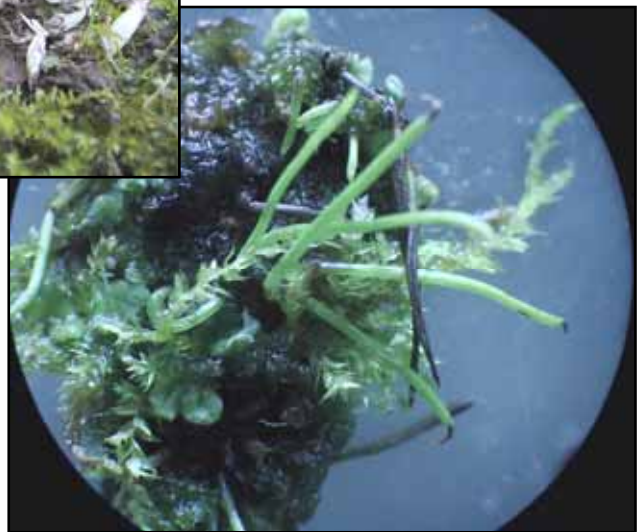
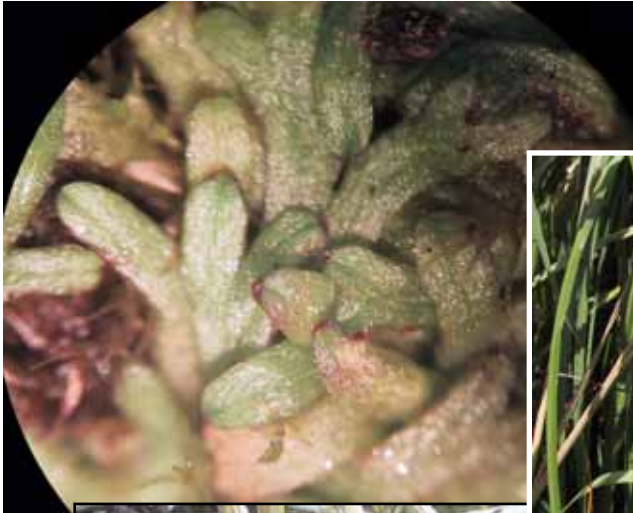


# Shropshire Botanical Society

## Newsletter

Autumn 2003



# Shropshire Botanical Society Newsletter No. 9

## Autumn 2003

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The Shropshire Botanical Society  
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Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the various authors, and are not necessarily those of the Society

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Editor: Alex Lockton

Distribution maps produced using DMap for Windows, supplied by Dr Alan Morton

# Botanical Society News

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Sarah Whild

It is very sad to report that Franklyn Perring, a key figure in the revival of botany in Shropshire during the 1960s and 70s, has died at the age of 76. Obituaries were published in The Times, Telegraph and Guardian, but we have written one about his work in Shropshire specifically, which is on the following pages.

This newsletter is slightly late, as we were awaiting news about the relaunch of our web database – but that has not happened yet, so we have to proceed anyway. The web site will soon be updated to include all botanical records for Shropshire from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the year 2000, very nearly 170,000 in all. These will be available for viewing and using for personal research by any member of the society, but we have not yet decided what sort of access to give to commercial users. Please keep an eye on [www.shropshirebotany.org.uk](http://www.shropshirebotany.org.uk) for developments.

Members are all cordially invited to our winter meeting, which will follow the same format as in recent years.

## Winter meeting

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 2pm, Preston Montford

Speaker: Dr Tim Rich of the National Museum of Wales

Subject: new research on *Sorbus*

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The year to date has been an interesting one in Shropshire. Several of the key rare species have happily been rediscovered, including Purple Ramping-fumitory still *ad sepes prope Shrewsbury* (hedges near...), where the first record ever was made by Dillenius in 1726.

Our database has grown by nearly 15,000 records to 318,000 since the last newsletter. Some of this is due to recording for Local Change, and we are very grateful to Ruth and Allan Dawes, Hugh Cutler, Maurice Hoare, Ray Knowles and everyone who came to the recording day in Clun for their contribution. But we are far from completing the project and, if anyone else has lists to submit, they would be very welcome. Recording cards and species lists can now be downloaded from a web database accessible from [www.bsbi.org.uk](http://www.bsbi.org.uk).

Anyone who has been following the progress of the Local Records Centre proposals over the last twenty years or so will be unsurprised to find that it has gone pear-shaped again. The consultants' report proposed a simple solution: take all the records and income from the naturalists' societies and set up a professional records centre. Wisely, they recommended that neither the Wildlife Trust nor the County Council had the capability to operate it, but guess what? – the Trust and council immediately took control of the process anyway, and the naturalists were left with no option but to walk out.

There is now a promising new development at Shrewsbury Library which looks as if it could be a cooperative process to enable the naturalists to make their information available for public use, rather than an attempt to displace us entirely. There are details to be worked out, but as a way forward it seems to have potential. See page 16 for details.

## Recorders in 2003

John Akeroyd  
Frank Bentley  
Tim Blackstock  
Pete Boardman  
John Clayfield  
Mags Cousins  
John Cox  
Hugh Cutler  
Allan Dawes  
Ruth Dawes  
Joan Fallows  
Fiona Gomersall  
Pam Green  
Richard Gulliver  
Alan Hale  
Chris Hogarth  
Jean Hooson  
Dr H.V. Hughes  
John Ibbott  
Mike Kelly  
Geoffrey  
Kitchener  
Ray Knowles  
Nick Law  
James Lawson  
Stephen Lewis  
Alex Lockton  
Ken Merrifield  
Desmond Meikle  
John Mason  
Stuart Moodie  
Jane Morris  
Elise O'Donnell  
Steve O'Donnell  
Tess Pearson  
Jackie Pedlow  
Franklyn Perring  
Jan Pursaill  
Bert Reid  
Tim Rich  
Mark Richards  
Elizabeth Roberts  
Robin Smith  
Nick Stewart  
Rob Stokes  
Kate Surry  
Sue Swales  
John Swindells  
Tina Teearu  
Kate Thorne  
Rosemary  
Thornes  
John Tucker  
Sarah Whild  
Philip Whittle  
Daniel Wrench

# Franklyn H. Perring, 1927-2003

Sarah Whild & Alex Lockton

Frank Perring was one of two people responsible for the resurrection of botany in Shropshire in the 1960s. After George Potts died in 1945 there had been few notable botanists active in the county and for a few years the county had even lacked a county recorder. All that changed, however, when Charles Sinker and Franklyn Perring arrived. Sinker was here first, charged with operating the newly-formed Field Studies Council at Preston Montford. Frank Perring, at that time working on the BSBI Maps Scheme, started running field courses from the adult education college at Attingham Park. His first records for the county are dated 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July 1958, and are of *Hieracium acuminatum* and *H. sabaudum* at Highley and in the Wyre Forest. Evidently he was already thinking ahead to the Critical Supplement. Over the next 39 years he contributed a remarkable amount to the study of the flora of the county, running plant identification courses for the FSC almost every year and co-authoring the Ecological Flora in 1985. The distribution map of his records show how many parts of the county he visited. Eventually his personal tally amounted to 1,555 records of 712 species, mostly rare and uncommon ones, throughout the county. We will never know how many records of common species he made as the convention at that time was not to retain recorders' names.

Two of the most significant contributions Franklyn made to the study of the Shropshire flora were the Floras of Earl's Hill (1966) and Attingham Park (1975). Earl's Hill was given to the Wildlife Trust as its first reserve in 1963, and Sinker & Perring compiled a detailed species list, by compartment, to act as a baseline for future monitoring. That report was never published, but copies are kept by the Trust and it is still one of the most detailed and valuable surveys they have. The Flora of Attingham employed the same method of detailing the species in each compartment, and was compiled with students on the residential field courses he taught there. It was 'published' as a stapled set of typed sheets, but a copy from the collection of the late David McClintock was recently auctioned for over £30, which caused Franklyn great amusement, and set him planning a second edition, or at least a reprint.

