sedge** *Blysmus compressus*, a species that is rapidly declining in most of Britain but which is doing well on the Sefton sand-dunes.

Our final stop was at a large wet-slack which was cleared of invasive Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* in 2005. Since then it has been colonised by about 140 vascular plants, 32 of which are new to the reserve. Around the edges we examined several bushes of the nationally rare hybrid willow *Salix x friesiana*, comparing it with one of its parents, Creeping

Willow *S. repens*, which occurs here as the incredibly variable coastal variety *argentea*. The slack had a spectacular display of Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, while less common plants to enjoy included **Water Speedwell** *Veronica scutellata*, **Pink Water-speedwell** *V. catenata*, **Shore Horsetail** *Equisetum litorale* and **Yellow Bartsia** *Parentucellia viscosa*.

8th September: St Helens

Canal and Burgy Banks

Leader: Peter Gateley

On a very pleasant autumn Saturday 14 LBS members and friends set off southwards from St Helen's station. On our left we followed the old sandstone wall forming the boundary of the railway land, this was generally devoid of plants apart from sparse **Oxford Ragwort** *Senecio squalidus* along the base and in the joints. However about two thirds of the way along there was a small colony of ferns just below the coping, mainly **Wall-rue** *Asplenium ruta-muraria* with some Hart's-tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium*. On the right-hand side of the road the newly re-landscaped park was noted, with a large glacial erratic forming its central feature.

After crossing the railway we turned sharp left to follow the route of the St Helens Canal northwards, at this point the canal has been filled in but the footpath follows the former towpath, between two lines of tall steel fences. In this disturbed area a typical range of ruderal plants was found, many of which were still in flower; one of the more interesting local species was **Field Woundwort** *Stachys arvensis* with many flowering specimens along the path edge, others included the rayed form of **Groundsel** *Senecio vulgaris*, **Sun Spurge** *Euphorbia helioscopia* and **Redshank** *Persicaria maculosa*.

Continuing north we passed under a road bridge to a section of canal still in water, this had also been recently landscaped with a broad screen of planting down the western side of the towpath. Within this planting the hazel bushes turned out to be **Filbert** *Corylus maxima* and several ripe nuts were harvested and enjoyed. Young seedlings, presumably of this species, were also noted around the



fringes of the canopy. In various open weedy patches between the shrubs and trees a wide range of plants was noted, including a fine display of *Scarlet Pimpernel* *Anagallis arvensis*, still flowering well but also displaying many fruits as well as the black-dotted undersides of the leaves.

The canal itself is still recovering from restoration work but *Hemp Agrimony* *Eupatorium cannabinum* was flowering well in the sidewall and *Common Spikerush* *Eleocharis palustris* was the most frequent water plant. In the stonework leading up to the former swing bridge there was a small but healthy population of *Black Spleenwort* *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*. On the opposite (eastern) side of the canal the derelict remains of an old factory had evidently been vacant for many years and a complex mosaic of herb-rich grassland, tall herb vegetation, developing scrub and bracken patches had regenerated naturally. *Black Medick* *Medicago lupulina* was abundant throughout the sward, its main feature at this time of year being numerous clusters - jet black seeds, standing out against the mainly pale and mildewed leaves. Amongst the many other species looked at here were still-flowering *Eyebright* *Euphrasia* species, *Red Bartsia* *Odontites verna* and *Bladder Campion* *Silene vulgaris*. A more unusual find was *Small Melilot* *Melilotus indicus*.

Crossing the roads to the next section of canal the exotic tree and shrub planting was noted, including species that are very capable of seeding into surrounding areas, such as *Himalayan Honeysuckle* *Leycesteria formosa* and two exotic species of alder. A locally unusual tree included in the plantings was Liquidamber, or *Sweet Gum*, *Liquidambar styraciflua*. Along this section of canal we lunched by the remains of the eighteenth century Parr New Double Locks, noting various wall plants and water plants. One unexpected species growing out of the far wall of the old lock chamber was Fern-leaf Yarrow *Achillea filipendulina*. Downstream of the double lock there is a well-vegetated stretch of canal water with areas of tall swamp and a healthy aquatic flora. Plants seen in this section included: *Broad-leaved Pondweed* *Potamogeton natans*, *Fennel-leaved Pondweed* *P. pectinatus*, *Rigid Hornwort* *Ceratophyllum demersum* and the alien *Fringed Yellow Waterlily* *Nymphoides peltatus*.

From these rich waters we crossed the course of Rainford Brook, now routed along the course of the former Gerrard's Bridge branch of the St Helens Canal. The brook is quite fast flowing but has broad marginal strips of a mix dominated by *Branched Bur-reed* *Sparganium erectum*, *Himalayan Balsam* *Impatiens glandulifera* and *Reed Canary-grass* *Phalaris arundinacea*. In the central channel the most notable species were *Broad-leaved Pondweed* and *Fennel-leaved Pondweed*.

Over the footbridge, to the north, the tall steep slopes of the southern (Haresfinch) burgy bank dominate the scene. At this point there is a wide bunded terrace at the foot of the slope where saline leachate collects from the multiple layers of waste product from industrial glass polishing; pumped here as slurry along pipes directly from the glassworks. This terrace is quite sparsely populated, with grassy islands surrounded by bare crusty surfaces; the dominant species is *Reflexed Saltmarsh-grass* *Puccinellia distans*; seedheads of *Marsh Arrow-grass* *Triglochin palustris* were also noted. An indication of how inimical the conditions here are to plant growth was given by the yellowed and stunted growth of *Japanese Knotweed* *Fallopia japonica* on the edge of this area. From the eastern end of this terrace we followed the steep path up to the flat plateau top, being thankful for the dry weather, as the exposed waste is excessively slippery when wet. This area, perched high over the former canal and bounded by a railway line to the west and north-west and a road in the north-east, has remained unmanaged since tipping of the polishing waste ceased following the introduction of the float glass process in the 1960s. After several years of the slurry drying out, plants began to colonise the surface and developed a diverse and unusual vegetation; however, over the last couple of decades continuing vegetation development and natural succession has led to the area being dominated by increasing areas of willow/birch scrub, dense grass/herb swards and tall herb stands, with a few remaining areas of wetter ground. The plateau now represents a fairly typical area of 'urban common' where natural vegetation processes have progressed but involving a significant element of exotic species. The most notable aliens seen on the burgy banks were species of *Michaelmas Daisy* *Aster* species, *Tansy* *Tanacetum*



*vulgare* and [Evening Primrose](#) species and hybrids *Oenothera* species, these are mixed with a wide range of native herbs and grasses presenting flower-rich swards that must be highly attractive to insects all through the summer.

After descending from the high plateau the group followed Rainford Brook upstream then followed the railway to the south, calling in at a small Victorian park that had seen better days but whose abandoned tennis courts and bowling green provided habitat for a range of flowering weed species, including: [Field Woundwort](#), [Marsh Cudweed](#) *Gnaphalium uliginosum* and [Toad Rush](#) *Juncus bufonius*. We followed the railway back to the station; noting en route an interesting street tree, a species of *Malus* with clusters of tiny orange-red fruits, and the abundance of Hemp Agrimony as a street weed in St Helens.

## 13th October 2007

### Freshfield

#### Leader: Steve Cross

#### Fungal Foray

With the mild damp weather seeming ideal for finding fungi the group of 18 set off from Freshfield Station, following along the side of the railway line towards the level crossing. Diverting into the heath the first fungal specimens were found including *Laccaria laccata* (Common Deceiver), *Paxillus involutus* (Brown Roll-rim), *Lycoperdon perlatum* (Common Puffball) and *Psathyrella conopilus* (Cone Brittle-head). Passing into the mainly Birch woodland more species were located these including *Leccinum scabrum* (Brown Birch Scaber Stalk), *Lactarius torminosus* (Woolly Milk-cap), *Russula ochroleuca* (Yellow-ochre Russule), *Stereum hirsutum* (Hairy Leather-bracket), *Cortinarius paleaceus* (Pelargonium Web-cap), and several *Mycenas* or Bonnets. Passing through a meadow we saw a carpet of *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird'sfoot) with both fruit and flowers, and *Juncus tenuis* (Slender Rush). On the perimeter of Freshfield Dune Heath were some lovely specimens of *Amanita muscaria* (Fly Agaric), one of *A. rubescens* (The Blusher), a few *Lactarius necator* (Ugly Milk-cap) and some *Clavulinopsis helvola* (Yellow Spindles).



Just inside Freshfield Dune Heath we found many specimens of *Suillus luteus* (Slippery Jack) and one nice specimen of *Heterobasidion annosum* (Conifer Base Polypore).

