

DERBYSHIRE FLORA PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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Number 16 – Winter 2006/Spring 2007

1. EDITORIAL (AW)

As progress on the flora has been slower this year than hoped, this newsletter is somewhat briefer than previous ones. However, some advances have been made and there has been considerable recording activity as noted below. Please note that there will be no indoor meeting this year though there will be a programme of outdoor meetings as usual. There is also a new plant quiz to help the funds.

2. RECENT PLANT RECORDS FOR VC 57 (AW)

As usual this is my personal selection of recent records, so please forgive me if I have not included your favorite find. However, I have tried to include all new county records and any records for plants not seen for fifty years or more.

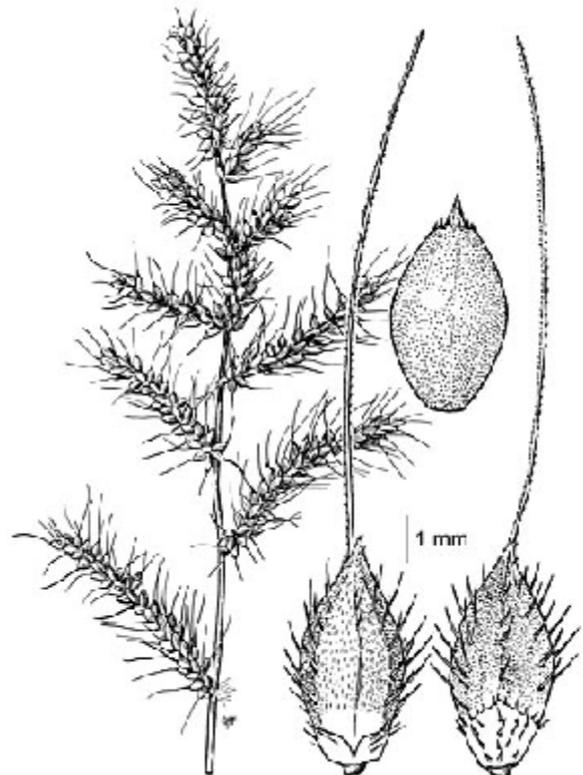
2.1 New County Records

***Arum italicum ssp. italicum* (Italian Lords-and-Ladies)** This subspecies was recorded as a well established clump on a road verge at Middle Moor, Ashover (SK3163) by Nick Law and Kieron Huston on the 26th April 2006. It was no doubt a garden throwout as it is the form often grown in gardens.

***Berberis julianae* (Chinese Barberry)** One bush of this was discovered on the line of the old Derby Canal, at Longmoor Road (SK4734) by Roger Martin on 18th April 2006. This shrub is

frequently planted in gardens but was possibly bird-sown here.

***Brunnera macrophylla* (Great Forget-me-not)** This was found on the lane leading to Hazelbarrow Farm (SK3681) by Ken Balkow on 6th May 2006. It was probably a garden throwout being a typical cottage garden perennial.



Echinochloa crus-galli see page 3

***Cerinthe major* (Greater Honeywort)** A single plant was found growing on waste ground at Station Road, Sandiacre (SK4836) by Roger Martin on 10th May 2005. This is a plant of the

Mediterranean region, which is increasingly grown in gardens. We may be seeing more of this locally with global warming.

***Cotoneaster dielsianus* (Diels'**

Cotoneaster) A single plant of this deciduous shrub was found on the bed of a disused railway at Long Eaton (SK4934) by Roger Martin on 12th August 2005. It was probably bird-sown from a garden planting.

***Eichhornia crassipes* (Water Hyacinth)**

Plants of this were found growing on the surface of the Old Hay Brook between Totley and Dore (SK3080) in early August 2006 by Ken Balkow. It was discovered with specimens of *Pistia stratiotes* (Water Lettuce). Both plants are now commonly available from plant nurseries for growing in garden ponds. Abroad this can be a serious



pest of waterbodies but thankfully the climate is generally too cold here for it to overwinter.

***Elaeagnus angustifolia* (Narrow-leaved**

Oleaster) One tree of this introduced species was found, at the side of the Mapperley Brook, between West

Hallam and Ilkeston (SK4442) by Claire Smith on 17th June 2006. It was a probably a survivor from an earlier time when the area concerned was the ornamental garden of some railway or colliery-man's office.