As far as we can ascertain, Frank Perring never made any really significant finds in the county. This is typical for someone whose interest was in education rather than exploration. However, there are plenty of good records to his name, such as:-

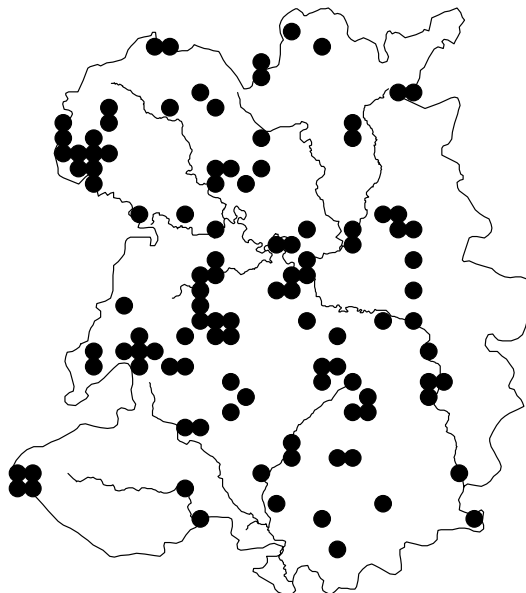
- *Osmunda regalis*, Royal Fern, Shrawardine Pool, 1981 (not seen there again).
- *Stellaria pallida*, Lesser Chickweed, Attingham Park, 1970.
- *Rumex maritimus*, Golden Dock, at Attingham Park (1972) and Pole Mere (1989).

- *Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*, Black Poplar, at Aston Clun in 1978 (the only time it was ever recorded there!)
- *Salix x mollissima*, Sharp-stipuled Willow, Atcham, 1972.
- *Sorbus croceocarpa*, Orange-berried Whitebeam, Wombridge, 1974 (1<sup>st</sup> v.c. record).
- *Galeopsis angustifolia*, Red Hemp-nettle, Llanymynech, 1992.
- *Littorella uniflora*, Shoreweed, Brown Moss, 1972.
- *Alisma lanceolatum*, Narrow-leaved Waterplantain, Blists Hill, 1975.
- *Alopecurus aequalis*, Orange Foxtail, Attingham Park, 1972.
- *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, Northern Marsh-orchid, Attingham Park, 1972.

It is equally noticeable that he made few incorrect records, despite recording a lot of difficult taxa and subspecies.

Franklyn had plenty of warning of his impending death from cancer and, typically for him, increased his workload to get as much done as possible in the limited

F.H. Perring's records, 1958-1997



time left to him. This included delivering all his files and correspondence relating to Shropshire into the safekeeping of the Botanical Society, so we may be able to extract more records over the next few years. His interest in conservation is betrayed by the fact that most of his lists were for sites, not grid squares; and we can now incorporate both formats into the database, so we shall.

# New Records

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Alex Lockton

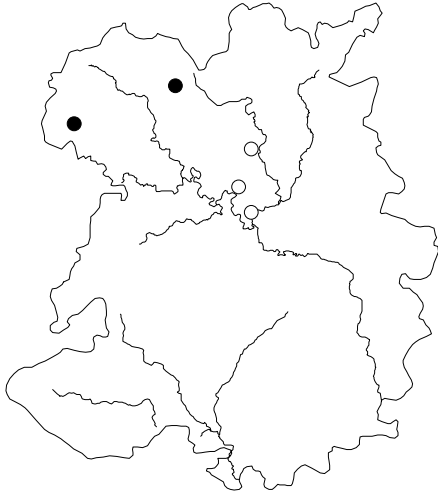
## First county records

- ❖ Rob Stokes found *Berberis julianae* C.K. Schneid., **Chinese Barberry**, established by the side of the Newport Canal (SJ749197) (conf. S.J. Whild, Hb. SFG) on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2003. This is a first county record for a frequently planted but only occasionally naturalised shrub.
- ❖ Geoffrey Kitchener visited Shropshire this year and recorded several new hybrid willowherbs, including:-
  - *Epilobium x novae-civitatatis* Smejkal (*hirsutum* L. x *ciliatum* Raf.) at Eaton Manor Farm, SO5090, 3<sup>rd</sup> September.
  - *E. x limosum* Schur (*montanum* L. x *parviflorum* Schreb.) at Blists Hill, SJ694033, 30<sup>th</sup> August.
  - *E. x dacicum* Borbás (*parviflorum* Schreb. x *obscurum* Schreb.) at Eaton Manor Farm, SO501899, 29<sup>th</sup> August.
  - *E. parviflorum* Schreb. x *ciliatum* Raf. at Blists Hill, SJ694033, 30<sup>th</sup> August.
  - *E. tetragonum* L. x *ciliatum* Raf. at Blists Hill, SJ694033, 30<sup>th</sup> August.
  - *E. obscurum* Schreb. x *ciliatum* Raf. at Eaton Manor Farm, SO501899, 29<sup>th</sup> August.
- ❖ Maurice Hoare, Ray Knowles and Hugh Cutler had the honour of being the first to record **Flame Nasturtium** *Tropaeolum speciosum* Poepp. & Endl. in the wild in their Local Change square, SJ31A, on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2003.
- ❖ The common subspecies of **Hogweed** is *Heracleum sphondylium* L. ssp. *sphondylium* which, if you agree with the current taxonomy, accounts for all our Shropshire plants but has never actually been recorded to subspecies before. Kate Surry and Mark Richards corrected this deficiency whilst on a course at Preston
- ❖ Montford this year, recording it in Preston Rough, SJ4314, 30<sup>th</sup> July (conf. S.J. Whild). In their thoroughness, they also made a first county record for the ubiquitous native **Nipplewort** *Lapsana communis* L. ssp. *communis* in the same place.
- ❖ Dr Kitchener found the **Bindweed** *Calystegia x lucana* (Ten.) G. Don. (*C. sepium* (L.) R. Br. x *C. silvatica* (Kit.) Griseb.) at Ludlow Castle, SO508745, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2003.
- ❖ **Garden Cat-mint** *Nepeta x faassenii* Bergmans ex Stearn (*N. racemosa* Lam. x *nepetella* L.) was found by John Swindells and Nick Law at Prees Heath, SJ5536, on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2003.
- ❖ Rob Stokes found **Laurustinus** *Viburnum tinus* L. near the Newport Canal a SJ749197 on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2003.
- ❖ **Large-flowered Waterweed** *Egeria densa* Planch. is a South American aquatic that resembles Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis*, but is generally welcomed because for many years it was only found in canals in Manchester, where outflows from factories kept the water warm. Sarah Whild and Sue Townsend collected from a farm pond near Preston Montford, SJ431142, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003, where it had been introduced by the owners.
- ❖ **Nonesuch Daffodil** *Narcissus x incomparabilis* Mill. (*N. poeticus* L. x *pseudonarcissus* L.) is a common garden plant and doubtless often established in almost wild situations, but Sarah Whild gets the credit for the first formal record at Benthall Edge, SJ6503, on April 18<sup>th</sup>.

## Rare Plants

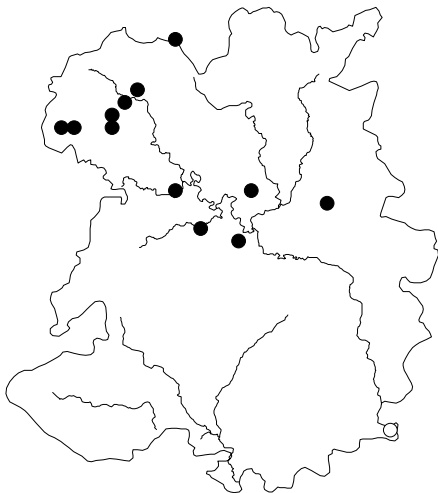
- ❖ We have looked for charophytes in Crose Mere several times over the last few years, and finally had some luck this year with **Opposite Stonewort** *Chara contraria* A. Braun ex Kuetz. SJ433303, S.J. Whild & A.J. Lockton 5<sup>th</sup> July 2003, det. N.F. Stewart, Hb. SFG, bringing the current number of sites for it in the county to two.

*Chara contraria*



- ❖ Delicate Stonewort *Chara virgata* Kuetz. is slightly less rare, but it was fascinating to find it in tiny quantities at Berrington Pool on 6<sup>th</sup> August this year (AJL, SJ524072, det. N.F. Stewart, Hb. SFG) where it was last collected by James Groves in 1881.

*Chara virgata*



- ❖ Arguably the rarest plant in Shropshire is **Channelled Crystalwort** *Riccia canaliculata* Hoffm., which was originally found at Brown Moss in 1975 by Jeff Duckett of Queen Mary College, London. It was still there this year on the shore of the main pool, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2003, SJ56343944, AJL, conf. A.D. Hale & T.H. Blackstock, Hb. BBSUK; but it has apparently not been recorded in Britain since 1981. It is illustrated on the front cover of this newsletter.

