#### The Liverpool Botanical Society

**Parnassia**: Review of 2019 Field Meetings

For information on the Society please contact Wendy Atkinson at World Museum, Liverpool. Tel: 0151 478 4216

[wendy.atkinson@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](mailto:wendy.atkinson@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk) [www.livbotsoc.weebly.com](http://www.livbotsoc.weebly.com)

Foreword

Visit our website address, [www.livbotsoc.weebly.com](http://www.livbotsoc.weebly.com) to view the blogs and find out more about the society. Our Facebook pages are at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/666270583430427/> . For members who do not have access to a home computer you should find computers for public use in your local library.

Fuller accounts of our field meetings, along with photographs and plant species lists are available for most of our 2019 field visits on the society’s website blog pages.

Field Meetings 2019

Excluding four joint meetings with two other societies (the Merseyside Naturalist’s Association and the Wildflower Society), 13 field meetings were listed in our programme for 2019, a brief overview follows:

**Saturday 20th April: Loggerheads** Led byPeter Gateley.

Our field season started on a bright fine day with 19 members gathered to enjoy the limestone flora. First, we scaled the steep steps up the scarp, noting frequent Spurge Laurel (*Daphne laureola*), and continued through the upper woods to then descend to the River Alwyn, here wooded banks supported good populations of Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*) and Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*). Amongst the more usual woodland groundflora we found a small patch of Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium alterniflorum*). In all, around 120 species of plants of limestone habitats were seen.

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**Saturday 4th May: Fairy Glen** Led byPeter Gateley.

Just 9 members made a chilly start, but were soon cheered by finding Rustyback Ferns (*Asplenium ceterach*) in Appley Bridge station walls. The route took us through a variety of habitats: the canal banks and towpath, a community garden and hedgerows on the way to the wooded valley of Fairy Glen. On the way we admired a well-grown specimen of Mountain Currant (*Ribes alpinum*) by the side of the towpath as well as noting the invasive alien Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*) in the canal. The woodlands of the glen were resplendent with Bluebells and Ramsons.

**Friday 17th May: Altcar Rifle Range** Led by Steve Cross.

20 members assembled this evening to witness the large population of Green-winged Orchid (*Anacamptis morio*) on the rifle ranges, with 23,552 counted this year! Also counted this year were c.950 Cowslips (*Primula veris*) and c.3,500 Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*). A good number of a wide diversity of other species was seen on the ranges and adjacent dune areas. This year the total number of flowering plants recorded from Altcar Rifle Range reached 436 species.

**Thursday 23rd May: Warton Crag,** A Wildflower Society meeting with Julie Clarke and Sue Riley

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**Saturday 1st June: Penmon Point, Anglesey**. The Merseyside Naturalists Association 80th anniversary coach trip

**Saturday 8th June: Minera Quarry** Led by Barbara Allen.

Fortunately for the 9 members present, woodland canopy took the edge off the wet windy weather, also providing shelter for Brittle Bladder-fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*)and Round-leaved Wintergreen (Pyrola rotundifolia subsp maritima) amongst a wide range of woodland flora. This limestone area has a history of past industrial activity and many plants have colonised the cracks and joints of the surviving structures. Barbara led the group to where they could admire some Frog Orchids (*Coeloglossum viride*), Early Purple-Orchid (*Orchis mascula*)and some Yellow Bird’-nest (*Hypopitys monotropa*), an interesting and quite rare saprophytic (or parasitic on fungal mycelia) plantwhich was just emerging through the leaf litter.

**Saturday 22th June: Conway RSPB Reserve** Led by John Crowder.

This reserve was transformed from its former industrial use largely by the shaping of spoil from construction of the road tunnel for the improvement of the A55. A mosaic of habitats has been created around large lagoons: grassland, scrub, reedbed, ponds and saltmarsh allowing a diversity of plants to thrive. Altogether over 160 species were noted. Bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) was numerous and in full flower, with scattered Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*). There were also some old cottage sites with various garden plants still surviving, such as *Brunnera macrophylla,* a good range of wetland species and many typical estuarine plants such as Common Sea-lavender (*Limonium vulgare*), Rock Samphire (*Crithmum* maritimum) and Tree Mallow (Malva *arborea*).

**Saturday 6th July: Lunt Meadows** Led by Julia Simons and Howard Harris.

17 members turned out to visit this EA/LWT managed wetland site, converted from arable use to create temporary flood-water defence reservoirs. There are now over 75ha of interconnected wetlands. Although there is much water and wetland flora there is still a mix of typical arable plants, such as Corn Spurrey (*Spergula arvensis*) and Field Penny-cress (*Thlaspi arvense*) along some path edges. There was a good opportunity to compare and contrast Hairy Tare (*Ervilia hirsuta*) and Smooth Tare (*Ervum tetraspermum*). Also, a field characteristic of native Yellow Loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*) was demonstrated, orange margins to its green sepals. A sample of weed was fished out from the River Alt and identified as Fennel Pondweed (*Stuckenia pectinata*). In all, over 160 species of vascular plants were noted

**Saturday 13th July: Dunsop Bridge**. Coach trip with the Merseyside Naturalists Association

**Saturday 20st July: Wirral Country Park, Thurstaston.** Led by Robert Freeth.

It was a dull and cloudy start but things got better after lunch for the 9 members setting out from Thurstaston Visitor Centre. The route took in a diversity of habitats, including: grasslands, ponds, clay cliffs and the Dee shoreline, enabling a total of more than 230 species of vascular plants being recorded for the day. Amongst them was a range of umbelliferous plants, including: Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*), Pepper Saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*), Rough Chervil (*Chaerphyllum temulum*), and Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*).