Passing across the railway the route followed down Fisherman's Path to Old Fisherman's Path. Along this path we continued to find and identify more fungi including *Lactarius deliciosus* (Delicious Milk-cap), *Rickenella fibula* (Orange Navel-cap), *Collybia maculata* (Spotted Tough-shank), *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* (False Chanterelle), *Hypholoma fasciculare* (Sulphur Tuft), *Scleroderma citrinum* (Common Earthball), *Hygrocybe conica* (Blackening Wax-cap), *Piptoporus betulinus* (Birch Polypore), *Nectria cinnabarina* (Coral Spot Fungus), *Stropharia aeruginosa* (Verdigris agaric) and *Agaricus silvicola* (Wood Mushroom). Also studied were several *Russulas* found under conifers, a *Marasimus* (Mummy-cap), a *Clitocybe* (Funnel-cap) and a *Pholiota* (Scale-head). Coming over the dunes to briefly glimpse the tide we turned back up Fisherman's Path and completed the foray with a fine display of *Coprinus comatus* (Shaggy Ink-cap) and *Geastrum triplex* (Collard Earthstar).

Maria Knowles

## Field Meetings

# Reports 2008

### 26th April 2008.

#### Caergwrle

#### Leader: Pat Lockwood.

A warm but overcast morning saw sixteen members gather for the first field trip of the present season. Down by the Alyn the day got off to a great start with the group finding [Alternate-leaved Golden Saxifrage](#) *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* amongst the [Ransoms](#) *Allium ursinum* and [Dog's Mercury](#) *Mercurialis perennis*. A Kingfisher on the river provided a great highlight.

A gentle uphill stroll towards the lunch site gave a nice selection of plants that included [Bitter Vetchling](#) *Lathyrus linifolius*, [Goldilocks](#) *Ranunculus auricomus* and [Greater Stitchwort](#) *Stellaria holostea*. Lunch was



taken amongst drifts of [English Bluebell](#) *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and [Wood Sorrel](#) *Oxalis acetosella*.

On the Plas Maen path [Marsh Valerian](#) *Valeriana dioica*, [Marsh Marigold](#) *Caltha palustris* and [Lesser Pond Sedge](#) *Carex acutiformis* were seen along with two Horsetails, [Equisetium palustre](#) and [telmateia](#). On the roadside near Cymau we found [Rough Chervil](#) *Chaerophyllum temulum*, [Navelwort](#) *Umbilicus rupestris* and [Early Purple Orchids](#) *Orchis mascula*, just coming into flower. Four plants of [Corn salad](#) *Valerianella locusta* were possibly the highlight of this site. No less than eight Veronicas were found through the day. All in all, a very good start to the season. Many thanks to Pat Lockwood for taking on the role of leader for this outing.

*Peter Tipping.*

## 24th May 2008. National Wildflower Centre Bumblebee Identification. Leaders- Carl Clee and Tony Parker.

The Bumblebee Identification workshop was aimed at raising awareness of both the plight and the significance of this very important group of insects.

The first session consisted of a Powerpoint presentation of the six commonest species, and an explanation of their life cycle and value within an ecosystem. The presentation was backed up with an information pack including a very useful laminated identification graphic. The final part of the presentation was a quiz, to see who had been paying attention!

The after lunch session consisted of a capture, identify and release activity. Graphics are well and good but the creature in hand is obviously another matter! We watched Red-tailed, Carder and other bees whilst seeing at close quarters the difference between nectaring and pollen collecting. A quite magnificent queen Cuckoo bee was the star capture of the session. Aptly named, these bees lay their eggs in the nests of hosts.

The botanical highspot of the day was a Red/White Campion hybrid, *Silene x hampeana* with both colours being displayed on the one plant.

Carl Clee is always interested to hear about sightings and reports of bees. Any reports or records can be sent to him in any format at the museum, or by email to [carl.clee@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](mailto:carl.clee@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk). Great thanks to both Carl and Tony for a very interesting and informative day.

*Peter Tipping*

## Anderton Country Park 7th June 2008 Leader: John Somerville

Seven members met in the car park at Northwich on a cloudy but dry day. Just outside the car park we firstly found [Grass Vetchling](#) *Lathyrus nissolia* and then [Hoary Ragwort](#) *Senecio erucifolius* with Common Ragwort nearby to compare the differences. We then walked along the path between Ashton Flash and Neumann's Flash to a bird hide from where we watched the pair of Black Winged Stilts with their one remaining youngster. This was the first time that this bird had had a chick in Cheshire and only the third time in the UK. Continuing along the path we found [Dame's Violet](#) *Hesperis matronalis*, [Mouse-ear Hawkweed](#) *Pilosella aurantiaca*, the remains from last year of [Great Mullein](#) *Verbascum thapsus* and a large patch of [Sainfoin](#) *Onobrychis viciifolia* in Ashton's Flash. We passed a number of [Swedish Whitebeam](#) *Sorbus intermedia* trees before we reached a second bird hide overlooking Neumann's Flash where we found [Great Burnet](#) *Sanguisorba officinalis* with [Meadowsweet](#) *Filipendula vulgaris* nearby, both not yet in flower.

Continuing our circuit of Neumann's Flash we passed numerous Orchids which were identified, with difficulty, as mainly [Northern Marsh](#) *Dactylorhiza purpurella* and [Southern Marsh](#) *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* Orchids. Reaching Haydn's Pool bird hide we stopped for ten minutes to watch the Black Swans with their two young and other birds including Little Grebe and Ringed Plover.

After leaving Haydn's Pool we walked along Witton brook towards the Anderton Boat lift.



We passed numerous plants of [Hemp Agrimony](#) *Eupatorium cannabinum*, [Teasel](#) *Dipsacus fullonum*, [Tansy](#) *Tanacetum vulgare*, Marsh and Hedge Woundworts *Stachys palustris*/*Stachys sylvatica*, [Prickly Sow-thistle](#) *Sonchus asper*, [Black](#) and [Hoary Mustard](#) *Brassica nigra* & *Hirschfeldia incana*, [Common Valerian](#) *Valeriana officinalis*, [Creeping Cinquefoil](#) *Potentilla reptans*, [White Bryony](#) *Bryonia dioica*, [Fodder Burnet](#) *Sanguisorba officinalis* ssp. *muricata*, but our star find was a solitary plant of [Maiden Pink](#) *Dianthus deltoides*.

Where Witton Brook flows into the River Weaver we saw [Floating Pennywort](#) *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* which is a mat forming pest which would choke a river if not kept in check. As we walked along the Weaver we passed Imperforate St. John's Wort *Hypericum maculatum* and [Creeping Yellowcress](#) *Rorippa sylvestris* until we reached the Anderton Boat Lift with its visitor centre. We stopped for lunch near the visitor centre and then spent ten minutes inside before setting out again on the return leg of our walk.

A couple of ponds produced [Amphibious Bistort](#) *Persicaria amphibia*, [Gipsywort](#) *Lycopus europaeus*, [Water Forgetmenot](#) *Myosotis scorpioides*, [White Water Lily](#) *Nymphaea alba*, and [Yellow Iris](#) *Iris pseudacorus* then along the path we were finding [Common Fleabane](#) *Pulicaria dysenterica*, [Cowslips](#) *Primula veris*, and the star of the area, [Pennyroyal](#) *Mentha pulegium*. The Cowslips were in seed and it would be another month before the Fleabane and Pennyroyal would be in flower.

We entered an area where the park rangers had cut down all the scrub to let the plants grow on the lime rich subsoil and we first found [Vipers Bugloss](#) *Echium vulgare*.

Searching the rest of the area was slow as most of our group were busy eating the wild Raspberries *Rubus idaeus* but we found two poor specimens of [Fragrant Orchid](#) *Gymnadenia conopsea*.

Leaving this area we entered the hay meadows and then continued along the path towards Marbury lane. There were not many new plants along this path but we did find [Lucerne](#) *Medicago sativa* ssp. *sativa*, [Marsh Willowherb](#) *Epilobium palustre*, [Brooklime](#) *Veronica beccabunga*, and [Black Bryony](#) *Tamus communis*.

Reaching Marbury lane we cut through a wood and then walked along Witton Brook back to our car park.

## Birkdale Green Beach. 21st June 2008. Leader Pat Lockwood.

Eleven intrepid souls ventured out on the longest day of the year. Practically mid summer, it couldn't rain that hard or for that long could it? Despite the weather a good morning botanising was to ensue.

First encounter was with a splendid specimen of [Sea Radish](#) *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp. *maritimus*. On the first section of the beach we found large numbers of, [Sea Club-rush](#) *Bolboschoenus maritimus*, [Brookweed](#) *Samolus valerandi*, [Strawberry Clover](#) *Trifolium fragiferum* and [Sea Milkwort](#) *Glauca maritima*. [Toad Rush](#) *Juncus bufonius* agg. [Fool's Watercress](#) *Apium nodiflorum* and [Eyebright](#) *Euphrasia* spp. were doing very well. The conditions suited them if not us! Forgetmenots are not easy to work out at the best of times, but when the books are getting wetter by the minute it does not really help. Even so [Tufted Myosotis](#) *Myosotis laxa* and [Changing Forgetmenot](#) *Myosotis discolor* were certainties before the book got too wet. [Garden Angelica](#) *Angelica archangelica* was an impressive sight with [Hemlock Water Dropwort](#) *Oenanthe crocata*. [Red Bartsia](#) *Odontites vernus* and [Water Cress](#) *Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*, the real one this time, were found around the pool edges, along with [Marsh Bedstraw](#) *Galium palustre*.