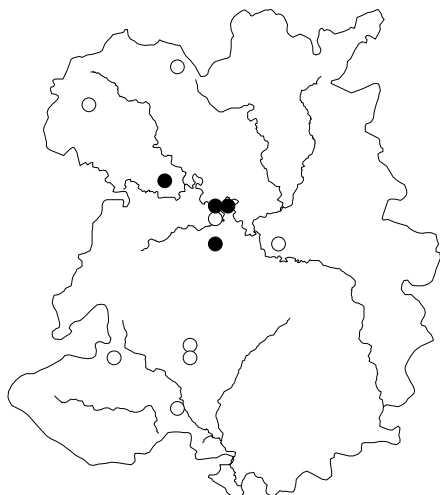
*Riccia canaliculata* in Britain



Threatened Lower Plants Database

- ❖ Another rare bryophyte is **Field Hornwort** *Anthoceros agrestis* Paton, which turned up on a field margin near Morton Hall, SJ301240, AJL, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2003, Hb. SFG. There have been no records of this species in the county since 1993, but it is surely overlooked. A photograph is on the front cover.
- ❖ **Purple Ramping-fumitory** *Fumaria purpurea* Pugsley is now officially back in Shropshire after an absence of nearly a hundred years. This species was first recorded in Shropshire in 1726 by J.J. Dillenius (although not identified until much later) and there are records for it here by William Leighton (1839), William Moyle Rogers (1912) and James Cosmo Melvill (1912). The last record of it in Shropshire was in 1923, when it was collected at Stokesay Castle by N.D. Simpson. A 1978 record for Church Stretton was never confirmed. In recent years, however, it has turned up in a spot close to St. Mary's Water Gate in Shropshire (SJ494126, S.J. Whild, March 2000); in a hedgerow at Conover (SJ493063, Whild, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2000); Underdale (SJ507139, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2000), and Ensdon (SJ4016, M. Hoare, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2000). Specimens have been determined by T.C. Rich as *F. purpurea*, although some are what Pugsley described as var. *brevisepala*, which is a variety he knew of only in Shropshire. *F. purpurea* is a national BAP species and is considered Nationally Scarce in Britain.

*Fumaria purpurea*

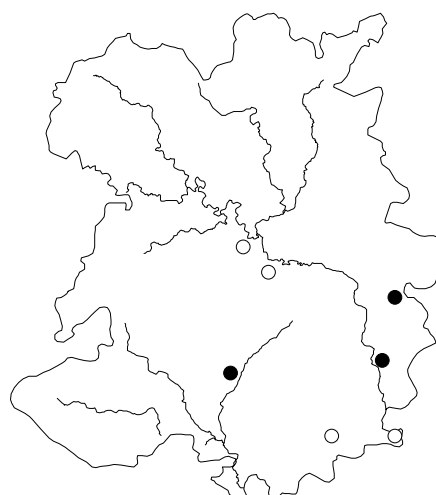


- ❖ The **Least Water-lily** *Nuphar pumila* (Timm) DC. at Cole Mere is famous for being the only native population of this glacial relic in England. It was first found there by Thomas Cox in 1854 (probably there – Cox never revealed his precise location) and persists to this day, but a survey by students from the University of Birmingham this year showed that it has declined from four patches around the margin in 1986 to just one today. The cause of its decline is probably shade from overhanging trees, and English Nature have just started a management programme, but whether it will be enough to save this rare plant has yet to be seen.
- ❖ **Small Water-pepper** *Persicaria minor* (Huds.) Opiz has only been recorded in Shropshire twice before this year, and neither of those records are substantiated. But perhaps the warm weather favoured it, because it turned up in two locations this summer, including at Brown Moss, SJ559395, 24<sup>th</sup> August 2003, A.J. Lockton, det. J.R. Akeroyd, Hb SFG, where it was previously recorded by Ro Fitzgerald in 1984. Kate Thorne also found it near Edgerley, SJ3417, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2003, conf. J.R. Akeroyd, Hb. SFG.
- ❖ **Floating Water-plantain** *Luronium natans* (L.) Raf. was refound at Bomere Pool, SJ501079, by Sarah Whild on 24<sup>th</sup> June (Hb. LIVB, SFG) where it was last recorded by Edward Rutter in 1955. Bomere is now thought to be the only mere that still contains this rare

plant but, as there is no public access, we would ask people who want to see it to visit the Montgomery Canal at the Vyrnwy Aqueduct instead.

- ❖ Sarah Whild spotted a few small clumps of **Grey Sedge** *Carex divulsa* Stokes ssp. *divulsa* at Dudmaston Dingle, SO74308835, during the Botanical Society meeting there on September 6<sup>th</sup> (Hb. SFG). The only other recent record for this species was in 1997, when Rob Stokes found it in Badger Dingle. It is a common enough species in the south, but Shropshire is just on the edge of its range. It also grows, apparently spontaneously, in a garden in Aston Munslow.

*Carex divulsa*



- ❖ A fine discovery this year was of **Northern Marsh-orchid** *Dactylorhiza purpurella* (T. & T.A. Stephenson) So6 by Robin Smith at The Riddings, SO1986, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2003. Ruth Dawes and Tess Pearson took measurements and photographs of the plants to confirm their identity to Sarah Whild. This is the first record since 1986 of a species that was thought to have become extinct in the county. Its distribution in Britain is the opposite to that of Grey Sedge, being common in the north but again with Shropshire on the very edge of its range.

# How Field Clubs Came to the Border

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## The Early Years of the Montgomeryshire Field Society and the Border Field Club

Mary Hignett

Shropshire has for a long time been a Mecca for geologists owing to the wide variety of the rocks from the ancient pre-Cambrian grits and flags of the Long Mynd, through the Lower Palaeozoic series which gives rise to a succession of ridges and valleys such as Wenlock Edge to the coalfields of the Wellington area. Beyond these, newer rocks of Mesozoic Age, mainly shales and sandstones, form the farming lowlands of the north and east and all are overlain by the boulder clay deposits of the Ice Age which also gave rise to the meres and mosses of the Ellesmere district. Volcanic activity produced further variation of rocks as on the intrusive masses of Corndon and the Breidden Hills.

Such a variation of bedrock has naturally resulted in many variations of soil and these in turn reflect the differences in vegetation and the resulting insect and bird populations they support. It is not surprising therefore that Shropshire provides a rich hunting ground for naturalists. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century sparser populations meant that many regions only contained one person with the knowledge, interest and time to appreciate the wealth of its natural history and so we have records of individuals, often clergymen, working alone to record this wealth for posterity. With the Industrial Revolution, however, the increased population and improved transport meant that these early naturalists could now meet like-minded people with whom to discuss their findings and hone their skills. So was born the cult of Field Clubs.

In Shropshire and the borderlands, clubs formed to visit and study sites of natural history and archaeological interest and to hold meetings to discuss these subjects. These included the (Oswestry and Welshpool) Naturalists Field Club and Archaeological Society in 1857, the Powysland Club in Welshpool formed in 1867 and the Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club, formed by the amalgamation of the Caradoc Field Society and the Severn Valley Field Club in 1883. The Oswestry Institute in the form of the Offa Field Club was based in Oswestry and formed in 1888.

Some of these clubs still flourish more than a century on, although the main emphasis has gradually changed and they now specialise in archaeology and history studies of which local families are able to assist with information. The Powysland Club developed into an important feature of Montgomeryshire with its own museum and regular publications, while the Offa Field Club, less open to change, still ran excursions to study interesting plants up till the start of the Second World War, though after the deaths of the founder members, less dedicated newcomers saw it tottering on the brink of extinction. The rescue of an interest in natural history was largely due to the enthusiasm and scholarship of two local women who met at meetings of a music society in Newtown and formed a friendship, which resulted in the formation of two new and active field clubs.

The Montgomeryshire Field Society was formed by Miss Janet McNair. Her grandfather was Lewis Pugh, Liberal Member of Parliament for Cardiganshire, and she spent a privileged and happy childhood at Pennal Towers in the Dovey Valley, where she rode over the nearby moors, happy to be part of the beautiful scenery and to listen to the bird song. Her father died when she was very young, her two brothers were away in boarding school, so that she and her mother struck up a happy companionship which was to last almost a century. Music was part of their mutual enjoyment and Janet learned to play the cello well.

When they moved to Lower Garth, Guilsfield, she missed the open moorlands, but compensated for this by exploring her new surroundings and making friends with the people. The lanes now became increasingly fascinating as Margaret Asterley, whom she had met at music meetings in Newtown, introduced her to the many wild flowers and helped her to recognise them. Janet already knew most of the common birds, but wild flowers now became a great interest. She started a book in which she wrote down the names of all the flowers she had found and their locations – a book that she envisaged would become a flora of Montgomeryshire which she guarded zealously and would not let out of her hands.

In 1945 the war ended and the lifting of restrictions paved the way for a resurrection of old interests. Janet joined with Captain Evans to start the Welshpool Music Club, then turned her attention to forming the Montgomeryshire Field Society in 1947 to open folks' eyes to the wonders and beauty of nature. In this she was stoutly supported by Pryce Carter, a local boy who had become a lecturer in botany at Aberystwyth University. He gave lectures and led expeditions ensuring that the Society made an interesting start.