***Euphorbia oblongata* (Balkan Spurge)**

As the name suggests, this is an introduced plant from the Balkans. It was found established in a hedge at Hazelbarrow Farm (SK3681) on 15th February 2006 by Ken Balkow. Although usually a garden throw-out, it did not appear obviously so at this location.

***Nectaroscordum siculum* (Honey**

Garlic) This was seen by Peter Llewellyn, apparently well naturalized, between the path and the riverbank in Wye Dale (SK1072) on June 15th 2006. However, we subsequently learn that it was actually discovered there by John Hodgson in May 2002. It is grown in flowerbeds and our plants probably result from the dumping of garden waste.

***Phalaris paradoxa* (Awned Canary-**

grass) Several plants were seen growing on disturbed ground, at the entrance to West Park Cemetery (SK4833), by Roger Martin on 20th June 2005. They were growing with plants of *P. canariensis* (Canary-grass) and possibly originated from birdseed. Derbyshire birds having exotic tastes!

***Pistia stratiotes* (Water Lettuce)** See

entry for *Eichhornia crassipes* above.

***Rubus loganobaccus* (Loganberry)**

This was found by me in deciduous woods by the roadside in Pleasley Vale (SK5164) on 6th May 2006 during one of our outdoor meetings. Here it was probably a garden throw-out or the result of some bird's lunch.

***Salix x stipularis* (Eared Osier)** This was another discovery of mine on one of our outdoor meetings last summer. About ten plants in all were observed growing along the brook in Tideswell Dale (SK1573) on 1st July 2006. These had been probably planted as part of a landscape improvement scheme.

2.2 Other Interesting Records

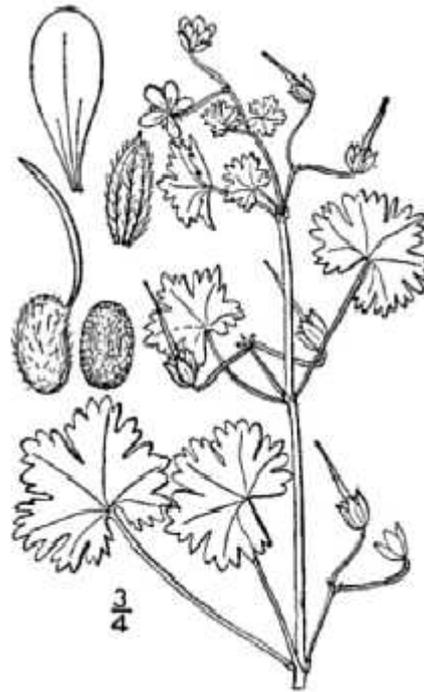
***Carex digitata* (Fingered Sedge)** This was found on another of our outdoor meetings in Pleasley Vale, near the edge of the Park (SK5165), on 6th May 2006. This sedge has long been known as a very rare plant of the Carboniferous limestone in Derbyshire but this was the first record of it from the Magnesian Limestone in the county. There were only two clumps on a shaded limestone outcrop just above the top of some stairs.

***Carex ornithopoda* (Bird's-foot Sedge)** This is the other very rare sedge of calcareous grasslands in the county. It was found on another of our outdoor meetings, to the new DWT reserve at Cramside Wood on 3rd June 2006. Seven or more clumps were found in open, unshaded grassland at SK1673 high up upon the side of the dale.

***Echinochloa crus-galli* (Cockspur)** This introduced grass was found growing at the base of a wall by a path in Markeaton Park (SK3337) by myself on 10th September 2006. It possibly came from birdseed and like many other aliens it may be responding to global warming by extending its range.

***Geranium rotundifolium* (Round-leaved Crane's-bill)** This plant had not been recorded in the county for over 100 years when it was found in Long Eaton (SK4934) by Roger Martin on 27th May

2006. It was growing in an area of disturbed ground in a bed of shrubs with a number of other weedy species. It may either have been hanging around locally, or it may have been reintroduced to our area with the shrubs.