Turning into the dunes for a bit of respite we were cheered up by stands of [Red Hot Poker](#) *Kniphofia uvaria* trying to be bright even on a day like this. Now the ground is drier, believe it or not, [Houndstongue](#) *Cynoglossum officinale*, [Sand Sedge](#) *Carex arenaria* and [Wild Parsnip](#) *Pastinaca sativa* make their presence known.

A nice sheltered slack rewarded our endeavours with [Early Marsh Orchid](#) *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, in flower and [Marsh Helleborine](#) *Epipactus palustris*, two species worth seeing at any time. [Common Milkwort](#) *Polygala vulgaris*, [Dewberry](#) *Rubus caesius* and [Sea Spurge](#) *Euphorbia paralias* were looking good despite the weather. A single specimen of [Common Broomrape](#) *Orobancha*



*minor* was found parasitising [Restharrow](#) *Ononis repens*.

It was at about this time that the weather degenerated even more. It was time to call it a day, but whilst making a dash to the cars we did take the time to notice [Yellow-wort](#) *Blackstonia perfoliata* and [Lesser Spearwort](#) *Ranunculus flammula*.

We certainly got the best out of a poor day weatherwise, but enough was enough! Many thanks to a brave Pat Lockwood for leading the session under such poor conditions.

*Peter Tipping.*

## South Stack, Anglesey 5th July 2008 Leader: David Bryant

A sunny, warm but breezy week was concluded by the arrival of a depression during Friday night so that Saturday morning was cloudy with occasional downpours and hopes weren't high after previous wet outings to Tregaron and Crook of Lune. However brighter skies to the west raised our spirits as we approached St. Asaph. By the time we reached South Stack it was blue skies with fluffy cumulus clouds so that first time visitors could truly appreciate the venue – dramatic cliffs, stacks and a natural arch, a deep-blue agitated sea, a dazzling white lighthouse and impressive views towards Snowdonia.

The main group made its way towards the cliff top path, traversing a good example of low, maritime heath with [Western Gorse](#), [Heather](#), [Cross-leaved Heath](#) and [Bell Heather](#). Variety was added to by [Angelica](#), [Burnet Saxifrage](#), [Catsear](#) and several hybrid [Southern Marsh Orchids](#). A Silver-studded Blue was disturbed but quickly sought shelter from the breeze. The sinuous cliff walk was a veritable rock garden with [English Stonecrop](#), [Sheep's-bit Scabious](#), [Lesser Centaury](#), [Sea Plantain](#) and [Rock Sea-spurrey](#). [Sea Carrot](#) demonstrated its convex flower head or umbel and usually a central red flower while some of the [Sea Pink](#) produced extremely large spongy cushions of fine leaves. We made our way south as far as the path permits, having our lunch against a large stack where Choughs flew about and fed on the steep grassy slopes towards the summit.

A Rock Pipit called and eventually put in an appearance while an immature Fulmar soared to and fro on rigid wings over a deep inlet – a predictable haunt. Far below on the foam-streaked swell mixed groups of browner Guillemots and contrasting black and white Razorbills bobbed about. On retracing our footsteps attention was drawn to the scale and structure of the cliffs with complex folds in the Pre-Cambrian white quartzites and greener schists with ages well in excess of 600,000,000 years, the oldest rocks in Wales.

Approaching Ellinis tower with its RSPB centre [Kidney Vetch](#) and [Sea Campion](#) were noted. A Grayling butterfly on the path was so well camouflaged that it was difficult for some to spot even at close quarters. The birds were obviously used to people since we were able to get very close views of a male Stonechat and a pair of Choughs, only taking to the air at the last minute. From the base of the tower we had a grandstand view of the serried ranks of Guillemots on the exposed white-washed ledges, growling and gargling, not too dissimilar to the sounds from a frustrated and angry Marg Simpson! The Razorbills confined themselves to the more sheltered rockier ledges, overhangs and crannies. Descending the steps to the lighthouse on the north side of the great colony enabled us to see at least five puffins, a great attraction for many members of the public. Some of the slopes there are less precipitous and have fairly thick soil for burrowing with protective vegetation. Peering over the wall revealed a good quantity of [Golden Samphire](#) and a little [Rock Sea-lavendar](#) while Dave Hardy photographed a Ruby Tailed Wasp. Terry Williams thought he heard a Common Sandpiper amidst the calls of the auks and gulls and patient scrutiny with binoculars and telescopes revealed the bird on the darker rocks below the auk ledges on the lighthouse cliffs. A few of the Guillemots were the "bridled" form with a white eye-ring and a white line extending backwards from the eye. Out to sea Gannets passed by in ones and twos and much further out Manx Shearwaters were confirmed with binoculars. Then attention was diverted to a Heron overhead which was inevitably mobbed by gulls. We were equally fascinated by the standing waves and foam caused by opposing currents coming into conflict fairly close inshore to the north-west.



Against a rapidly changing cloudscape and with intermittent showers we crossed the road and headed east up to a pair of shallow lakes, their margins colonised by [Water Horsetail](#) and Bottle Sedge. Although no dragonflies were evident we could at least admire a good concentration of [Marsh St. John's-wort](#) with yellow flowers and rounded glaucous leaves. After sheltering from a heavy shower we had a last look at the heath below the café and came across [Scarlet Pimpernel](#), [Annual Wall Rocket](#), plenty of [Goldenrod](#), a solitary [Common Lousewort](#) and numerous red rounded, berry-like galls, *Diplolepsis spinosissima*, on the Burnet Rose.

## Earlestown 26th July 2008 Leader: Peter Gateley

Sixteen members met at the exit to Earlestown Station, delayed slightly by a 10 minute wait for the train to arrive. However we soon moved off and looked at some typical urban situations for plants. Just across the road, on the empty plot of a demolished property tall stands of [Hemp Agrimony](#) were just starting to flower, this is a typical weed of the whole of the urban parts of St Helens. Amongst the usual mix of coarse grasses and annual weeds there were also flowering specimens of [Autumn Hawkbit](#). We proceeded via Chemical Street into Suez Street where many plants occupied the niches provided by abandoned buildings and urban dereliction.

One wall top had strikingly silhouetted plants of [Blue Fleabane](#) and [Perforate St John's-wort](#), and a wall further down the street was festooned with growths of [Ivy-leaved Toadflax](#). [Hemp Agrimony](#) had also established in this vertical display as well as various ferns and other plants noted included [Oxford Ragwort](#), [Black Nightshade](#), [Canadian Fleabane](#) and [Eastern Rocket](#), part of a rich mix of native and exotic annuals and ruderal plants.

Joined by a further member, the party of seventeen moved west along Earle Street noting more plants established in the walls of the old Victorian works, but also the rich mix of species in plots where buildings had been demolished and edges kept maintained as short flower-rich verges. This section of the

walk provided an ideal opportunity to compare and contrast some similar species that learner botanists can be puzzled by. We were able to study [Lesser Trefoil](#) and [Black Medick](#), along with [Hop Trefoil](#), pointing out the distinguishing features of these low-growing yellow-flowered legumes; just further along, [Smooth Tare](#) and [Hairy Tare](#) were growing together in some abundance, allowing the characters of the flowers and fruits to be closely compared.

From Earle Street we cut into The Dingle, where one end has been left unmanaged to allow a diverse acidic flora to develop, this probably represents relict vegetation from the former Newton Common that formerly stretched westwards from here. The sward is dominated by a mix of [Purple Moor-grass](#), [Common Bent](#), [Red Fescue](#) and [Heath Grass](#), with a range of other typical acidophiles, including [Heather](#), [Tormentil](#), [Common Rush](#), [Mat-grass](#) and many others. From here we crossed into Sankey Valley Park and went to look at the now remarkably clean waters of Sankey Brook with waving strands of what looked like [Water Crowfoot](#) and pondweed species visible in the strong flow. The path through was edged with a mix of tall herb and coarse grasses, with many species typical of very damp conditions. Amongst the species picked out for extra attention was a colony of [Greater Burnet-saxifrage](#), just coming into full flower and large flowering bushes of [Burdock](#), with the future sticky-bobs clearly visible. Other species typical of the path under the nine-arched viaduct were [Himalayan Balsam](#), [Rosebay Willowherb](#), [Yellow Flag](#), [False Fox-sedge](#), [Wild Angelica](#), [Floating Sweet-grass](#), [Red Bartsia](#), [Common Fleabane](#), [Tufted Vetch](#). Many of the species were in full flower and put on a bright show.

