



# New Flora of the Isle of Man Newsletter

Newsletter no. 1, October 2009

## A First Newsletter

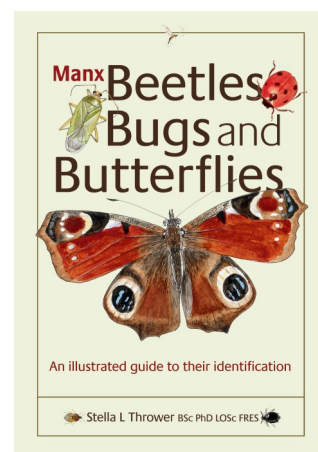
Welcome to the first of what will be an irregular series of updates on the *New Flora of the Isle of Man*. We hope we will be able to keep you informed as to our progress and reassure you about your wildflower recording.

It is nearly the end of our first season of recording for the Flora and the first records are coming in. We will chat a little about submitting records later in the newsletter, but do not worry, you can send in records now and complete your tetrad(s) next year if you want.

There have been some significant finds with several new species to the Island and new records for many rare and protected species.

We can see already that there will be conservation benefits such as 'wildflower hotspots' that can be protected under an 'Area of Special Scientific Interest' designation, and certain new species will now be protected under Schedule 7. Even more reassuring is that many species can be taken off Schedule 7 as they will no longer be considered rare or threatened.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and that you will join us at our next open meeting in November (see page 4). It would be great for the next newsletter if we could have few thoughts from some of you on your experiences of recording so far, good, bad or just a witty anecdote. AD



Stella Thrower's new book entitled *Manx Beetles, Bugs and Butterflies* contains excellent watercolour illustrations of many garden insects plus all the butterfly species that can be found on the Island. Packed with information on identification and ecology it has recently been published by the Manx Heritage Foundation, [www.manxheritage.com](http://www.manxheritage.com), price £10.

## Finds From Year 1

That after more than 200 years of botanising there is anything left to find on the Isle of Man seems unlikely, but after one year of surveying we have found two or maybe three new native species on the Island as well as a few more introduced species.

The blunt flowered rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) is the great find of the year, found in Jurby by John Harris and Jessie Tregale. This rush is found in lime-rich fens and the Island is close to the Northern edge of its British range.

There are two records of tor grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*) that have cropped up in Jurby and Colby, but it is very hard to determine if this is a native species or an accidental introduction.

Of all the finds this year, the rediscovery of the lesser twayblade orchid (*Neottia cordata*) by Aline Thomas caused almost a frenzy of local media interest. Even the Royal Horticultural Society featured it in their 'Orchid Review'. We may be able to arrange an outing to see the lesser twayblade next May for those who are interested. Let us

hope we will be able to stoke up some more positive publicity next year.

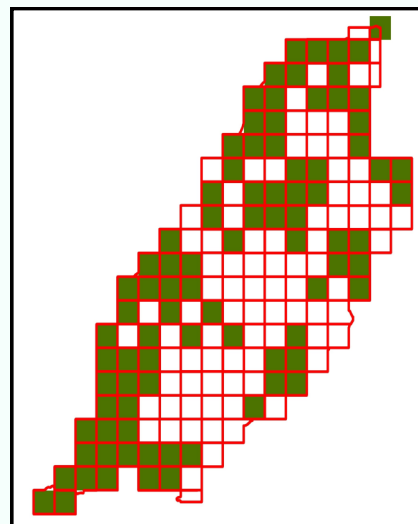


Every tetrad has something special waiting to be found, be it a rediscovery of an old record or a new record of a rare species. See our gallery of finds on page 3. AD

## Progress Report

We started this venture with the overall aim of completing the survey and publication of the Flora by 2013. This would have allowed three years to complete the surveying and a further 2 years for production. This is not all bad news however as it will give us all more time to fully hone our botanical skills and really get to grips with all our tetrads (some do seem to be very difficult and varied).

