

BOTANY NOTES

1997

1997 has been one of the quietest years for along time probably due to the finishing of recording for The Atlas Flora of Somerset in 1996. This super flora was published in November 1997 and is available at £20.00 from the address below.

Ismelia carinata (Tricolor Chrysanthemum) found by Paul Green was the only new species for the county in 1997 growing on the shores of Sutton Bingham reservoir probably introduced with seed fed to the many ducks and geese, as many other exotic plants were also growing near by: *Datura stramonium* (Thorn-apple), *Amaranthus retroflexus* (Common Amaranth) noted by Geraldine Crouch, *Lavatera trimestris* (Royal Mallow), *Setaria pumila* and *S. viridis* (Yellow and Green Bristle-grass) noted by Paul Green.

Rupert Higgins found the most exciting record, *Polycarpon tetraphyllum* (Four-leaved Allseed), only the second county record growing in sparse open grassland on very sandy soil in two separate spots in the grounds of the School joining Windwhistle Road, Weston-super-Mare, associated species included *Aphanes arvensis*, *A. inexpectata*, *Trifolium dubium*, *T. micranthum*, *Geranium molle*, *Carex arenaria* and *Plantago coronopus*.

A walk along the River Barle from Landacre Bridge to Sherdon Hutch lead by Caroline Giddens for the Exmoor Natural History Society on 30th July which was really enjoyed by all. *Vaccinium oxycoccos* (Cranberry) was found to be more plentiful than thought by the River Barle in the Sherdon Hutch area. New to the area was *Mentha x piperita* (*M. aquatica* x *M. spicata*) (Peppermint) found by John and Di Maxwell. New for the 10km square (SS83) was *Salix x sericans* (*S. viminalis* x *S. caprea*) (Broad-leaved Osier) and *Dryopteris carthusiana* (Narrow Buckler-fern) both found by Paul Green.

The Somerset Butterfly group manages the old quarry land joining Thurlbear Wood which is an extremely rich area of old grassland and scrub, very good for plants, butterflies and the Nightingale. Over the years many exciting plants have been found such as *Clinopodium acinos* (Basil Thyme), *Gentianella anglica* (Early Gentain) and this year Mark Galliot refound *Anagallis arvensis* ssp. *coerulea* (Blue Pimpernel) in small quantity, last reported from this area in 1944 by W. Watson.

Another area managed by The Somerset Butterfly group is Haddon Moor Butterfly reserve, a super rich boggy field opposite Upton church. This field seems full of surprises, in 1996 Mike Edgington discovered a few plants of *Pinguicula lusitanica* (Pale Butterwort), this being the first record for this 10km square (SS92).

Heather Winship has spent several years looking at *Chamaemelum nobile* (Chamomile) in the British Isles to see why this plant is declining, looking at all the present and past sites. A visit to Holford Combe with Mr. C. R. Hall was rewarding when they found one very small patch 20cm x 30cm where it was last reported in 1989 by myself and in 1990 by Robert Cropper. They also visited Ash Priors Common where a patch roughly 3m x 3m was refound after an absents of 101 years. The only mention of it being known from this site was in 1896 by R. P. Murray.

One clump of the increasing alien grass *Phalaris aquatica* (Bulbous Canary-grass) was found by John P. Martin on the sea wall/edge of golf course, Clevedon. This is a perennial grass that seems to persist well and sometimes also spreads by seed, as it seems to be doing on the verge of A358 near Capland. Another *Phalaris* that is becoming an increasing arable weed in the county is *P. paradoxa* (Awned Canary-grass) which was found to be abundant in a field at Ashill by Paul Green.

A group of ten botanists met on the 21st September in the Lockside carpark to search the banks of the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal for *Leersia oryzoides* (Cut-grass). This grass is thought to be extinct, last reported in 1992. The group spent the day searching without any luck. The only new record of the day was the discovery of a small colony of *Medicago polymorpha* (Toothed Medick) by myself on the east bank of the canal, by handrail almost next to the bridge of Bankland lane. Growing with it was *Medicago lupulina* (Black Medick) and *Medicago arabica* (Spotted Medick) which was good as one could compare the differences between the three.

Several botanists also met at Uphill to check on the very small colony of *Aster linosyris* (Goldilocks Aster), to their dismay it looked if someone had been to the site and dug several pieces up. Not far from the Aster on the grassy slope over looking the boat yard, was an abundance of *Gaudinia fragilis* (French Oat-grass). Wayford Woods, locally famous for its Rhododendrons and Camellias, turned up several good records in 1997. A visit in October by myself was very rewarding with 30 plus plants of *Stratiotes aloides* (Water-soldier) in the pond at the southern end of the wood, this being the first record for vice-county 5. Also not noted from the pond before was *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort) and several none flowering plants of *Rumex hydrolapathum* (Water Dock) around the margins. By the pond, not noted from the wood before was a very small stand of *Fallopia sachalinensis* (Giant Knotweed) amongst Bamboo and a small stand of *Fallopia x bohemica* (*F. japonica* x *F. sachalinensis*) on the margin of the pond. On the gravel drive at English Natures head quarters at Roughmoor, Simon Leach reported two coastal species, *Spergularia marina* (Lesser Sea-spurrey) and *Parapholis incurva* (Curved Hard-grass) as established, this is the only record for the later away from the coast. He also noted *Filipendula vulgaris* (Dropwort) as naturalised in the lawns, it is believed these three species arrive as seed stuck on the soles of footwear.

To round the year off Di Maxwell spotted a single clump of *Viscum album* (Mistletoe) on a mature Medlar tree in the grounds of Clarks Village, Street. This is the first reported sighting on this host since 1972, when it last seen at Kingsweston by C. A. Howe. All records are welcome and may be sent to the address below.

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