Always looking for new opportunities, Janet persuaded the local authority to set up a course of lectures on natural history. By great good fortune the lecturer appointed was William Condry. His wide knowledge and easy delivery soon made him popular and he joined the society. With two such gifted and enthusiastic helpers the society could hardly fail.

Janet, flushed with the success of her venture into botany, was soon looking for other worlds to conquer. One day soon after my appointment to teach geography at Welshpool High School a pupil came to me at the end of the day and said a lady wished to speak to me. The "lady" turned out to be a Janet MacNair who said she wanted to learn about geology. Still obsessed with this fascinating subject the request didn't seem strange and I invited her to join me in exploring the region in preparation for a field meeting I had promised to lead for the Midland Branch of the Geological Association.

This turned out to be an inspired invitation. Places to explore recommended by the local geological memoir

were proving to be difficult to locate, often remote abandoned quarries and river banks in unfamiliar country, but also hard to reach on my bicycle. Now I had merely to quote the names and I was whisked off quickly in Janet's old but reliable car. She quickly learnt to identify the important fossils and when the Midland Geologists arrived she proved an invaluable helper.

Later we made a good collection of Montgomeryshire specimens and these were housed at Lower Garth, together with much other Montgomeryshire Field Society property such as books and correspondence for which the society having failed to find a permanent home had no accommodation. The geology specimens were arranged as an exhibition which could be conveniently assembled at any meeting, such as the County show, where our society was invited to stage a display.

As a youngster Janet was very shy and at children's parties would usually sit silently taking everything in. When she made a remark, which was later reported to her mother, the astonished parent said "You mean that Janet actually uttered!" Now at the height of her interests in and concern for the wild places she uttered forcibly and relentlessly as she fought to preserve sites, including Craig Breidden, Marrington Dingle, the Guilsfield Branch of the Montgomery Canal and the Dulas Valley. At times the arguments got heated as the planners regarded her as a dinosaur unwilling to accept the new developments which would attract tourists to the town. Far from that, Janet was a voice before her time saving the county's treasures as any conservation society would have done, but they were still ideas well in the future.

One of her pleasures was to take her mother to a hotel in some secluded spot in the country, settle her there with the Daily Telegraph crossword and an order for tea, then set out often with me for company to explore a lonely valley as a reconnoitre for a field society excursion. She also kept in touch with the wider happenings in the world of natural history. In the early 1960s she travelled to Llanrhaeadr to meet Perring and Walters to help them in their quest for wild flowers for their *Atlas of the British Flora* and she worked as recorder for Montgomeryshire for the BSBI from 1969 to 1974.

Meanwhile another field club was coming into life beyond the border in Oswestry, started by her friend who had introduced her to the love of wild flowers.

Margaret Asterley spent her childhood in Lichfield where her father was a bank manager and she received the typical education of a middle class girl at the turn of the century. Observations on their afternoon walks were conscientiously recorded in a nature diary giving rise to an appreciation of nature and music lessons were thorough enough for her to become an accomplished player on both piano and violin.

When the time came for her to earn her own living teaching music was the obvious choice and she moved into Birmingham where custom was more easily available. She was a born teacher, loved by children who appreciated her friendly manner and sense of humour. She had several riddles for them, all associated with her love of natural history. They included riddles such as "Why

did the owl, howl?" Answer – "because the woodpecker would peck her." And "Why didn't the viper vipe'er nose?" Answer – "because the adder add 'er handkerchief."

She enjoyed teaching but also kept up with adult friends and a continuing contact with the natural world by joining the local branch of the British Empire Naturalists Association. The members organised excursions into the country areas around Birmingham including all night walks which left them by sunrise sitting on the verge of a country road listening to the dawn chorus.

World War Two was not a pleasant time to live in Birmingham and soon after it finished Margaret moved to Llanymynech, the former home of her family. Here she became enamoured with the wide variety of natural history and soon made friends with naturalists who appreciated her straightforward rather astringent manner. She also boarded three delightful girls in the school holidays to supplement her precarious funds.

She was often to be seen walking with John Owen, a retired schoolmaster, who forcibly made known to the small boys of the area the folly of robbing nests for he was a keen and knowledgeable ornithologist

Getting much enjoyment out of the Montgomeryshire Field Society excursions, Margaret formed an Oswestry Branch of the British Naturalists Association, whose Birmingham branch had given her much enjoyment. She had a courageous independent spirit, but little of the organising ability of Janet. She just hoped for the best and the fact that the society flourished was largely due to the unselfish support of Mr Wallace Pugh, her president. She was secretary and I recall one AGM when she couldn't read the minutes for she had left them at home on the piano and the treasurer could not give his report as he had not received the accounts from the secretary but all was accepted in good humour.

She complained to my brother-in-law when he was tuning her piano that she couldn't get enough pupils for her piano lessons. When he suggested that somewhere in Oswestry would be more convenient than expecting them to trail to Pen-y-foel she seemed surprised but gladly availed herself of his offer to use the front room of our house. This proved to be a good idea for on her teaching day she stayed to tea, entertained us with amusing stories and often brought some unusual insect for my father to identify for she admired him as an entomologist. Sometimes her offerings were more bizarre and I admired them while keeping my hands firmly behind my back. They included a live grass snake which curled in a friendly way around her neck and a box of wasps, carefully picked out as male drones which had no sting. Sometimes as an enjoyable diversion she would take these unconventional exhibits to enliven a biology class she taught in the Girls' High School. If the headmistress, alerted by the wild shrieks, looked through the window of her classroom, only to be confronted by a swarm of wasps flying about the room, she sensibly retired and left the organisation to Miss Asterley till peace descended with the bell for dismissal.

She continued to arrange Saturday expeditions which needed some organisation as our only means of transport were feet or the service buses. She also contributed records of plants found on the Montgomeryshire part of Llanymynech Hill for the Montgomeryshire Field Society Annual Report, led excursions for that society too, and regaled us with snippets in Welsh learned from her grandmother who lived on a farm near Llanfyllin. It was a busy and happy life.

One Saturday I accompanied her to Whixall Moss to work out details for an excursion she had promised to lead for the Montgomeryshire Field Society. When she announced that the Moss was so badly burnt that the trip would have to be cancelled and later could eat no tea, I realised that she was a very sick woman. An operation revealed inoperable cancer and she was transferred for nursing to Morda Infirmary. This did not suit Janet at all, and she quickly arranged for her to be transferred to a private nursing home in Pant, at whose expense I never knew.

Margaret was cremated and when in 1956 we went to scatter her ashes on Llyncllys Hill, the blasting from Porthywaen quarry seemed like a military salute. Janet wanted far more of a memorial and wrote to the Ordnance Survey to persuade them to mark on their maps the rocks above her cottage at Llanymynech as "Asterley Rocks" and a memorial tablet was let into the rocks themselves. A similar explanation was mounted on a post of wood from the Leighton Redwoods and placed at the start of the path to the rocks. Unfortunately, this only briefly survived the air gun pellets of the local youths. But the rocks remain...

Margaret's society remains also, for it was too well built to crumble with her passing. Her post as honorary secretary was taken over by Gwyneth Pierce Jones who ran it unselfishly for about 30 years when ill-health forced her resignation. During this time, the society detached itself from British Naturalist Association and took the name Border Field Club.

Janet had continued to run the Montgomeryshire Field Society and monitor any threats to her beloved countryside. She was determined and very strong for although she was 10 years older she always managed to outstay and outpace me on our exploratory walks. With time the work grew harder and it was an attack of rheumatic fever which led her to accept the freely given offers of help from society members. Her mother's death at 102 was a further debilitating influence for they had been companions and confidantes for nearly a century. In the early 1970s she was persuaded to resign as secretary and her job was taken on by a number of volunteers. After the meeting she said to me "I feel free as a bird", so her self-imposed duties must by then have become a burden. She handed over the job as recorder for the BSBI to Phyllis Parr in 1974, who in time passed it on to Doris Pugh in 1977.

Janet obviously recognised Doris as a true plant lover who recorded flowers just for the joy of seeing them and not as a step to their own aggrandisement for she gave Doris her precious book of records which no one else had been able to prise from her. Doris, with the help of Peter Benoit, arranged these records along with any other extant

records and they were published, as Janet would have wished, by the North Wales Naturalists' Trust and the Montgomeryshire Field Society as *Plants of Montgomeryshire* in 1977.