**Saturday 3rd August: Woolston Eyes** Led by Tony Parker.

A visit across the locked bridge onto the wooded island reserve with lagoons and materials dredged from the Ship Canal.

**Saturday 10th August: Aughton and Ormskirk Arable** Leader – Peter Gateley.

6 people set off from Town Green station in grey overcast weather, but during the third bout of heavy rainfall we decided to call it a day and cut back to the railway station to get home and dry earlier. Despite this earlier than expected finish we did get to see a wide range of field weeds around the edges of Aughton’s extensive arable fields and also made time to study the old grassland around the medieval St Michael’s church. Amongst the more notable of the c. 175 species of vascular plants seen were Purple Ramping-fumitory (*Fumaria purpurea*), Fiddleneck (*Amsinckia micrantha*), Field Mouse-ear (*Cerastium arvense*) and Bird’s-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*). Perhaps the most surprising find was a small patch of Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) in a roadside verge, a rare species in this area of intensive agriculture.

**Thursday 22nd August: Silverdale** A Wildflower Society meeting led by Julie Clarke

**Saturday 31st August: Gop Hill** Led by Peter Gateley

Around a dozen of us assembled in a rather wet car park at Trelawnyd, but as we approached Gop Hill the rain lifted to just overcast. Once we reached the lower slopes on which the Gop was mounded, spirits were immediately lifted as rather than having to start a search we were faced with literally thousands of flowering Autumn Lady’s-tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*) making it very tricky not to tread on any. In total we recorded around 135 vascular plant species on this section of grassy limestone hillside and the mound itself. By the time we made our way to Craig Fawr the weather had become warm and sunny, really showing off the later-flowering limestone flora, Species such as Hoary Rockrose (*Helianthemum oelandicum*), Nottingham Catchfly (*Silene nutans*) and Dark-red Helleborine (*Epipactis atrorubens*) had finished flowering but there were still some blue tufts of Spiked Speedwell (*Veronica spicata*), as well as many other typical limestone plants, altogether we recorded over 160 species in the afternoon.

**Saturday 7th September: Liverpool city centre** Led by Steve Cross.

11 members and visitors set off from the Museum, after first spending some time in the excellent Museum Meadow, fronting William Brown Street, with its 250 planted native wildflower species. From here we walked past the library and art gallery, noting pavement-crack and gutter-edge plants and crossed into inner city residential areas with verges and gardens allowing more spaces for plants to grow and regenerate of their own volition. The typical species found along this route included both natives and exotic species, such as Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), Water Bent (*Polypogon viridis*) and Guernsey Fleabane (*Erigeron sumatrensis*). Reaching Everton Park, it was time for lunch and then an afternoon exploring this open space with its large areas seeded with colourful mixes of many wildflowers. Amongst the many species in these seeded ‘meadows’ were: Vipers Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), Meadow Cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) and Corn Marigold (*Glebionis segetum*), with the latter still making a brave show en-masse in late Summer.

**Saturday 14th September: Walton, urban plant recording** Led by Dave Earl

## 9 members met outside Rice Lane station and saw wall ferns: Wall Rue (*Asplenium ruta-muraria*), Maidenhair Spleenwort (*A. trichomanes*) and Hart’s-tongue (*A. scolopendrium*). In a wildflower bed in the nearby park there was some Narrow-leaved Ragwort (Senecio inaequidens) and Thorn-apple (*Datura stramonium*). Just beyond was a patch of Cockspur grass (Echinochloa crus-galli). In a grassy road verge, there was an unexpected patch of Lawn Lobelia (*Pratia* sp), and in Walton Hall Park we noted Curled Pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus)* and Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) in the lake and margins. The weather had turned quite hot and sunny and we returned to the starting point having had a very fruitful day.

**Saturday 19th October: Freshfield Fungal Foray** Led by Steve Cross

A group of 8 members explored the woodland and dune heath habitats, both inside the LWT Freshfield Dune Heath Reserve and outside. It was a bright dry day with plenty of fungi showing, keeping both Steve and Tony Carter busy with identification. Highlights included **Earthtongue**​(Geoglossum cookeanum),**Poplar Bells (**Schizophyllum amplum)  and **Straw Fibrecap (**Inocybe cookie), amongst the many fungi. **Bishop’s Inkcap (**Coprinellus angulatus) was found ona bonfire site on the Dune Heath.  More-colourful fungi found included Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), Yellow Brain (*Tremella mesenterica*) and Orange Peel Fungus (*Aleuria aurantica*).

**We look forward to you joining in with some of our field meetings from our 2020 programme**