We lunched on the edge of the section of canal that is still in water, admiring the flowering patches of [Yellow Waterlily](#), some with fruits well-formed, and entertained by passing coots, Brown Hawkers and Emperor Dragonflies. After lunch we climbed Mucky Mountains, a large mound of alkaline waste dating from the 1830s and 1840s that was formerly known for a wide range of limestone-loving plants not normally associated with the St Helens area. Despite proliferation of scrub over the last two decades, shading the ground and enriching the surface soil, much [Fairy Flax](#) and [Quaking Grass](#) was still to be



seen, as well as some large patches of [Mouse-ear Hawkweed](#) and scattered [Common Centaury](#). Along the northern edges much colour was provided by [Red Clover](#), [Knapweed](#) and [Tall Melilot](#).

After continuing along the canal to admire typical water plants such as [Greater Duckweed](#), [Fools Watercress](#), [White Waterlily](#), [Purple Loosestrife](#) and [Gipsywort](#) we then retired to the shade of Old Hey Wood and walked back through this strip of woodland that predates the canal. Although it was late in the year for looking at woodlands there was evidence of a good population of [Bluebells](#) and the typical woodland grasses: [Wood False-brome](#), [Tufted Hair-grass](#) and [Wavy Hair-grass](#) were all flowering well; a small population of [Pill Sedge](#) was also noted along the path edge, emphasising the acidic nature of this wooded slope. After leaving the wood we walked through Wargrave, back into Earlestown and those that could resist the temptation of the pub on this very hot day (by no means all of the party!) arrived at the station just in time for the next Liverpool train.

## 16th August 2008

### Highfield Moss

Leaders: David Bryant/Chris Felton

This was a joint meeting between the LBS and the MNA. 17 members gathered outside the station and we started botanising and insect hunting nearly straight away. There was a marvellous wall nearby, covered in ferns. David said it was bedrock sandstone; a considerable time was spent there. We walked into Willow Park, an excellent area with lots of interest for both Societies. We passed an overhanging plum tree, damson trees and filled our faces with blackberries (yummy). Highfield Moss is a wonderful place. Vera and I visited the area every August for many, many years. For those of you who have never been to the Moss, it is well worth a visit. The weather forecast was very bad but we were so lucky; it didn't rain, although it was very gloomy with a cold wind blowing. Everyone enjoyed the day. My thanks go to David Bryant and Chris Felton for their expertise and also for their great company. Here's to the next time.



List of plants worth a mention:

*Gentiana pneumonanthe* (Marsh Gentian) - the star of the show!

*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* (Floating Pennywort)

*Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan Balsam)

*Oenanthe crocata* (Hemlock Water Dropwort)

*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum* (Water Cress)

*Lemna minor* (Common Duckweed)

*Stachys palustris* (Marsh Woundwort)

*Galium palustre* (Marsh Bedstraw)

*Achillea ptarmica* (Sneezewort)

*Solidago virgaurea* (Goldenrod)

*Senecio aquaticus* (Marsh Ragwort)

*Pedicularis sylvatica* (Lousewort)

*Cydonia oblonga* (Quince)/ Loquat - identification still to be confirmed.

*Report from Pat Lockwood*

## 6th September 2008

### Calderstones Tree Trail

Leader: Maria Knowles

A group of 12 explored the trees of Calderstones Park which include some interesting specimens from North America (planted due to the Park's connection with the transatlantic shipping line Cunard), as well as many from Asia, Europe and even the southern hemisphere.

Over 70 species were looked at and discussed. The first tree was the unusual Spur-Leaf *Tetracentron sinense* from Asia, which is allied to the Magnolias and has the primitive wood structure of a conifer. Two Plum Yews were studied *Cephalotaxus fortunei* and *C. harringtonii* and compared to the Common Yew *Taxus baccata* and also to the closely related Californian Nutmeg *Torreya californica*.

Comparisons were made between different species of:

Limes- *Tilia x petiolaris*, *T. x euchlora*, *T. x europaea* and *Tilia americana*;

Ashes- *Fraxinus ornus*, *F. excelsior* and *F. oxycarpa*;

Walnuts- *Juglans regia*, *J. nigra*, and *J. ailanthifolia*;

Pines- *Pinus ponderosa*, *P. mugo*, *P. parviflora*, *P. pinaster*, and *P. x holfordiana*;

Redwoods- *Sequoia sempervirens* and *Sequoiadendron giganteum*;



Cedars- *Cedrus atlantica*, *C. deodara* and *C. libani*.

The two deciduous conifers Dawn Redwood *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* from China, and Swamp Cypress *Taxodium distichum* from the USA, were compared and contrasted.

Time was spent at the 1000 year old Allerton Oak, under which 'Hundreds Courts' were said to have been held.

Five closely related conifers were examined in the 'Ring of Five'. These are: Western Red Cedar *Thuja plicata*; Lawson Cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsonia*; Sawara Cypress *C. pisifera*; Hinoki Cypress *C. obtusa* and Nootka Cypress *C. nootkatensis*. The close proximity of these five helps with their tricky identification.

Estimation of the height of a tree was demonstrated and measurement of girth was used to suggest the age of a couple of specimens.

Lunch was enjoyed in the sunshine in the walled garden where the Norfolk Island Pine *Araucaria heterophylla* was viewed in the glasshouse.

Later the group walked down the avenue of American Limes on route to see the Calderstones themselves (six stones which formed part of a burial chamber used by a local Neolithic community), which are now housed in a glasshouse in the Harthill side of the Park.

Towards the end of the day two trees from the southern hemisphere were seen: *Polylepis australis* (an unusual member of the Rosaceae family from the Andes with a papery bark which builds up in layers) and Coigue *Nothofagus dombeyi* a Southern Beech.

And finally the day ended with a new find of the Snowbell Tree *Styrax japonica* showing its lovely hanging fruits.

*Report by Maria Knowles*

## 18th October 2008 Eastham Woods Leader: Steve Cross

A small but select group of 6 assembled for the final field trip of the season. Before setting off the group took a few minutes to remember Keith Watson, who would have led

this trip had not the tragic circumstances of last February taken place.

Under the canopy of Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, many showing evidence of Tar Spot *Rhytisma acerinum* and Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa* amongst others, a nice selection of fungi were found. These included: Honey Fungus *Armillaria* spp., Coral Spot, *Stereum hirsutum*, Earth Ball *Scleroderma citrinum*, Candle Snuff *Xylaria hypoxylon*, Fairies' Bonnets *Coprinus disseminatus*, Birch Polypore *Piptoporus betulinus*, Bleeding Broadleaf Crust *Stereum rugosum*, Southern Bracket *Ganoderma australe*, Judas' Ear *Auricularia auricula-judae*, Common Puff Ball *Lycoperdon perlatum* and Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*. The Sweet Chestnut also provided grazing for several of the group!

A notice board informed us that some of the trees were in the order of five hundred years old. Not to be dictated to, we measured the girth of several. One huge Beech had a girth of 204 inches. This gives a free standing tree a possible age of over two hundred years but for a tree in woodland I am told that figure can be doubled. With an age of four hundred and eight, it started growth in the year King Charles 1 was born, was five years old when the Gunpowder Plot was discovered and entitled to a bus pass when the Plague hit London! Makes you think doesn't it?

Several plantings in the woods showed specimens of interest, Mahonia *Mahonia japonica* in flower, Norway Maple *Acer platanoides* showing the start of its Autumn colours, Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* complete with fruit and, perhaps the prize tree of the wood Wellingtonia

*Sequoiadendron giganteum*. This magnificent tree was growing near, of all things, a Victorian Bear Pit, an obscene reminder of our one time attitude to animals in captivity.

Away from the heavy tree canopy Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara* showed its colourful fruit and Traveller's Joy *Clematis vitalba* was a remarkable sight, its seedheads covering the undershrubs. Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, Meadow Cranesbill *Geranium pratense* and Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare* showed us the remnants of summer planting in the Pleasure Gardens.

Jay, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Great Tit and Nuthatch provided the birdlife of the day.



Thanks also to Michael Barrow for providing both the species list.

Peter Tipping

## Field Meetings Reports 2009

25<sup>th</sup> April 2009

Wepre Woods

Leaders: Peter and Sheila  
Mason.

Fourteen members met under lowering skies and heavy rain at Shotton station. A short drive took us to Wepre Country Park where we were met by a further three members. The trip proper started in the now disused garden of the original estate where Cowslip *Primula veris*, Sweet Woodruff *Galium odorata*, Common Dog Violet, *Viola riviniana*) and Cuckoo Pint, *Arum maculatum* were in good flower.

From here we moved into the woodland habitat. Two different Ivies, Irish and Persian, *Hedera helix* 'Hibernica' and *Hedera colchica* could be seen close enough to compare and contrast. Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* were in abundance. For those interested in ferns a varied selection was growing in close proximity, this being a help to those wishing to revise the differences and particular features which help in identification. Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Scaly Male *Dryopteris affinis* and Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina* presented a good introduction to common ferns. We also could examine Broad Buckler *Dryopteris dilatata*, Hard Shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum* and Hard Fern *Blechnum spicant* at close hand.