After years of hard work, Janet's brain finally gave out and when epilepsy struck she was taken to Welshpool Victoria Hospital where the staff nursed her devotedly for more than a year. She died in 1975 and was buried in Guilsfield Cemetery, but the church service seemed so cold and impersonal without even a mention of her name that our society decided to hold our own memorial service. For this they chose the little church of Pennant Melangell for Janet made Saint Melangell her heroine for saving the little hare from Brochwel and his huntsmen. She adopted her picture as the logo for our society symbolising that we would save wild creatures from the destructive pleasures of man. The service turned out to be a happy affair with her friends and relations there, each making his own contributions in the way he was most able. Instruments, songs, talks, and readings all spoke of our memories rather than our loss. Donations given in her memory were put into a Memorial Fund by the Montgomeryshire Field Society.

Back at Lower Garth, Millicent Williams gave invaluable help in removing the great accumulation of Montgomeryshire Field Society property – books, papers, fossils, etc and tried hard with little permanent success to find storage facilities.

Over the border, Charles Sinker *et al* were busy producing a Flora of Shropshire, Gwyneth Pierce Jones was amongst the small number of Border Field Club members who volunteered to record. A new member, who claimed to have no knowledge of botany, but who owned a car, volunteered to chauffeur any recorders who had no transport. Thus Marjorie Wainwright became involved by taking Gwyneth to record, largely in the Old Oswestry area, and such was Gwyneth's enthusiasm that Marjorie quickly learnt to recognise many flowers, and in order to develop this new interest made friends with our botanist nonpareil, Doris Pugh.

Doris, with her discerning eye and consuming interest, was not only a wonderful field botanist, but also generous to a degree, willing to offer hospitality and time to anyone interested in her beloved wildflowers. Soon Marjorie was something of a specialist and able to join the Shropshire Flora recording team.

When the *Shropshire Flora* was published, Doris, with much encouragement from Ian Trueman, lecturer at Wolverhampton University, planned to produce a similar Flora for Montgomeryshire. She sadly died in 1985, when the work was still in its infancy, and donations in her memory were added to the Montgomeryshire Field Society Memorial Fund. Marjorie took over, not only her post as Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) recorder for Montgomeryshire, but also, with Ian, the organisation of work for the Montgomeryshire Flora. This was to be an independent project, although members of both Field Clubs worked as recorders and by 1995 a great mass of information had been arranged into an erudite and attractive volume.

When the cost of publication came into the picture the Montgomeryshire Field Society found itself able to provide much needed help. Amongst its assets was a Memorial fund of money donated in memory of Janet and Doris and this seemed to be an ideal way to use it. As it wasn't sufficient, the Montgomeryshire Field Society talked the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust into putting up a similar sum and the new Flora became a reality.

Its mass of information and attractive presentation made it a good seller and in a short time the loans of the Montgomeryshire Field society and the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust were repaid in either kind or hard cash. Complimentary copies were given to each of the secondary schools and libraries of the county. As further cash from sales came in, Marjorie saw that it was paid in to the Montgomeryshire Field Society to augment its Memorial Fund.

There were many members and supporters who gave and continue to give sterling support to the running of these two field clubs. As recollections are personal and subject to the memory of the story teller, it would indeed be inappropriate to pick out individuals.

So the history of the field club has turned full circle from the early multi-interest gatherings to the modern conservation clubs concerned mainly with preservation. Somewhere in the middle, the field clubs study mostly the life and surroundings of our wild creatures and so are becoming increasingly popular with students of natural history. The membership of both the Montgomeryshire Field Society and the Border Field Club have increased considerably with numbers to whom the founders are merely names in history. Their members' gain is access to gatherings of like-minded naturalists, their loss, the companionship of the two inspired if unassuming ladies whose enthusiasm brought the clubs into being.

# The botanical exploration of the Oswestry district

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Alex Lockton & Sarah Whild

The Oswestry area is a part of Shropshire which is distinctive but rather difficult to define. English Nature identified it as a “natural area” in the 1990s, but chose the A483 as a rather unnatural boundary. Here we have defined it as the English parts of SJ22 and SJ23, which is equally artificial and not all that different, but more convenient for the purpose of analysing the botanical records. Our purpose is to make a first effort at describing the main events and the significant species of this area. To do this thoroughly would be a very large task, but hopefully this article will be a useful starting point.

The ancient history of the Oswestry area is very well described by Phillip Oswald in Sinkers’s Flora, and before him by P.W. Carter in the Transactions of the Caradoc & Severn Valley Field Club in 1956. It starts with John Leland’s observation of the oaks (presumably *Quercus petraea*) on Old Oswestry (SJ2931) and Rev. William Salusbury’s Mistletoe *Viscum album* at Cerrig Bridge (SJ2837) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Edward Lhwyd made a few records for the area in about 1680, mostly at Llanforda (SJ2628), where he was brought up. He is alleged to have planted Southern Polypody *Polypodium cambricum* and Yellow Figwort *Scrophularia vernalis* there. The only rare plant he found in the area was Pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium*, which was at a place he called Gwern Vele, although no-one is entirely sure where that was. Pennyroyal has only ever been found in the district twice – the other record being by Dr John Evans in about 1805. Although it is now considered a Red Data Book species, it was once widely cultivated and may have been established along roadsides and in wet fields when the climate was warmer. Both Lhwyd and Evans were recording in the depths of the Little Ice Age when southern plants were on the retreat.

Richard Hill Waring lived at The Hayes, Oswestry (SJ2830) for a time and recorded Greater Broomrape *Orobanche rapum-genistae* and Globeflower *Trollius europaeus* on his own land in about 1770. The only other site for the broomrape in the area is at Old Oswestry, where it was first recorded by John Thompson in 1995. This is a Nationally Scarce species that could well occur elsewhere in the district, although it is not a characteristic plant of limestone. Globeflower, by contrast, is confined to the north-west of the county, and is one of the key species of the area. It was subsequently seen at The Hayes by Thomas Salwey in 1855 and by W.E. Beckwith in 1889. Beckwith thought it had escaped from the gardens, but even if that were true it would surely have come originally from somewhere close by. Waring also recorded Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* at The Hayes. It is not immediately apparent why several of the earliest botanists in Shropshire made records of this plant. It does not seem to have any herbal significance; perhaps it was once much rarer? Finally, Waring recorded

Crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* on Selattyn Hill (SJ2534), a plant that has never been recorded in the district again.

In 1796 Arthur Aikin made the first botanical records for Llanymynech Hill (SJ2622), notably Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, and Burnet Rose *Rosa pimpinellifolia*. These are all calcicoles, typical of the area and appropriate ones for Aikin to have noted. The Burnet Rose is also a Shropshire rarity, having been recorded as native in just four sites, all of which are in the Oswestry area. It is probably now restricted to just two – Llyncllys Hill & Bryn Celyn, where it was recorded by Ruth Dawes in 1999 and 2003 respectively.

Edward Williams paid very little attention to the area, recording just three species in about 1800: Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum* and Small-flowered Buttercup *Ranunculus parviflorus* in Oswestry (SJ2929) and Gipsywort *Lycopus europaeus* at Morda Pool (SJ2927).

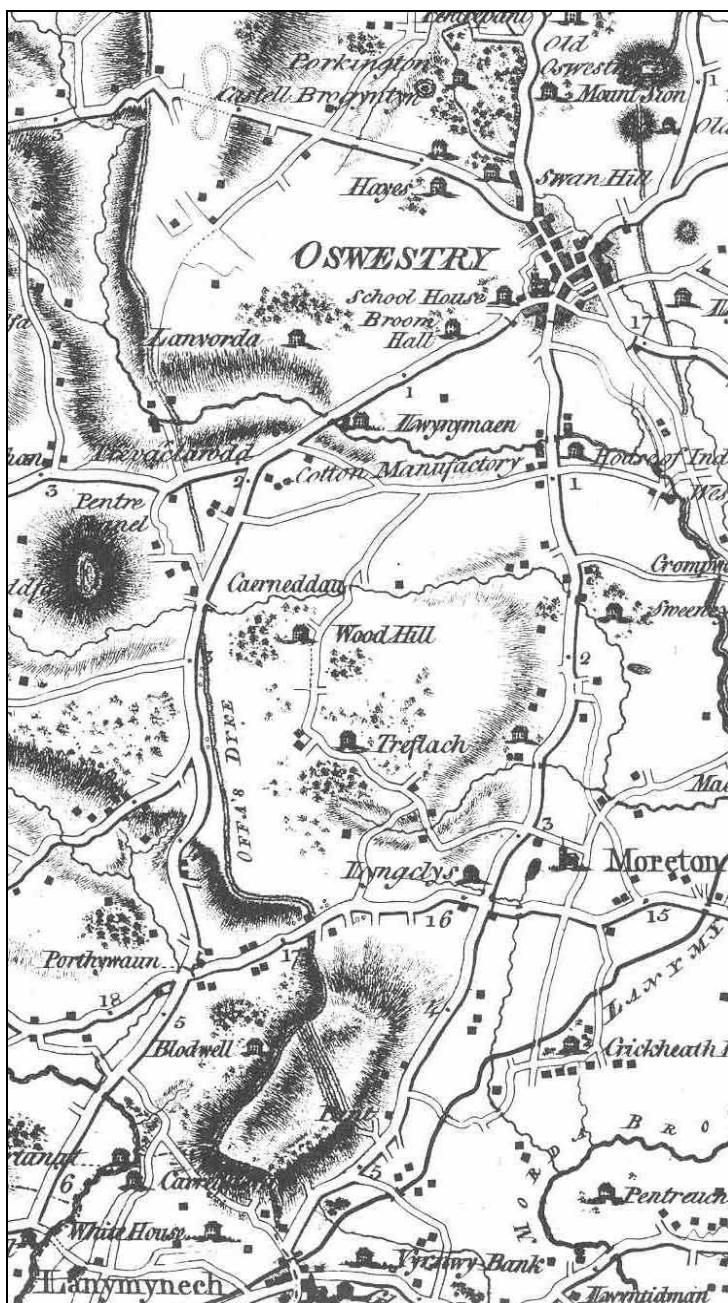
John Evans of Llwyn-y-groes (in Shropshire, not Montgomeryshire, as Oswald states in Sinkers’s Flora) made a few records that were published in Turner & Dillwyn’s *Botanists Guide* in 1805. The most significant of these were the Pennyroyal in “wet fields near Llanymynech,” and Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, at Llwyn-y-groes wood (SJ2820). The latter is now very rare in the county, with just three known sites, but two of those are in the Oswestry area, so it is clearly another speciality of the district.

