#### The Liverpool Botanical Society

**Parnassia**: Review of 2020/21 and 2021/22 Meetings

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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 field visits on the society’s website blog pages: [www.livbotsoc.weebly.com](http://www.livbotsoc.weebly.com)

Meetings 2020

**Indoor meetings**

**Saturday 11th January**. **The Botany and Archaeology of Lunt Meadows** – Howard Harris & Julia Simons. This former tract of low-lying farmland adjacent to the River Alt was identified as a suitable area for balancing pools for flood prevention purposes, before any work took place, various investigations were undertaken. The archaeological field survey uncovered unprecedented evidence of settled habitation in Mesolithic times, before agriculture was introduced to Britain. The site was excavated and analysed and the findings interpreted on information boards. Now that the flood management work is complete, the landscape is managed by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, maintaining a complex of water bodies, wetlands and woodlands, adding greatly to local ecological diversity.

**Saturday 8th February**. Our **AGM** was followed by members slides from our 2019 field meetings. Existing society officers were voted to continue in post.

**Saturday 14th March**. Indoor meeting **Urban plants of Waterloo** – Steve Cross. Steve took us around his local patch exploring every nook and cranny where a seed can lodge and a plant grow, revealing a surprising diversity of both native and naturalised plants and a range of casuals.

**Field Meetings**Before the programme of planned meetings could begin, with David Earl’s visit to the Blackbrook Valley in St Helens on April 18th, the whole country was put into a Covid-19 lock-down. This meant that none of the 17 field meetings, detailed in the programme, could go ahead, either because of complete lockdown or the restrictions of the tier system and other pandemic precautions in place at the time.  
  
**Indoor meetings**

Similarly, the two indoor meetings arranged at World Museum, for November and December could not take place because of a second lock-down being put in place.

**Meetings 2021**

**Indoor meetings**

The restrictions of 2020 continued into the new year, so the two talks (in January and March) at the museum could not take place, neither could the 2021 AGM, although a statement of the society’s accounts was prepared and distributed. Council meetings were conducted via e-mails and phone calls and it was decided to go ahead with payment of our annual insurance premium in the hope that field meetings would be able to take place at some point in the 2021 season.

**Field Meetings**As lock-down restrictions began to ease, a short programme of field meetings was compiled. The Spring season was totally missed but from July onwards six meetings were arranged, with advice to adhere to social distancing and masking in enclosed areas and not to attend if testing for Covid proved positive, also booking with the leaders in advance was initiated so that there would not be too many people at each meeting and track and trace could operate.

**Saturday 3rd July. Minera Quarry, Denbighshire.**  Fromthe car park at the end of Maes-y-Ffynnon Road, Barbara Allen led members into this limestone area which has been exploited for its lead ores since Roman times. There is open grassland and woodland across limestone outcrops, steep slopes, quarries and other areas of post-industrial remains. Despite the wet thundery weather, a wide range of plants was observed, notably Round-leaved Wintergreen (*Pyrola rotundifolia*) and Frog Orchid (*Dactylorhiza viridis*), in total seven taxa of orchids were recorded on this rich site that day.

**Saturday 24th July. Burton Marsh, The Wirral**

Robert Freeth led us from the marsh gateway and we explored the Dee coast and saltmarsh, eventually straying over the border in to Flintshire at the furthest extent of the walk, along the raised bank of a former railway line. A diverse range of coastal and grassland plants was seen including: **Henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), White Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), the spiny variety of Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*) & Slender Thistle (*Carduus tenuiflorus*)** a mix of species quite unusual for the Wirral peninsula. Eric Greenwood pointed out the two frequent species of bindweed and their sterile hybrid *Calystegia x lucana*. As well as extensive areas of saltmarsh and grassland, this part of the Dee coast also has headlands of outcropping red sandstone, some quarried, each with distinctive plants noted.

**Saturday 21st August: Hightown**

Steve Cross led members to the banks of the River Alt, pointing out a variety of pavement and kerb weeds on our way from the station, including Sea Fern-grass (*Catapodium marinum*) and Buckshorn Plantain (*Plantago coronopus*). We were soon in the reedbed, muddy riverbank and developing saltmarsh along the Alt. Heading South we reached bare mud, exposed submerged forest beds and patches of saltmarsh plants, all backed by an eroding sand dune face. Among many plants noted were: Sea Bindweed (*Calystegia soldanella*), Prickly Saltwort (*Salsola kali*) and Babingtons Orache (*Atriplex glabriuscul*a). Further south is the stretch of wave-worn rubble from demolished Liverpool buildings with plants typical of shingle habitats, such as Yellow Horned-poppy (*Glaucium flavum*) and Rock Samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*). We returned via a mature dune landscape noting Burnet Saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*) and towards the end of the walk the pink flowered form of Bindweed ( *Calystegia sepium* ssp *roseata*).