Still in the woodlands, but along the side of the stream, we encountered Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum* and Fool's Watercress *Apium nodiflorum*. Peter Mason was able to point out the differing spikes, fertile and sterile, of Great Horsetail, *Equisetium telmateia*, an interesting exotic plant, in full deep-red flower so early in the

year, was the Thimbleberry or Purple Flowered Raspberry (*Rubus odorata*). Grasses in the woodland included Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosum* and perhaps one of the prettiest of woodland grasses Wood Melick *Melica uniflora*. Both Wood and Greater Stitchwort were also seen, *Stellaria nemorum* and *Stellaria holostea*. Two species of wood-rush were found in good numbers, Great Wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* and Hairy Wood-rush *Luzula pilosa*. From the woodland we moved into an open area with a mix of plants typical of both woodland edges and open ground. Species looked at included Soft Brome *Bromus hordeaceus*, Field Pansy *Viola arvensis* and Corn Spurrey *Spergula arvensis* in the more open areas. Three species of speedwell: Germander, Ivy-leaved and Thyme-leaved, (*Veronica chamaedrys*, *V. hederifolia* and *V. serpyllifolia*) complemented the Wood Speedwell found earlier.

Birds seemed in very short supply, even though the weather improved vastly after the poor start. With butterflies, however, after their two previous appalling seasons, we were rewarded by good views of Orange Tip, *Anthocharis cardamines*, Green-veined White *Pieris napi*, Speckled Wood *Parage aegeria* and Comma *Polygonia c-album*. Despite the damp start we had a very pleasant day. Many thanks to Peter and Sheila Mason for arranging and leading the visit.

Peter Tipping

9th May 2009

Gwersyllt to Gresford

Leader: Peter Gateley

Five members met on Bidston station to make the change for the Chester train to reach Gwersyllt. By the time we had we had reached the public footpath system, via the north-eastern road through the village, the party had increased to twelve. After perusing the pavement edge and verge plants along the village roads, including an extensive bank of Mouse-ear Hawkweed *Pilosella officinalis*, we followed the footpath to the east, leading into a shallow valley of predominantly pasture land. However, the valley bottom is occupied by a strip of diverse swampy habitat, mainly dominated by Reedmace *Typha latifolia*, but with very noticeable large clumps of Greater



Tussock-sedge, *Carex paniculata*, in full flower. Amongst many other species in this area were Lesser Pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis*, Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*.

The footpath continued east, crossing the B5425; given that the party included several younger members, time was spent comparing the three common buttercup species and also three horsetails, Field *Equisetum arvense*, Marsh *E. palustre* and Giant *E. telmateia*. This footpath leads into the lush Alyn valley, with rich grasslands and glimpses into woodland showing both Bluebell

*Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and Wild Garlic *Allium ursinum* in abundant full flower.

Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, was in abundance in this part of the walk and lunch was taken on a grassy bank overlooking the river Alyn.

Heading north along the Alyn valley we then turned east, across the river, and into the very different landscape of a disused colliery, with typical development of birch woodland and areas of disturbed ground with good displays of ephemeral plants such as Weld, *Reseda luteola* and Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis* amongst many others. The footpath then took us across both carriageways of the busy A483(T) into the flat arable land of Gresford. Crossing through the fields, looking at arable weeds and hedgerow plants, we arrived at Gresford Church. The churchyard here is how botanophiles would like to see all churchyards, a fitting setting to the magnificent mediaeval church but also sensitively managed to maximise local biodiversity. Mixed grass and wood-rush swards were studded with plump clumps of fading Primrose *Primula vulgaris* as well as some Cowslip *P. veris* and Cuckoo-flower *Cardamine pratensis*, but the chief delights were the frequent patches of Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, just coming into full flower, and Goldilocks Buttercup, *Ranunculus auricomis*. Our party was able to observe the diverse foliage of this plant and its strangely sparse flowering habit. We also admired the magnificent ancient Yew tree *Taxus baccata*, on the north-east side of the church, said to be the largest and oldest in Wales.

Sharp-eyed Peter Tipping noted carvings of green-man on the exterior of the church and inside, the most helpful and informative

custodian moved aside a flower arrangement to show us another magnificent green-man low down on the wall of one of the side-chapels.

From this glorious churchyard we headed back west, through part of Llay and then across restored colliery land that now forms part of the Alyn Waters Country Park. We re-crossed the Alyn along sections of old country lanes with species-rich hedges and verges that had escaped the rigours of coal mining and returned to Gwersyllt station and car park.

Peter Gateley

## Saturday 13th June Tansley Dale & Cressbrook Dale

Leader: John Somerville

Ten of us met in Litton village at 10am on a bright sunny day. Two cars were driven to the end of Cressbrook Dale where one was left before returning to Litton village. As we walked along the lanes to the start of Tansley Dale we met Rue-leaved Saxifrage *Saxifraga tridactyla* on the walls and discussed the differences between the abundant Rough-stalked Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis* and Smooth-stalked Meadow-grass *P. pratensis*. Then, over a tall stile, across a small field and we were into Tansley Dale.

Wild flowers were everywhere. In the first 50 metres we had seen Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, Mouse-eared Hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*, Kidney Vetch *Anhyllis vulneraria*, Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*, Salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, Wild Thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, Common Milkwort *Polygala vulgaris* and Limestone Bedstraw *Galium sternerii*. A bit further on and we were seeing Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, Dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, Early Purple Orchis *mascula* and Common Spotted *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* Orchids, Thyme-leaved Sandwort *Arenaria serpyllifolia*, Field and Small Scabious (*Knautia arvensis* and *Scabiosa columbaria*), Hairy Rock-cress *Arabis hirsuta*, Perennial Cornflower *Centaurea montana* and Downy Oat-grass *Helictotrichon pubescens*. Further down Tansley Dale we met a patch of Crow Garlic *Allium vineale* and an area of Brittle Bladder-fern *Cystopteris fragilis*. Large patches of Spring Sandwort



*Minuartia verna* were seen around the tailings of the old lead mines.

Reaching the bottom of Tansley Dale we passed through a small gate and entered Cressbrook Dale. A lush patch was full of Silverweed *Potentilla anserina* and some plants of Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*. We sat on a grassy bank for lunch and then continued our walk. The first plants noted after that were Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina*, Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomis*, Shining Cranesbill *Geranium lucidum* and more Rue-leaved Saxifrage. Then, quite surprisingly far up a steep bank, we reached one of the star attractions, a large area of Globeflower *Trollius europaeus*. The plants grow at least 25 metres above the path, which traverses the slope fairly high above the valley floor, it could be easy not have recognized them, assuming that the yellow flowers above were Meadow Buttercup.

We descended back to the path and continued into Cressbrook Dale. We were now walking under the trees with a limestone face on our left. A gap in the trees had allowed Harebells *Campanula rotundifolia* to grow on the rock face. Along the path we found False Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, Hairy Brome *Bromopsis ramosus*, Greater Burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella major*, Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, Wood Sedge *Carex sylvatica*, Woodruff *Galium odoratum*, Nettle-leaved Bellflower *Campanula trachelium* and Midland Hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata*. Then it was up a path that led us out of the trees to an open grassy bank where we found Stone Bramble *Rubus saxatilis*, Lesser Meadow-rue *Thalictrum minus*, Common Twayblade *Listera ovata* and Mountain Melick *Melica nutans*. We enjoyed a 20 minute rest sitting on this bank in the bright sun and then it was time to go. Ready to go but three of our group were missing, a quick search found them keeping cool by sitting in the shade of some Hazel *Corylus avellana* bushes.

The final leg of our walk led us past the cottages in Cressbrook Dale and up the track to the road. Half of our group had missed the Sanicle *Sanicula europaeus* which was among the last plants found in Cressbrook Dale. Now we reached the road where one of our cars had been parked earlier and this was used to ferry all the car drivers back to Litton village. Then back to pick up our entire

group before returning again to Litton village. It was 3.40pm and the shop was still open so we finished the day by sitting around a table outside the shop enjoying coffees, teas and ice cream.

## 11th July 2009 Moore Nature Reserve Leader: John Somerville

The weather was dull but dry when we met at the crossroads, 15 LBS members started out, with 2 guests from the Manchester Field Club. In the morning we covered the western third of the reserve. Entering the reserve at we noted abundant low creeping vegetation at the side of the path, it turned out to be Ground-ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, looking very atypical. Other plants here included Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, Lesser Burdock *Arctium minus*, Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea* and Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, and it was on this Creeping Thistle that the eagle eyes of Peter Gateley spotted a Tortoise Beetle.

Along the path we passed planted Many-flowered Rose *Rosa multiflora* before entering another open area next to a bird hide. Here we found Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Smooth Hawksbeard *Crepis capillaris*, Self Heal *Prunella vulgaris* and much Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*. A small pond nearby had been previously dug out to try and remove the Australian Swamp Stonecrop *Crassula helmsii* but it was back and totally covered the pond area.