In the herbarium of Cambridge University there is apparently a specimen of Marsh Gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe* from Llanymynech, dated 1829. The collector is not known, and there must be an element of doubt about whether it was a cultivated or perhaps a mislabelled specimen (it could have been the address of the collector, rather than the site for the plant) but, equally, there could really have been a site for this rarity in the district.

The first substantial recording effort was by William Leighton and his colleagues in the late 1830s and early 1840s. We know that Leighton spent the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June 1840 recording in Oswestry and Treflach Wood (SJ2624) because he collected specimens of Purple Ramping-fumitory *Fumaria purpurea* in the former and Wilson’s Filmy-fern *Hymenophyllum wilsonii* in the latter.

Leighton also found an interesting orchid, possibly Narrow-lipped Helleborine *Epipactis leptochila*, somewhere near Oswestry. It is difficult from his description to be certain of its identity, but it could well have been this as it is a plant of limestone areas. Elsewhere in Shropshire it is found only along Wenlock Edge.

The Oswestry District in 1808, by Robert Baugh



The soils of the Oswestry area are by no means all calcareous. Where there is Carboniferous limestone it is hard and less alkaline than the Silurian limestone along Wenlock Edge. Where humus builds up, especially on the tops of the hills, it can soon produce neutral or even acidic soils. By no means is the surface geology of the whole area limestone, either – more is millstone grit or coal measures. These acid soils of the region are perhaps underestimated. Leighton found Least Cudweed *Filago minima* on Sweeny Mountain (SJ2725). This is now quite a rare species in the county, and a typical one of U1 grassland – which is also the habitat for Upright Chickweed *Moenchia erecta* and Early Forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima*, which were recorded at about the same time by Thomas Salwey. Leighton was the first to make a good list for Morda Pool (SJ2927), where he found Alternate Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum*

*alterniflorum* and Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*, together with Globeflower.

John Dovaston contributed sixteen records for the district to Leighton's Flora, among which was one for Dwarf Elder *Sambucus ebulus* near Llanymynech. This is another calcicole, very rare in Shropshire now. It was probably introduced for its medicinal uses, but was very likely naturalised if Dovaston bothered to record it. He also found Bloody Crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum* on Blodwel Rocks (SJ2623) and Llanymynech Hill (SJ2622), doubtless native here. Unfortunately it has not been recorded in the district again. The only other place that it is considered native in Shropshire is on Earl's Hill.

Thomas Salwey was the other main contributor to Leighton's Flora, and by far the most productive botanist to have worked the Oswestry district. Although he was

born in Ludlow, he was Rector of Oswestry for nearly 40 years and knew the botany of the whole area exceptionally well. He was the first to find Rock-cress *Arabis hirsuta*, which in Shropshire is restricted to this area except for a few casuals along railways elsewhere. He also found Frog Orchid *Coeloglossum viride* somewhere near Oswestry. This was once quite a widespread species wherever there is base-rich rock, but now it is entirely restricted to this district. It is now only abundant in one site, though, and could be considered one of the most endangered plants in the county.

Another of Salwey's additions was Lily of the Valley *Convallaria majalis*. He made a good case for it being native on Sweeny Mountain (SJ2725) and it is still mapped as such in the New Atlas. Sinker later found it in Blodwel Wood, and it seems there were two other records for it in the district in Hamilton's lost Flora of 1913. It is reasonable to consider that this was a native, but it is probably gone now. He also recorded Field Gentian *Gentianella campestris* and Field Gromwell *Lithospermum arvense*, which could now both be extinct in Shropshire.

Other significant records by Salwey in Leighton's Flora include Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* in Blodwel Wood; Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, Lesser Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera bifolia*, Knotted Pearlwort *Sagina nodosa*, Wood Stitchwort *Stellaria nemorum* and Globeflower, all near Oswestry; Brookweed *Samolus valerandi* at Trefonen (SJ2526); and Yellow Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea* at Pentregaer (SJ2328) and Oswestry Racecourse (SJ2530).

A few years later, in 1855, Salwey published a list of plants of the parish of Oswestry which updates some of the records from Leighton's Flora and adds some new species. For instance, he found Brittle Bladder-fern *Cystopteris fragilis* in two places and Hutchinsia *Hornungia petraea* in three. The latter has never been recorded again in the county. He also saw Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis* at Craig Forda (SJ2529).

The only good records of Limestone Fern *Gymnocarpium robertianum* in Shropshire are those by William Whitwell, who saw it on the bridge over the Morda near Oswestry and on Llanymynech Hill in about 1864. In both places it was later collected by fern enthusiasts. The last known record of Wilson's Filmy-fern in the district was also in 1864, when Emily Farmer collected a tiny specimen at Treflach Wood. It may also have been eliminated from this site during the Victorian fern craze. Farmer has the distinction of being the first woman to make a botanical record in the district.

Stone Bramble *Rubus saxatilis* was apparently recorded at Craig Sychtyn (SJ2325) in 1866, but Sinker (1985) gives no source for that record. It was subsequently seen there by Ian Bonner in 1969, by Graham Walker in 1988 and by Rob Stokes in 1991. Bonner also found it at Nantmawr Quarry (SJ2524) in 1969 and Thomas Diamond recorded it at Trefonen (SJ2526) in 1891. Although none of these records is substantiated, the frequency with which it has been recorded makes it difficult to reject them, but it would be very interesting to re-find it in one of these sites.

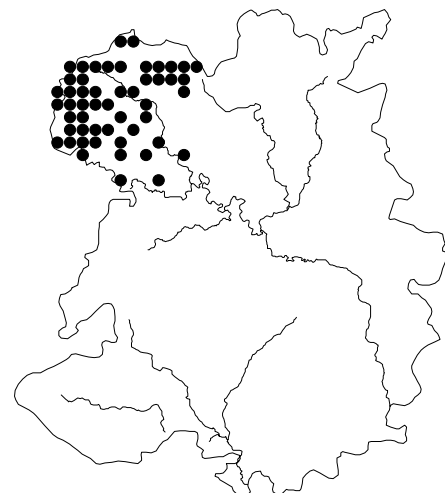
Elizabeth Jones is a rather mysterious botanist who was active in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. She collected Red Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis angustifolia* at Treflach Quarries (SJ2525) in 1872. This is another limestone plant which is now found in just two sites in the county – both in the Oswestry district. She also collected *Gentianella amarella* on Moelydd (SJ2425) in 1892. Other botanists of that time about whom we know very little include a certain G.R. (or possibly J.R.) Jebb of Birmingham, who visited the county "on occasion" and recorded Rustyback *Ceterach officinarum* on Crickheath Hill (SJ2723) in about 1877, and R. Anslow of Wellington, who also recorded some ferns in the district at about the same time.

William Beckwith made only a few records for the district in his various publications on Shropshire's Flora in the 1880s and 1890s. He was the first to record Traveller's Joy *Clematis vitalba*, at Llanymynech Hill in 1882. This species is not actually native to the area, although it is in some places in Britain, and it still behaves like an invasive alien, especially in abandoned limestone quarries.