Geranium rotundifolium

***Oenanthe fluviatilis* (River Water-dropwort)** This is another species that has not been seen locally for over one hundred years. It was found last year, in the center of the River Mease (SK2311), by David Broughton on the 25th July 2006. I say center of the river since the river here is the county boundary.

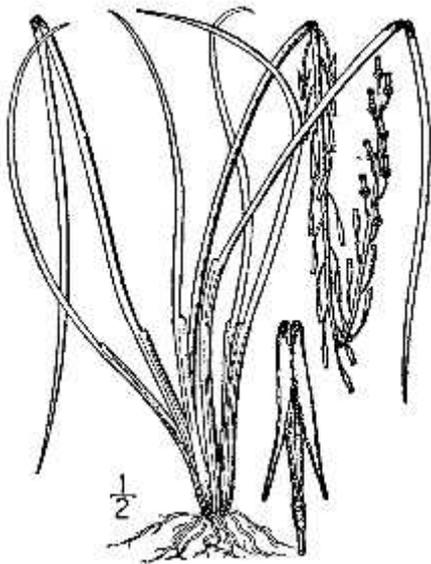
***Potamogeton compressus* (Grass-wrack Pondweed)** A healthy population of this was recorded growing in the Erewash/Cromford Canal at Langley Mill (SK4547) on 7th September 2006 by Philip Precey. This is only our second known extant population, and it appears to have survived only by growing in an area where it was undisturbed by boats.

***Setaria pumila* (Yellow Bristle-grass)**

This rare alien grass was found at two places in Allestree Derby this year. One was in the ornamental flowerbeds in Markeaton Park (SK3337) where it was found by myself on 10th September 2006. There appears to have been an upsurge of alien grass records over the last few years probably related to both global warming and an increased feeding of garden birds.

***Triglochin palustris* (Marsh**

Arrowgrass) A large population of this rare marsh plant was found by Penny Anderson near the Cat and Fiddle in the Goyt Valley (SK0071) during September 2006.



Triglochin palustris

2.3 Roadside Seaside Plants Again

The presence of seaside plants along roadsides in the county due to the increasing use of salt for de-icing is a well-known phenomenon. However, it still came as something of a surprise to me to find four such plants growing together on a roadside at Sinfin in Derby (SK3631) on 13th June 2006. There was the very frequent Danish Scurvy-grass (*Cochlearia danica*); the less common

Reflexed Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia distans*) and Lesser Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia marina*), plus a plant I had not come across before as a roadside seaside plant Narrow-leaved Pepperwort (*Lepidium ruderale*). It will be interesting to see if these plants retreat back to the seaside when less salt is needed on our roads due to global warming.

2.4 A Rare Fern

Some rare plants are like buses, you wait ages for one to come along and, when it does, another identical bus comes along just behind it, and then another! I felt like this last year over *Polystichum setiferum* (Soft Shield-fern). I first found one plant on the side of the Cromford Canal at SK3951 on 19th August 2006. I then found another at the base of a wall at Muggington Church (SK2842) on 28th August. It is surprising how often you find just one plant of this fern apparently a long way from any other members of its species. Finally I found the plant at several locations in a more natural setting at Linacre Woods (SK3372) on 9th September. These first two localities were new to me. However, I had seen the plants at Linacre Woods around a quarter of a century ago in virtually the exact same parts of the woods.

3. FLORA PROGRESS (NM)

Some progress has been made with preparing the flora this year, though two bereavements, two job re-organisations, two children and an ongoing illness means I must apologise for not making anywhere like the progress we all would have wished for. Despite that, our volunteer data inputting team have caught up with the outstanding data. Another 30,000 records have been processed since Jan 2006. Alan has drafted a few more species accounts, specifically those for the problem

groups of the Hawkweeds, Dandelions and Blackberries. This leaves only newly discovered species and extinct plants still to draft. So far, I've managed to update his initial accounts for the following Stace families: 1-63; 79-90 and 166. A number of county experts have kindly agreed to write introductory chapters for us.

4. FLORA – THE WAY FORWARD (AW & NM)

The most immediate task now is to complete the editing of the drafts. If anyone would like to comment on the drafts for particular species or groups of plants, these can be provided. Whole families are the best to look at, but individual species can be printed out too, should you want to check out your favourite plants. Please send a list to Nick Moyes.