Moving along we passed much Birdsfoot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*, Spear Thistle and Large-flowered Evening-primrose *Oenothera glazoviana*, Marsh Bedstraw *Galium palustre* and Hedge Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* before arriving at an area with Common Cudweed *Filago vulgaris*. We knew that Small Cudweed *F. minima* grew on the reserve but we could not spot it anywhere nearby.

It was not until we came to a set of timber steps that we found two small plants of Small Cudweed. The Dovesfoot Cranesbill



*Geranium molle* in this area showed both the normal pink-purple form and also some very pale forms.

Further on we arrived at some ponds containing Water Soldier *Stratiotes aloides*, Corn Mint *Mentha arvensis* and Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*. Of the orchids that normally grew in this area there was no sign at all.

As we moved along the path towards the end of the reserve we came across a single plant of Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*. At the end of the reserve we passed through a gate onto the road, turning left we walked only a few yards before coming to an opening on our right with a totally different habitat.

Here, on the banks were Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Mignonette *Reseda lutea*, Wild Radish *Raphanus sativus*, Common Field Speedwell *Veronica persica*, Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum*, Dark Mullein *Verbascum nigrum*, Tufted Vetch *Vicia cracca*, Bush Vetch *V. sepium*, Fodder Vetch *V. villosa*, Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*, Black Horehound *Marrubium vulgare*, Comfrey *Symphytum x uplandicum*, and Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*. A few yards further and we were on the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal where there was Goatsbeard *Tragopogon pratensis* and some vigorous plants of Weld *Reseda luteola*.

We were now in a large open area stretching along the Ship Canal back to the crossroads where our cars were parked. Here we found Red Bartsia *Odontites verna*, Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, masses of Birdsfoot Trefoil and a small specimen of Hemlock *Conium maculatum*. On the road banks nearby the Hemlock was up to ten foot tall. Walking through the Smooth Tare *Vicia tetrasperma* we came down into an area that was about twelve foot lower than the main field. Here some ponds contained Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum* and Spiked Water Milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum* and another LBS member, Rob, who had come late now found us at last. On the final leg, walking back to our cars we found Bristly Ox-tongue *Picris echioides*, Dotted Loosestrife *Lysimachia punctata* and much Musk Mallow *Malva moschata*.

Lunch was taken in the sun on a grassy bank in the reserve before we got back into the cars and drove to the eastern end of the reserve. Climbing over a gate led us into a

very dry area full of Haresfoot Clover *Trifolium campestre* and the odd plant of Trailing St. John's-wort *Hypericum humifusum*. We walked down to the edge of the lake which was edged with Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* and watched the Broad-bodied Chasers *Libellula quadrimaculata*. As we walked back to our cars we came across an area containing hundreds of Small Cudweed plants where in the morning we had only found two specimens after much searching. Back over the gate we walked down the track to a bird hide where we finished the day with the sighting of a Kingfisher.

## 25th July 2009 Wigan Flashes Leader John Clegg

Twenty four people assembled for this joint L.B.S. and M.N.A. outing to Wigan. This included two new members for the L.B.S. Outside a very forlorn looking Wigan Pier (can it really be shut down?), we found the usual range of plants for such an environment, including Hemp Agrimony, *Eupatorium cannabinum*, Ivy-leaved Toadflax, *Cymbalaria muralis* and Canadian Fleabane *Conyza canadensis*. Reaching the start of the canal path there was Feverfew *Tanacetum parthenium*, a white flowered Musk Mallow *Malva moschata* and Gipsywort *Lycopus europaeus*. What was to be one of the plants of the day, Rock Stonecrop *Sedum fosterianum* and Sticky Groundsel *Senecio viscosus* were soon found along with Prickly Lettuce *Lactuca serriola* a plant that seems to be cropping up in ever increasing numbers. Not to be outdone by the Stonecrop the next plant, all on its own, was Broad-leaved Helleborine, *Epipactis helleborine*, why just the one in splendid isolation I do not know. Following the canal bank we were able to observe Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*, Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa* and Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* also several plants of Orange Hawkweed, or Fox and Cubs *Pilosella aurantiaca*. Marsh Woundwort *Stachys palustris*, Weld (*Reseda luteola* and Common Field Speedwell *Veronica persica* were all growing well. Just before the lunch break we enjoyed an area with Golden Melilot *Melilotus*



*altissima*, Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica* and Red Bartsia *Odontites vernus*.

During lunch we were entertained watching Common Tern fishing in the canal, lunch all round then!

The afternoon session gave us Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*, Zig-zag Clover *Trifolium medium* and Bladder Campion *Silene vulgaris*. Narrow Leaved Everlasting Pea, *Lathyrus sylvestris* caused some discussion, only to be superseded by it's bigger and brighter relative Broad Leaved Everlasting Pea *Lathyrus latifolius*.

The other plant that gave rise to some serious discussion was what turned out to be the young leaves of Unbranched Bur-reed *Sparganium emersum* and NOT *Vallisneria spiralis* as I had suggested!

Peter Tipping

## 8th August 2009 Birkdale Green Beach Leader: Pat Lockwood

In all 20 members gathered together at Birkdale Station. It was a glorious morning as we made our way down to the beach, some going by car others walking. It was such a contrast to the year before, when the rain was torrential and the meeting, after 2 hours, was abandoned. I enjoyed hearing the chattering of happy voices. We were sorry that George Russell was unable to join us. We wish him well and hope he will lead us on another occasion.

The first plant that really stood out is the Sea Club Rush *Bolboschoenus maritimus*, it was really impressive. Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus*, Saltmarsh Rush *J. gerardii*, Baltic Rush *J. balticus* and Common Cord-grass *Spartina anglica* were also studied, also Fools Water-cress *Apium nodiflorum* and Wild Celery *A. graveolens* and the Lesser Water Parsnip *Berula erecta*. Lots of Willowherbs were pored over, Hoary Willowherb *Epilobium parviflorum*, Great Willowherb *E. hirsutum* and Marsh Willowherb *E. palustre*. The Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* was an interesting contrast to the thousands of plants of Parsley Water Dropwort *O. lachenelii*, wonderful hosts to so many insects. Gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, Sea Milkwort *Glaux maritima*, Sea Aster *Aster tripolium*,

Watermint *Mentha aquatica* Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Strawberry Clover *Trifolium fragiferum* and Alsike Clover *T. hybridum* were all in very good flower. Sea Arrow-grass *Triglochin maritima*, Marsh Arrow-grass *T. palustris*, Thrift *Armeria maritima*, Sea Plantain *Plantago maritima*, Greater Sea-spurrey and Lesser Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia media* and *S. marina*) and Common Glasswort *Salicornia europaea* were all seen. David Bryant found a Lesser Conehead, a rare species of bush-cricket locally.

We wandered onto the main path where there were lots of goodies. Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense* and Spear Thistle *C. vulgare* were studied, so were Large-flowered Evening Primrose *Oenothera glazioviana* and Intermediate Evening Primrose *O. x fallax*, and the Spear-leaved Orache *Atriplex prostrata*. Red Bartsia *Odontites vernus*, Common Restharrow *Ononis repens*, Tufted Forget-me-not *Myosotis laxa*, were found and Sea Mayweed *Tripleurospermum maritimum* grew along the edges, also the Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, Seaside Centaury *C. littorale* and Lesser Centaury *C. pulchellum*. We were very pleased to find Galingale *Cyperus longus*.

In the dunes Wild Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* was everywhere, Marion spotted the Common Broomrape *Orobanche minor* and Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* still in good flower, as also were Sea Holly *Eryngium maritimum*, Eyebright *Euphrasia sp.*, Carlina Thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, Garden Speedwell *Veronica longifolia* and Ploughman's Spikenard *Inula conyzae*. John found really very good flowers on the Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, and two found very good specimens of fruiting Crosswort *Cruciata laevipes*.

## 5th September 2009 Ness Gardens Tree Trail Leader: Maria Knowles

We looked at and discussed over 60 different species of trees.



Ness of course is famous for its *Sorbus* collection, being the largest in the country. We first looked at *Sorbus rosea*, introduced to cultivation through Ness. It was wild-sourced from Gillgit in Pakistan in the 1980's and has whitish pink berries. *Sorbus leyana*, Ley's Whitebeam is described as Britain's rarest tree. It is an apomictic microspecies, and is thought to be derived from Rowan *S. aucuparia* and Rock Whitebeam *S. rupicola*. It is endemic to south Wales and is critically endangered. *Sorbus domestica*, the True Service Tree is native from southern Europe to north Africa. It was disputed to be native to Britain until it was found near Cardiff in 1984. It is a big tree with leaves like Rowan, but slightly bigger and hairy beneath. It exists in two forms, one with apple-shaped fruit (f. *pomifera*), and one with pear-shaped fruit (f. *pyrifera*).