Thomas Diamond's *Flora of Oswestry* was published in 1891. It is a reasonably thorough account of the botany of the district, compiled over a period of about three years from records collected by the Offa Field Club, the Oswestry & Welshpool Naturalists, and the Ellesmere Field Club. Oswald Mosley Feilden, rector of Welsh Frankton and president of the Offa Field Club, seems to have been the botanical expert while Diamond worked mainly as compiler. The book repeats some records from Leighton's and Salwey's lists, but includes 756 original records of 552 taxa in Shropshire, and a few more from neighbouring parts of Wales, from Chirk and Llangollen to the Breidden hills (the scope of the work being anything within eight miles of Oswestry).

Among the significant new records in the Flora of Oswestry are the first record of Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica* on Llanymynech Hill, Juniper *Juniperus communis* at Carreg-y-big (SJ2532) and Craignant (SJ2535), and Creeping Willow *Salix repens* at Glopa (SJ2631).

Diamond's coverage of Shropshire



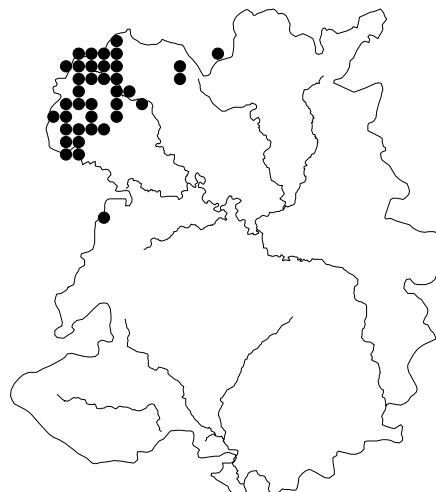
In 1892 William Phillips made a few more records for Glopa, a farm adjacent to Oswestry Racecourse, which had at that time fine grassland with *Orchis morio* and *Ophioglossum vulgatum*. In 1898 his nephew, W.P. Hamilton, recorded *Trollius europaeus* at Llyncllys Pool (SJ2824).

Isaac Watkin was a farmer who wrote a history of the parish of Llanyblodwel in about 1900, in which he gives a list of 78 species, several of which are surely incorrect, such as *Carex limosa* and *Carex bigelowii*. His list is only localised to the parish except for the grasses, which were recorded at Blodwel Hall.

Between 1901 and 1913 there are a few records for the district made by such people as G.A. Audley, William Whitwell, William Hamilton, William Beacall and Gilbert Johnson. These seem to have been as a result of visits by members of the Caradoc & Severn Valley Field Club in preparation for the abortive Flora of 1913, and we know there were more records from the notes that Charles Sinker made before the manuscript was lost. There was another trip by the C&SVFC to Llanymynech on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1920, but only three records survive, for: *Helianthemum nummularium*, *Thlaspi arvense* and *Linum catharticum*.

In the 1920s the most active botanist in the district was Ellen R. Lloyd. She lived in Gobowen, and was for a short period Recorder for Shropshire, although she personally only worked in the north-west. She published just 196 records between 1926 and 1953, but they are exceptionally detailed and interesting. Among the more noteworthy are London Rocket *Sisymbrium irio* at Oswestry, Least Pepperwort *Lepidium virginicum* at Gobowen, Red Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis angustifolia* at Porth-y-waen, and Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata* at Coed-yr-Allt Wood. Ellen Lloyd's most interesting discovery was of an unusual whitebeam at Llyncllys Hill. The specimens she collected were identified as probably *S. rupicola*, but it seems likely now that she was actually the first to find English Whitebeam *Sorbus anglica* there.

Records by E.R. Lloyd



Other recorders active in the area at this time include the ornithologist John Hugh Owen of Llanymynech (who was famous for his collection of over 6,000 birds eggs), Miss A.G. Cook of Pant, W.J. Slack of Cressage, and Llewelyn Cyril Lloyd of Shrewsbury.

In the 1950s Edward A. Wilson, a teacher at Ellesmere College, was active in the district (see Newsletter 7 (2002), 11-15), as was Norah Mackenzie, Margaret Asterley, Hilda Murrell, Honor Pendlebury, Hildred Bigwood, James Lawson, Mrs Tanner, Mrs Comber, Charles Sinker and Mary Hignett. The only new species, however, seem to have been found by visiting botanists such as Max Walters, Peter Sell, Vera Gordon and Claude Andrews, who concentrated on difficult taxa such as hawkweeds and water plants. In 1959, for instance, Vera Gordon made the first record of *Luronium natans*, from the Llangollen Canal near Chirk.

During the 1960s recording was at a low level, and Doris Pugh and Ian Bonner are among the few that recorded in the district, with scattered records by Stand Turner, Charles Sinker, Frank Perring, John Kiernan and Brian Seddon. Again there was little new, but many refinds of older records.

In the 1970s Sinker's Flora Project gathered pace, and the level of recording increased enormously. Of 28,000 botanical records currently known for the district, fewer than 1,000 were made before 1970. However, those 1,000 include most of the plants of ecological significance. The recent history is beyond the scope of the current study, but will hopefully be addressed another time.

## Characteristic plants of the Oswestry District

A draft list of the more significant species of the district.

*Antennaria dioica*, Mountain Everlasting  
*Anthyllis vulneraria*, Kidney Vetch  
*Arabis hirsuta*, Hairy Rock-cress  
*Carex muricata* ssp. *muricata*, Prickly Sedge  
*Chamaemelum nobile*, Chamomile  
*Clinopodium ascendens*, Common Calamint  
*Coeloglossum viride*, Frog Orchid  
*Convallaria majalis*, Lily of the Valley  
*Cystopteris fragilis*, Brittle Bladder-fern  
*Empetrum nigrum*, Crowberry  
*Epipactis leptochila*, Narrow-lipped Helleborine  
*E. palustris*, Marsh Helleborine  
*Filago minima*, Small Cudweed  
*Fumaria purpurea*, Purple Ramping-fumitory  
*Gagea lutea*, Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem  
*Galeopsis angustifolia*, Red Hemp-nettle  
*Gentiana pneumonanthe*, Marsh Gentian  
*Gentianella campestris*, Field Gentian  
*Geranium sanguineum*, Bloody Crane's-bill  
*G. sylvaticum*, Wood Crane's-bill  
*Gymnocarpium robertianum*, Limestone Fern  
*Helianthemum nummularium*, Common Rock-rose  
*Helleborus foetidus*, Stinking Hellebore  
*Hordelymus europaeus*, Wood Barley  
*Hornungia petraea*, Hutchinsia  
*Hymenophyllum wilsonii*, Wilson's Filmy Fern  
*Hypericum montanum*, Pale St. John's-wort  
*Juniperus communis*, Juniper  
*Lithospermum arvense*, Field Gromwell  
*Luronium natans*, Floating Water-plantain  
*Lycopodium clavatum*, Stag's-horn Clubmoss  
*Melica nutans*, Mountain Melick  
*Mentha pulegium*, Pennyroyal  
*Moenchia erecta*, Upright Chickweed  
*Myosotis ramosissima*, Early Forget-me-not  
*Myriophyllum alterniflorum*, Alternate Water-milfoil  
*Neottia nidus-avis*, Bird's-nest Orchid  
*Orchis morio*, Green-winged Orchid  
*Orobanche rapum-genistae*, Greater Broomrape  
*Parnassia palustris*, Grass of Parnassus  
*Pedicularis palustris*, Marsh Lousewort  
*Phegopteris connectilis*, Beech Fern  
*Pinguicula vulgaris*, Common Butterwort  
*Platanthera bifolia*, Lesser Butterfly-orchid  
*Polypodium cambricum*, Southern Polypody  
*Potamogeton alpinus*, Red Pondweed  
*P. friesii*, Flat-stalked Pondweed  
*P. praelongus*, Long-stalked Pondweed  
*Ranunculus parviflorus*, Small-flowered Buttercup  
*Ribes alpinum*, Mountain Currant  
*Rosa micrantha*, Small-flowered Sweet-briar  
*R. pimpinellifolia*, Burnet Rose  
*Rubus saxatilis*, Stone Bramble  
*Sagina nodosa*, Knotted Pearlwort  
*Sambucus ebulus*, Dwarf Elder  
*Samolus valerandi*, Brookweed  
*Scrophularia vernalis*, Yellow Figwort  
*Sedum forsterianum*, Rock Stonecrop  
*Sorbus anglica*, a whitebeam  
*Stellaria nemorum*, Wood Stitchwort  
*Teucrium chamaedrys*, Wall Germander  
*Trollius europaeus*, Globeflower  
*Viola lutea*, Yellow Mountain Pansy

# Secret Shropshire

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Dan Wrench

Secret Shropshire is a New Opportunities Fund project which will put archive material, records, images and documents about the archaeology, natural environment and local history of Shropshire onto a web site. It is aimed at lifelong learners who wouldn't normally come to a library or records centre and have little or no previous knowledge of these aspects of the county. In the near future users will be able to pursue their own interests through a searchable resource of digitised pictures and accompanying text. There will be maps, old documents, old and new photographs of buildings, towns, archaeological sites and finds, wildlife photos, landscapes, nature reserves, geology and much more.