Perhaps a dose of reality has now set in and the size of the task ahead of us is more fully understood. It is likely that the survey will take five years to complete, thus putting our publication date back two years. Another benefit of this is that it will also give us time to develop a Web-based flora, that will essentially run as a working document for the final flora. We should then see the flora gradually develop on the web. AD



*Tetrad Coverage in 2009 (dark squares are the allotted ones)*

### Herbarium Specimens Please

If you come across a plant that gives you an identification headache, you can preserve a sample as a herbarium specimen for future reference or as a 'voucher'. This not only buys a bit more time for an accurate identification, but also gives you a chance to assimilate some examples of 'difficult' species or suspected hybrids to build confidence in your field skills.

Just press samples between sheets of newspaper weighted down with boards or books. Fleshy plants can be padded with more newspaper or paper towels, and seeds or other loose items can be kept in an envelope or paper packet. Usually a herbarium specimen will consist of samples of each part of the plant, though you must be careful not to take more than is necessary for identification. Don't forget to include a label with details of location, date and collector.

You need to be careful not to collect protected plants, so if there is any doubt, report the find with a photograph if possible to the Flora organisers. Kate Hawkins would be happy to receive any voucher specimens for the Manx Museum herbarium if recorders feel so inclined. KH

### Submitting Your Records

The first records are now coming in, though everyone seems to be putting in the proviso that they will give us the records as long as they can go back to finish off next year. Which is of course fine.

Send your records by post, or if you have computerised them by e-mail. If you want me to take a photocopy of your original and post it back to you I can do that as well.

When sets of records are submitted I will scrutinise them for errors and omissions. Do not worry if you have made a mistake I will be able to spot it. Anything that is dubious I will check, either by contacting you, or by going back next year to the grid reference you have given. Once I am sure that all the records are complete, with names, dates, grid references and locations, we will make two photocopies of the whole set and one set will be sent to Linda Moore (see 'Digitising Records' on the next page).

Your original records, paper and/or digital, will be archived in the emerging biological records centre.

Send your records to:  
Andree Dubbeldam,  
Manx Wildlife Trust, Tynwald Mills, St Johns. IM4 3AE.  
Email: [andree@manxwt.org.uk](mailto:andree@manxwt.org.uk)

### Photograph Competition

With the aim of gathering together many new great pictures for the New Flora we have decided to hold a competition for the best wildflower photos of 2010.



Please send your photos to Philippa Tomlinson by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010, enter as many photos as you wish, digital or prints but they must each be properly documented (date, location etc). There will be a number of classes, including 'botanist's in action', and prizes, prizes, *prizes*!! Entry is open to all flora volunteers, except the committee who will be on the judging panel. PT



## Gallery of Finds



Fir Clubmoss at Glen Auldyn by Philippa Tomlinson



Ivy-leaved Bellflower At Glen Dhoo By Gail Jeffcoate



Parsley Fern on Cronk ny Arrey Laa by Andree Dubbeldam



Climbing Snapdragon at Port Jack by Peter Davey

### Accessing Private Land

As you will all have discovered by now, there are lots of 'habitat's tucked away on areas of private farmland. It is important to try to access at least a representative sample of these to ensure that you get as many species recorded as possible.

In most cases landowners will be known to you, or a knock at the door of the nearest house should yield the permission required. However if ownership is unknown, we can help! If you contact me on 843109 or by email [peter.mcevoy@gov.im](mailto:peter.mcevoy@gov.im) with a six-figure grid reference and any other details of the area you are trying to get to (including details of land you may need to cross to get to it) I will contact the landowner on your behalf.

PM



### Butterfly Update

We welcome butterfly records that come in from flora recorders. The westward movement of the Speckled Wood and Comma after recent colonisation on the Island has already benefited with at least four new tetrads recorded. Please provide these: a) date; b) site by name and GR (6 figs if possible); b) species, one by one; with numbers if possible; by email – or on a form which will be available on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>.

SJ

### A Change of Authority

The 'authority' of a plant species refers to the scientific naming, the person who named it and the voucher specimens used. The scientific names that we are using for this project are taken from Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, C.U.P., 1997.

Later this year a third edition is due for publication and this means that some names and sub-species are likely to change as a result of recent taxonomic research. To avoid confusion we will stick to the names in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition for the rest of the survey but we will need to use the most up-to-date taxonomy in the final publication.