There are many lovely birches at Ness. *Betula nigra*, River Birch grows on river banks and waterways in the warmer parts of eastern USA, where it can survive being wet for several weeks at a time. The seeds ripen early and fall when the water is lowest to germinate in the moist rich soil. It has dark rugged bark when young, but the mature bark is pinkish orange and shaggy. It is a lovely tree to plant in a damp area. *Betula dahurica* is similar to *B. nigra* but is even nicer-looking, it is found in Japan and Russia. *Betula michauxii*, the tiny Swamp Birch was sourced from an oil refinery access road in a place called Come by Chance, Newfoundland, Canada in 1988.

We looked a several maples. *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King' is a variant of Norway Maple with nice crimson fruits. *Acer griseum*, Paper-bark Maple was brought back from China by Ernest Wilson in 1901 and has bark with papery scrolls and lovely autumn colour. The nutlets have a very thick shell and often form without pollination so the tree is difficult to raise from seed. *Acer cappadocicum* is like Norway Maple but the fruits are more angled and the leaves less lobed. It turns butter-yellow in Autumn and is one of the four species of maple with latex. It is native to Asia Minor. *Acer saccharinum*, Silver Maple is native to eastern USA. It is airy and willowy, with silver under its leaves it is attractive when ruffled by wind. It can be confused with Sugar Maple *A. saccharum*, the

species depicted on Canada's flag. Silver Maple is closely related to *A. rubrum* and like it produces red flowers in spring before the leaves. It does produce a small amount maple syrup. *Acer carpiniifolium*, Hornbeam-leaved Maple has leaves like hornbeam, elegant, hanging and golden in autumn.

Two species of Liquidambar were considered. *Liquidambar styraciflua*, American Sweet Gum, has five-lobed leaves which are star-like and has good autumn colour. *Liquidambar formosana*, Chinese Sweet Gum has matt leaves with usually only three lobes, but occasionally five. The fruits have curled spines.

*Platanus orientalis*, Oriental Plane is from south east Europe and has deeper lobes than London Plane (which is the hybrid of *P. orientalis* and *P. occidentalis*). The species we looked at is most likely 'Digitata', which has narrow lobes.

There are some lovely Alders at Ness. We looked at the elegant *Alnus glutinosa* 'Imperialis' a variant of Common Alder, more graceful and finely cut than 'Laciniata' and very Japanese-looking. We also looked at *Alnus sieboldiana*, a splendid tree named after Von Siebold, a German botanist who worked in Japan as a doctor in the 1820s and amassed thousands of both living and preserved specimens of plants. This tree has big leaves edged with yellow teeth and impressive cones.

The two species of Tulip Tree were compared. *Liriodendron tulipifera*, the Tulip Tree from eastern USA, where it is known as Yellow Poplar, has flowers like 5cm 'tulips' of green and orange. *Liriodendron chinense*, Chinese Tulip Tree, from east China to north Vietnam, has leaves that are purple in spring, more waisted and whiter below.

We considered the differences between firs and spruces. *Abies procera*, Noble Fir, was discovered and brought to Britain from the US in 1830 by David Douglas. It has huge cones which disintegrate on the tree with seeds that are enjoyed by squirrels. It is very successful in Britain and regenerates naturally in Scotland. *Abies concolor*, Colorado White Fir, grows from Utah to Mexico and has leaves which are pale and



curl vertically above the shoot. *A. delavayi* var *forrestii*, also known as *A. forrestii* was discovered by Forrest in China in 1910. It has glossy dark green leaves and lovely purple cones. Two spruces were compared to the firs, *Picea smithiana*, Morinda Spruce and *Picea spinulosa* Sikkim Spruce. The main difference between spruces and firs are that spruces have 'pegs' on old shoots which are left when the leaves fall and they have pendulous cones. Firs don't have pegs but the leaves leave small scars, they have resin blisters on the trunk and cones which disintegrate on the tree.

A few species of pine were considered. *Pinus longaeva*, the Great Basin Bristlecone Pine is one of the worlds longest lived trees, living nearly 5000 years. It grows in parts of California, Nevada and Utah. One was found to have 4,862 annual rings when it met its tragic end in 1964, accidentally cut down by forest rangers sent to take a core sample for counting. *Pinus nigra* ssp. *laricio*, Corsican Pine, can be differentiated from *Pinus nigra* ssp. *nigra*, Austrian Pine, by having a pale trunk, longer twisted needles, cleaner straighter bole and boughs like poles. On the other hand Austrian Pine is heavy limbed and has dark bark. We looked at the splendid row of Austrian Pines planted by A K Bulley as a windbreak. *Pinus contorta* ssp. *contorta*, Shore Pine is like Lodgepole Pine (*P. contorta* ssp. *latifolia*) but has shorter twisted needles pressed closer to the shoot and is more bushy. *Pinus wallichiana*, Bhutan Pine is from the Himalayas and has blue green leaves in 5's which are long enough to droop.

We compared the two deciduous conifers. *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, Dawn Redwood, a critically endangered tree in the wild, discovered in 1941 in a village in China. It has leaves, buds and side shoots all opposite, it comes into leaf earlier and has spongier darker bark than Swamp Cypress. *Taxodium distichum*, Swamp Cypress, from eastern USA, can cope with waterlogged conditions by throwing up 'knees' or pneumatophores, which trap silt around the roots and probably help the roots to breathe. It has side shoots borne alternately (actually helically) along twigs and comes into leaf later and has a much more feathery look than Dawn Redwood.

Three redwoods were looked at and compared. *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, Giant Sequoia or Wellingtonia, is the world's largest tree, has a flared bole with soft spongy bark and scale-like leaves. It is native to California where it grows on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada. *Cryptomeria japonica*, Japanese Red Cedar, a giant tree in the mountains of Japan, is a redwood with hard bark, it has awl-shaped leaves arranged in a helix around the shoot and yields an excellent reddish timber. *Sequoia sempervirens* 'Cantab' is a variant of Coast Redwood which originated from 'witches brooms' at the University Botanic Gardens at Cambridge. Massive brooms could be seen in the tree we examined.

From the terrace three species of cedar could be easily compared. *Cedrus deodora*, Deodar, from the Himalayas has a drooping leader, shoots that hang and leaves which are longer and softer than the others. *Cedrus libani*, Cedar of Lebanon has black-brown bark and level plates of foliage. *Cedrus atlantica*, Atlas Cedar is most often seen as the form 'glauca', with greyer bark, shorter needles in rosettes and branch tips that ascend.

Some other notable trees were: *Aesculus wangii* is found in China and Vietnam, where it is threatened by habitat loss, and bears enormous panicles (to 45cm) of scented yellow purple-brown spotted flowers in spring, followed by large encased seeds (conkers) up to 10cm across. Although the Ness specimen is the British Champion it has not flowered yet.

*Salix alba* var *sericea*, Silver Willow is a County Champion for girth and height. The leaves stay silky hairy above so that the tree looks like a puff of pale smoke from a distance.

*Fagus sylvatica* 'Asplenifolia' Fern-leaved Beech, is a 'chimaera' with inner tissues of typical Beech enveloped by cells of the 'sport', so that sprouts of normal leaves will often grow from the trunk especially after injury. Both types of leaves were visible on the tree.

*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, Katsura is from China and southern Japan (where it is endangered), it has opposite leaves that flush pink and die off lemon and orange with a smell of caramel from summer on. We had to



smell four different trees before all the group could smell the caramel!

*Davidia involucrata* var *vilmoriniana*, the Dove or Handkerchief Tree is fertilized by bats, and has huge white hanging bracts early in the summer. This variety, which is the one most planted as it is the most hardy, is not hairy on the under surface of the leaf in comparison with *Davidia involucrata* var *involucrata* which is very downy underneath. *Cunninghamia lanceolata*, Chinese Fir, is native to China to Vietnam and its leaves clasp the shoot all round in a helix. 'Glauca' has metallic blue-bloomed foliage due to more vivid stomatal bands and a waxy bloom. It is hardier than the type which is sensitive to cold winds.

*Thuja plicata*, Western Red Cedar, from the USA, brought here 1853, has dull white stripes under the leaves and a smell of pineapple which fills the air around the tree on warm days.

*Thujopsis dolabrata*, Hiba, is related to Thuja but has broader leaves 'painted' white underneath, which are more glossy, and scale-like resembling tiny axe-heads (botanical name 'dolabra' means hatchet). It is an important forestry tree in Japan, the wood being light, strong and hard-wearing.

*Populus wilsonii*, a beautiful and unusual poplar, it has big sea-green leaves which flap noisily and turn black on falling. It was found in Yunnan in China in 1907 by Ernest Wilson.

*Polylepis australis* is from high altitudes in the Andes; its generic name refers to the peeling bark.

*Drimys winteri*, Winter's Bark is native to the central Andes, it has aromatic bark that was once chewed by sailors to combat scurvy and so was collected by Francis Drake. The fruits have been used as a pepper substitute.

*Luma apiculata*, Chilean or Orange-barked Myrtle is closely related to *Myrtus*, it has aromatic almost black foliage, abundant white flowers, cinnamon bark which peels to white and fruits which are edible and sweet. It has become naturalised in some gardens in southern Ireland.