The web site also features learning zones which are designed to give an overview of a particular subject assisted by images taken from the database of images available. Many of these learning zones will cut across the three main areas of Archaeology, Archives and Natural Environment.

As members of the Shropshire Botanical Society you may be aware that the services of the SBS online database had to be withdrawn. As part of our remit to provide interpretation of Shropshire's natural environment and encourage community involvement we have teamed up with the SBS to restore this service. The new service will include more recent records with the fine detail available only to members of the SBS. We are also working with the SBS toward providing this service for bryophytes of Shropshire.

This is a community website and we want input from the community. We would like people to email us with what they would like to see on the website, or perhaps they have material they want to include. We would also be interested in short written pieces on specific subjects that could form the basis of a learning zone. All contributors will be fully acknowledged and retain full copyright. Volunteers are also sought to help the mammoth task of putting a caption to each and every picture. Caption writing can be done at Shropshire Archive's office where we are based (next door to Shrewsbury library) or from home.

The Natural Environment Researcher is Dan Wrench who can be contacted at Secret Shropshire, The Shropshire Archive Centre, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ. [natenv@secretshropshire.co.uk](mailto:natenv@secretshropshire.co.uk).

## Golden Ragwort Award

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The award for the greatest damage to the environment this year must go to British Waterways for their failure to protect the wildlife interest in Shropshire's canals. This year they relaxed the restrictions on boat movements along the Montgomery Canal, and almost all aquatic plants disappeared immediately as the water became turbid, causing the loss of what was probably the last site in the county for Flat-stalked and Grasswrack Pondweed, *Potamogeton friesii* and *P. compressus*.

It seems that all the canals in Shropshire are now largely degraded as far as nature conservation is concerned. There were four that were SSSI and Prees Branch Canal was considered a Grade 1 site under the Nature Conservation Review – the highest accolade a site can get. Surely this level of destruction is too much? If you suggest to BW staff that what they are doing is wrong, the response you tend to get is "if we're not allowed to redevelop the canals we will neglect them and all the wildlife will be lost anyway." But if British Waterways are responsible landowners, it is surely their job to find ways of managing their holdings appropriately. If they can't do that then they should be relieved of their duties: it is mostly taxpayers' money that they are spending.

It would not be impossible to design a boat with an alternative means of propulsion. They could use horses or small vehicles on the towpath to pull boats along; or they could install a rail or cable to which an electric motor could be attached. There is no need for conflict between nature conservation and appropriate use of the canals, it is only irresponsible use that causes problems.

# The Shropshire Botanical Society

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Is an independent association of professional and amateur botanists concerned with botany, ecology and conservation in Shropshire. It is a voluntary society with the aim of promoting the study and appreciation of botany; conducting research into and recording the flora and plant communities of Shropshire (vice-county 40); and co-operating with other organisations to promote the conservation of the flora of Shropshire.

## List of members

Janet Allwood, Hayton .....	2004	Jane Morris, Shrewsbury .....	2004
Audrey Ashwell, Clungunford.....	2005	Nick Musgrove, Wolverhampton.....	2005
Douglas Bain, Toronto .....	2005	Dennis Nisbet, Church Stretton .....	2005
N.H. Barnett, Lea Cross .....	2004	Elise O'Donnell, Albrighton .....	2005
Adrian Bayley, Shrewsbury .....	2004	Steve O'Donnell, Albrighton.....	2005
Frank Bentley, Shrewsbury .....	2005	Philip Oswald, Cambridge.....	2005
John & Denise Bingham, Kidderminster .....	2006	John Packham, Bridgnorth.....	(life)
David Cadman, Eccleshall .....	2004	John Pagett, Telford.....	2004
Tony Carr, Shrewsbury Library.....	2007	Pat Parker, Weston Lullingfields .....	2006
Arthur Chater, Aberystwyth .....	2005	Tess Pearson, Bishops Castle.....	2005
Julie Clarke, Macclesfield .....	2004	Jackie Pedlow, Llynclys .....	2004
John Clayfield, Clunton.....	2005	Philip Pope, Abercraf.....	2004
Bernard & Mollie Coleman, Telford .....	2005	Tom Preece, Llynclys .....	2004
Clare Coleman, Wonersh.....	2006	Jan Pursail, Shrewsbury .....	2004
Mags Cousins, All Stretton.....	2005	Michelle Rocke, Much Wenlock .....	2007
Hugh Cutler, Shrewsbury .....	2006	Mrs M. Ryle, Kingsland .....	2004
Ruth Dawes, Trefonen.....	2005	Ron Shoubridge, Ludlow .....	2004
Sian Edwards, Ellesmere .....	2005	Mr W. Shufflebotham, Wem .....	2004
Glenys Evans, Telford .....	2005	Charles Sinker, Montford Bridge.....	(life)
Joan Fallows, Shrewsbury .....	2005	David Smith, Telford .....	2004
Rosa Ford, Whitchurch.....	2005	Les Smith, Ross-on-Wye .....	2005
Audrey Franks, Manchester.....	2005	Anne Stephens, Old Churchstoke .....	2005
Peter Gateley, Ormskirk .....	2005	Rob Stokes, Shrewsbury .....	2005
Hilary Gee, Grange-over-Sands.....	2004	Janet Stone, Shrewsbury .....	2004
Fiona Gomersall, Lydbury North .....	2007	Spencer Stoves, Rushbury .....	2005
Pam Green, Ratlinghope.....	2004	Sue Swales, Shrewsbury .....	2006
Roger Green, Ratlinghope .....	2004	Tina Teearu, Shrewsbury .....	2005
Llew Guest, Shrewsbury.....	2006	Ian Thompson, Meole Brace.....	2004
Henry Hand, Alcaston .....	2006	Jo Thompson, Meole Brace .....	2004
Maurice Hoare, Montford Bridge .....	2004	John Thompson, Harmer Hill .....	2005
Vivienne Hodges, Shrewsbury .....	2004	Peter & Stephanie Thomson, Hereford .....	2005
Jean Hooson, Oswestry .....	2004	Kate Thorne, Church Pulverbatch.....	2005
Dr H.V. Hughes, Albrighton .....	2005	Rosemary Thornes, Shrewsbury .....	2006
Mrs R.E. Hunter, Macclesfield.....	2005	Mary Thornton, Hengoed .....	2004
John Ibbott, Dorrington .....	2005	Marjorie Wainwright, Oswestry .....	2006
Jane Ing, Weston Lullingfields .....	2005	Chris Walker, Condover .....	2004
Ron Iremonger, Shrewsbury .....	2004	Tom Wall, Lydbury North .....	2006
Clive Jermy, Staunton-on-Arrow.....	2006	Sarah Whild, Shrewsbury .....	2004
Mary Johnson, Ludlow .....	2004	Mary White, Bayston Hill.....	2004
Sylvia Kingsbury, Wentnor .....	2005	Philip Whittle, Wistanstow .....	2004
Clare Kitchen, Berkeley .....	2004	Pat Woods, Malpas .....	2004
Mark Kitchen, Berkeley .....	2004	Dan Wrench, Shrewsbury .....	2007
Ray Knowles, Hanwood.....	2004	Colin Wright, Shrewsbury .....	2005
Mark Lawley, Ludlow .....	2004	Jean Wynne-Jones, Ledbury .....	2004
James Lawson, Habberley .....	2005	Dorothy Young, Clun .....	2005
John & Marjorie Leonard, Hopesay .....	2005		
Stephen Lewis, Pontesbury.....	2004		
Susan Lewis, Criftins.....	2004		
Alex Lockton, Shrewsbury .....	2004		
Peter Lukey, Barnsley .....	2004		
Pauline Mackintosh, Stanton Lacy .....	2003		
Paddy Martin, Llanymynech .....	2003		
Robert Mileto, Shrewsbury.....	2004		
Harvey Morgan, Aston .....	2005		

## Complimentary newsletters are sent to:-

The Botany Library, Natural History Museum  
John Mason, English Nature, Attingham Park  
David Pearman, BSBI  
Chris Preston, Biological Records Centre  
Clive Stace, University of Leicester  
Sue Townsend, Preston Montford Field Centre