5. INDOOR SPRING MEETING 2007(AW)

Nick and I have decided not to organise an indoor meeting this year due to pressure of work at the museum and the lack of progress during 2006.

6. OUTDOOR MEETINGS 2007 (AW)

I am currently beginning to organise a programme of outdoor meetings for the summer. I should therefore be pleased to receive any suggestions for sites to visit along with details of the interest of the sites. There must be public access to the site or we must have the owner's permission to visit. There also needs to be car parking nearby.

7. FUND RAISING - THE FLOWER PEOPLE QUIZ (AW) and SSSIs (NM)

A written quiz sheet, with prizes for the winners, is on sale to raise funds to help publish our new flora of Derbyshire. The quiz features cryptic clues, botanical puzzles and general

knowledge questions with a floral theme. The closing date for entries is Saturday 14th April 2007. If you would like to obtain a copy, please send an SAE and cheque for £1.00p payable to "Derbyshire Flora Committee" to "Flora Quiz" 12 Chertsey Road, Mickleover, Derby, DE3 0RA.

We are grateful once again Sue Jones and John Bland for organising this. At the time of going to press it has raised almost £500.

Roger Martin and Nick have undertaken to computerise some of the rarest plant records held by Natural England (formerly English Nature/NCC) for plants on SSSIs. When completed this spring, it will generate a significant sum for the Flora Committee funds.

7. BSBI PROJECTS (AW)

There is only one new project I know of this year. This is an initiative between the BSBI and Plantlife to draw up a list of what they are calling Important Plant Areas (IPAs) from across the United Kingdom. IPAs are not to be another legal site designation like SSSI but a mechanism for identifying and highlighting the very best sites of international importance for plant diversity. I have been sent a proposed list of such sites for Derbyshire, which I am asked to comment on by mid-February. Derbyshire is currently represented by three sites: the Peak District Dales (including Lathkill Dale), the South Pennine Moors (including Bleaklow & Kinder) and Gang Mine. Any ideas for extra sites of international importance should be forwarded to me and I will pass a compilation of my suggestions, and those of others, on to Plantlife.

8. DERBY MUSEUM HERBARIUM (NM)

Roy and Ann Branson, two of my volunteers, recently completed a two-year project to computerise all 8,400 specimens in the Derby Museum Herbarium. The ultimate aim is to make this database accessible from the Web so anyone can call up and see what material the herbarium holds of a particular species. At present it is only available at the museum, as much work still needs to be done to prepare the data ready for Internet access. But already it has made access to the records so much easier and reduces handling of specimens themselves. We can now push back our knowledge of some of the earliest county records, and are even finding one or two species which could turn out to be overlooked new county records.

A preliminary analysis shows that 40% of our herbarium specimens are from Derbyshire. Sixty percent of plants were collected before 1900; 10% are undated, and 20% were collected between 1960 and 1980. Impressively, 25% of specimens have a determination of some sort! Whilst not all the recent voucher specimens have been mounted and incorporated, it is telling to see how few specimens have been collected in modern times. This may reflect conservation concerns, but I would still urge all botanists to retain and press specimens they collect for determination. It appears we don't have modern examples of most common species, which is a worry.

So, what is our earliest Derbyshire record? It's Yew, *Taxus baccata*, from Allestree collected by Joseph Whittaker

in 1841 – just before he set sail for Australia to work as a gardener to the governor of South Australia.

Many thanks are due to Ann and Roy for their labour of love, and to Roger Martin who is now working to extract key records for the Flora, is attributing VC numbers, proof reading and checking nomenclature, and also adding recent voucher specimens.

9. ENQUIRIES (AW & NM)

Any enquiry concerning the Flora scheme in general or requests for recording cards can be directed to either of us. Ideally, questions about either plant determinations or areas to record should be directed to Alan Willmot. To enquire about computerisation of records and to request particular up-to-date species maps contact Nick Moyes. Details of how we can be contacted are:

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Information on the current state of recording plus detailed monad and tetrad counts can be found on our website:

www.dbrc.freeseerve.co.uk click on "plants".