*Phymosia umbellata*, Mexican Bush Mallow has deep red mallow-like flowers and green velvety leaves. Apparently hummingbirds love it.

*Styrax japonicus*, Snowbell Tree, from Japan, has buds like furry mittens, massed snow white flowers which droop below every branch in early summer to be replaced by

fruits like dangly earrings. It is hardy yet delicate, a lovely tree to plant.

*Poncirus trifoliata*, Japanese Bitter Orange is closely related to Citrus and has white flowers, yellow inedible fruits, trifoliate leaves and spines. It is from China and Korea and makes an attractive thorny hedge which is hardy.

*Juglans nigra*, Black Walnut is native to eastern and central USA. The leaves have 10-23 slender leaflets often with no end one, and are finely toothed and downy underneath. This specimen is the County Champion for girth and height and was laden with fruit.

*Ailanthus altissima*, the Tree of Heaven is native to northern China but naturalises in US cities and Southern Europe as it survives in dry polluted urban sites. Male trees are reputed to smell bad. It has extra-floral nectaries like *Prunus*.

*Phellodendron amurense*, Amur Cork Tree resembles Ailanthus but the fruit is a drupe and the winter buds are enclosed.

*Pterocarya x rhederiana*, the hybrid of *P. fraxinifolia* (Caucasian Wingnut) and *P. stenoptera* (Chinese Wingnut), is a big tree with long hanging fruits, and this specimen is a County Champion.

We compared the cut stumps of a Beech and a Giant Redwood to see different thickness of the bark and the annual rings. We also listened to water moving up Eucalyptus Trees.

And also, we visited the *Quercus robur* planted in memory of Vera Gordon and were very pleased to see it looking healthy and already supporting four types of gall! (Marble, Spangle, Silk-button and Artichoke).

## 26 September 2009 Ormskirk and Lathom

Leader: Peter Gateley

Continuing the weather theme for this September it was a dullish, but dry, Saturday morning when 19 members and friends met up at the recently refurbished Ormskirk Station. We headed north from the station through the exotic plantings of the car park, noting the purple berries on Box-leaved



Honeysuckle *Lonicera pileata*; a blackbird was seen feeding on them, no doubt leading to potential spread of this Chinese species as the effects of global warming increase seed viability. A wide range of typical railway weeds was recorded as we headed to the north-east towards the route of the disused line that once ran through Skelmersdale to St Helens. The low embankment here has been colonised by mature oak growth, both *Quercus robur* and *Q. cerris*, with traces of a former acidic sward surviving where the shade is not too dense and where not swamped by exotic species spreading from the adjacent back gardens. A rampant specimen of Mile-a-minute Vine *Fallopia baldshuanica* was noted and its numerous inflorescences compared with those of its cousin, Japanese Knotweed *F. japonica*).

After leaving the old railway we stopped at an old roadside sandstone wall that has been colonised by patches of a large-flowered Yellow Corydalis *Pseudofumaria lutea*. Walking along residential streets we found a range of typical pavement-crack and gutter species and admired various weeds and exotics in front gardens, including Field Woundwort *Stachys arvensis*. We turned off the pavements onto the track known as Ladies' Walk, heading north through the former Lathom estates of the Earls of Derby. Here a range of typical arable field edge weeds was seen, many of them still flowering, including Field Pansy *Viola arvensis* and Corn Spurrey *Spergula arvensis*, with many others in full seed. Towards the northern end of this track a recently planted hedge of native species was thriving on the eastern side, beyond this was a potato field with a tall fringe of weeds, mainly Red Goosefoot *Chenopodium rubrum* and Common Orache *Atriplex patula* but also with much Redleg *Persicaria maculosa* and a little Leafy-fruited Nightshade *Solanum sarachoides*. This field edge marked the end of the second 1km square recorded, with 126 vascular species noted along the route.

Following lunch we proceeded along Castle Lane towards the village of Westhead. All along the right-hand side of the route there was a broad seeded edge to the ploughed field, with sparse wheat ears intermixed with many seed-rich weeds such as red goosefoot and redleg and also scattered Maize *Zea*

*mais* and Sunflower *Helianthus annuus* plants. Gallant Soldier *Galinsoga parviflora* was present in the edges near to Westhead. South from Westhead a footpath led us through a much more-enclosed landscape with tall mixed hedges and many trees. Just to the east of the church there is a sheep-grazed field with a short sward dominated by Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, on the edge next to the church was a flourishing strip of Michaelmas Daisy *Aster* sp. in full flower.

We next called in at Ruff Woods, where a birch and oak-dominated woodland has established around a disused sandstone quarry. The ground conditions are predominantly acidic and patches of Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and Wavy Hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* were noted amongst abundant fern and bracken growth. Various fungi were also noted, including earth ball, tawny grisette and a species of bolete. Walking from the woods, into Ormskirk, various wall-ferns were noted from garden boundaries and just before returning to the station a large population of Water Bent *Polypogon viridis*, that has recently established in one of the main car parks, was visited.

17th October 2009  
Caergwrle,  
Leaders: Pat Lockwood &  
Peter Gateley

The Bus Replacement service from Bidston, arriving in Caergwrle one hour later than expected, was quite disruptive to our plans, especially as it was also discovered that our usual car park was also out of bounds. It was possible to let many members know about this in advance via email and the website, but many apologies to those members who did not get to find out in time. In all 18 of us gathered for a walk through glorious autumn weather.

Our route took us along the highways and byways of this lovely area, hoping to find the hedgerow dripping with lots of berries, hips and haws; but, surprisingly, these were generally lacking. Either the birds must have had a very good feed, or the season for fruit setting has been poor here this year. The fungi were also hiding from us, probably due



to the recent prolonged dry periods. Those few we did see were examined and named for us by Tim Rogers: *Panaeolus accuminatus*, Smallbracket fungus (*Bjerkandera adjusta*), Bonnet Mycena (*Mycena galericulata*), Yellow wax cap (*Hygrocybe chlorophana*).

The first tree of note along the walk was the Blue Atlas Cedar *Cedrus atlantica* f. *glauca*, a lovely tree, and we also looked at the Purging Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica* and Wild Damson *Prunus domestica*, full of fruit. We were very lucky to see the Small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata* exhibiting upright fruits at the end of the branches.

Surprisingly some grasses were in good flower, particularly the False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata* and False-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*. At the end of the walk we found Wood Melick *Melica uniflora* flowering on shady road banks, along with ferns, the Western Polypody *Polypodium interjectum*, Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, the latter turning rich Autumn colours.

Although a note was made of all plants seen, only the ones in flower are listed here, a surprising total for mid-October: Fox and Cubs, known also as Orange Hawkweed, *Pilosella aurantiaca*, White Dead-nettle *Lamium album*, Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare*, Marjoram *Origanum vulgare*, Self-heal *Prunella vulgaris*, Balm *Melissa officinalis*, Wood-sage *Teucrium scorodonia*, Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Hedgerow Cranesbill *Geranium pyrenaicum*, Herb Bennet *Geum urbanum*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, Red or Pink Campion *Silene dioica*, Nipplewort *Lapsana communis*, Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Wall lettuce *Mycelis muralis*, Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, Agrimony (still in good flower and wonderful seeds, *Agrimonia eupatoria*) and most abundantly Ivy *Hedera helix* with flower heads buzzing with insects..

Amongst the Autumn fruits we did find were Duke of Argyle's Tea plant *Lyceum barbarum*. It was noted that the current

wonder-food, the Goji Berry, is actually the dried fruit of this species. White Bryony *Bryonia dioica* was a glorious sight in flower and early fruit, and also Black Bryony *Tamus communis* with swags of scarlet berries.

We were pleased to have Tom Smale with us again after a long absence, and we welcomed our new members, namely Helen Hebden, Matthew Bradman and Michael Penney and we do hope we will see you again soon. We were also very pleased to have Val Gateley along and wish him a full recovery, following a serious illness.

On a biodiversity note, we would like to mention the site of a Badgers' latrine alongside one of the footpaths up the base of Hope Mountain. The stools were full of damson stones and bramble seeds and when we did the recce the site was in perfect order, however by the time of the field meeting it was a bit past its sell-by-date.

Because of the train problems, members faced a longer trip home than anticipated, hopefully there were no hitches on your journey.

Patricia Lockwood



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A small piece from an unidentified local paper from a few years ago was amongst the material that Keith had for the newsletter. This is what it said.

### **Very Apt**

I'm glad to see from a copy of the Liverpool Botanical Society's bulletin, which has arrived on my desk, that the members keep well within the spirit of their title. The secretary lives in Alder Grove, the treasurer in Yew Tree Road and the bulletin editor in Eccleston Park.

A list of forthcoming events shows that Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood will be talking about flowers, illustrated by slides provided by Mr. Green, while a visit in March to Neston will be led by Miss Moss.