AD

### Wildflower identification Course

A one-day University of Liverpool Continuing Education course, on Saturday 26 June 2010, 10am-5pm, at The Nunnery. This is being organised by Philippa who is planning to invite Linda Moore and/or another BSBI botanist over to provide expert training.

### Digitising Records

The data we have collected this summer will be sent to Linda Moore who is the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) 'recorder' for the Isle of Man (Vice County 71). She will enter the data into the computer program Recorder 6, including all your individual lists for specific grid-referenced sites. She will also continue the checking process that Andree started and verify all the records. This data will be used by Linda to produce tetrad distribution maps for the Island, using MapMate. These maps will help us next year to fill in gaps, we hope that we may be able to get them online in due course, and over the next few years we will repeat the whole process.

The data will also be fed into the BSBI for their ongoing British and Irish atlas flora. They are aiming for full coverage at the tetrad level by 2020. The third destination for your data will be the island's emerging Biological Records Centre which means it will go towards providing a baseline for local conservation and biodiversity research, so that any additional details, such as numbers of plants, that you have collected, beyond the basic tetrad level, will eventually become part of that resource.

PT

## Open Meeting

The next flora event is an open meeting for all flora volunteers. It will essentially be a debriefing session on this year's survey. It will be on:

**Monday 2nd November at  
7pm at Knockaloe  
Classroom.**

There will be lots of cake and tea and a chance to chat about the

problems and pit-falls of surveying this year and find out what everyone's training needs for next year will be.

How the project develops next year will be guided by you. Please let us know what you need... for example, more training days, guided walks, focussed sessions on difficult groups such as grasses or ferns.

So that we can present some preliminary results it would be very

useful if you could let us know beforehand how you got on this year.

A quick note to Andree, if you have not already done so, with the number of species you have recorded in your tetrad(s), and the numbers either not on the list or that you have not yet found, would be useful. Please include your comments on the project as a whole.  
AD

## Frequently Asked Questions

*I took on one tetrad to learn on this year, can I stick with it next year or should I go on to another tetrad next year?*  
It is up to you. Starting on a new tetrad and continuing to work on your old one is a good way of putting to use all you have learned so far.

*I have been trying to get to grips with wildflowers all summer but still feel I am not able to ID a great many species. Is it worth me continuing with my tetrad?*

YES! When next years surveying season starts you will realise how much you have learnt. If when you have finished next year (or the year after) your tetrad needs some extra work by more experienced botanists, the work you have put in will make the difference between us having to do an hour or two or having to spend several days on it.

*I am really out of my depth, can I retire gracefully from the survey?*

Of course you can, just let us know. Feel free however to keep coming to training events and stay on the mailing list so you can keep up to date with progress.

*There are lots of sub-species on my tetrad list like Atlantic ivy and rusty willow, do I need to ID these?*

No, unless you feel confident in doing so. The Identification of sub-species requires more than just a recommended field guide so it is ok to just list ivy under 'Hedera helix' and put grey (and rusty) willow under 'Salix cinerea'.

*There are several plants on my species list that just have generic names such as an oak or a birch. Is this sufficient?*

No. This information not good enough for us, we need to know which oak or birch (it may be a hybrid). If you are unsure send us a sample or a photo of several leaves.

*So we always have to go to the species level? ... Umm no. This is where it gets complicated. There are several groups that are too difficult even for the more experienced of us to determine. These are closely related species that you id to genera only . The groups concerned are whitebeams, brambles, eyebrights, hawkweeds and dandelions. We will map these as aggregate species except perhaps for hawkweeds which are uncommon enough for us to make a special effort. We will also bring in experts on these difficult groups. We will also make a list of guidance sources for difficult groups.*

*My tetrad species list has lots of species I can not find. Some do not seem even possible. What is going on?*

Almost every tetrad list has errors! They come from inputting errors, ID errors and Grid Ref errors. Weeding out these errors will be part of our verification process. If you came across a glaring error it would help us if you could highlight it.  
AD

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