**Saturday 4th Sept: Leasowe**

We met up at the car park just NW of Leasowe Lighthouse and John Crowder led us first into a large meadow area. Given the lateness of the season, many species had finished flowering but some Meadow Cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) and Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) flowers were seen and the yellow seedheads of Smaller Cat’s-tail (*Phleum bertolonii*) were quite frequent. Lucerne (*Medicago sativa*) was still flowering well and in a wide range of colours, from almost white to a deep purple. Stems of Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*), on the other hand, had completely dried out and bore heads of chunky matte-black seeds. John led us along paths through willow scrub, reedbeds and past small waterbodies into areas of open sand dune, with a wide diversity of species. As well as the flowering plants John showed us, Steve also pointed out many species of rusts, mildews and galls becoming more noticeable as Autumn approaches.

**Saturday 18th Sept: Ormskirk area**

From Ormskirk Station, Peter Gateley led the party to the bus station where the council planters had splendid thickets of Shaggy Soldier (*Galinsoga quadriradiata*) swamping the council’s plantings. We looked at a variety of typical urban pavement and gutter weeds on our way to a raised bed near Marks and Spencer, here original planting of *Lonicera pileata* had partly died out and a variety of weeds had colonised, mainly small crucifers and Squirrel-tail Fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*) but amongst them, specimens of Green-flowered Helleborine (*Epipactis phyllanthes*). There were around a dozen capsule-bearing spikes of this nationally scarce plant, both in the open soil and growing up through the *Lonicera*. We saw more-typical weeds such as Water Bent (*Polypogon viridis*) making our way into the arable fields around Ormskirk and returning via a sandstone outcrop in Aughton with flowering Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), both pink and white.

**Saturday 9th October: Dibbinsdale Fungus Foray**

We met in the visitor centre car park and Steve Cross led us out into the mainly woodland habitat, finding many fungi along the way. We soon got to an area of seeded wildflower meadow, with many species bearing late-season flowers, then we headed into the mature woodland and stream banks finding a wide range of fungi. Steve and Tony Carter both identified fungal fruiting bodies growing on decomposing timber, tree roots, leaf litter and dead plant stems, ranging from large and obvious brackets to tiny and almost invisible species.

**Indoor meetings**

**Saturday 11th December: Urban Plants, Waterloo**

This was our first foray into Zoom, for both the Council meeting and then Steve Cross’s presentation on the urban plants he has been studying in detail for many seasons now. This presentation expanded on the March presentation with a range of extra sightings observations made during the lengthy period of lockdowns when local walks replaced longer trips out of the area. The pavement crack and kerbside habitats were covered as well as plants on walls and in park planting beds. Steve’s talk was followed by members slides of various plants seen through the Summer of 2021, outside the LBS field meetings.

**Saturday 8th January: Local Arable Weeds**

Via Zoom Peter Gateley expanded on the information given on the relatively sparse selection of field edge weeds seen on the September field trip. The range of species, from natives and archaeophytes to neophytes and casual species was explained, pointing out that many of the species now regarded as weeds were originally an important part of the diets of both hunter gatherers and early agriculturalists colonising the British Isles after the last glaciation. Some genera, such as *Chenopodium*, are still important, our native Fat-hen (C. album) is a common edible weed but the South American *C. quinoa* is grown as a food crop and imported here as Quinoa. The longevity of seed banks was also noted.

**Saturday 12th February: Annual General Meeting**

This will be our first Zoom AGM and will be followed by a selection of members slides illustrating 2021 field meetings.

The AGM will start at 11.00, accessed via [https://us05web.zoom.us/j/82777459034?pwd=V0RYY3ZnSi85MG9Lc2lvTEZTTVhodz09](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fus05web.zoom.us%2Fj%2F82777459034%3Fpwd%3DV0RYY3ZnSi85MG9Lc2lvTEZTTVhodz09&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cdc922ae3e1cb4ede387608d9d1ca54ae%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637771489196704677%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=2K96xsUETsKfxJu5o%2Bt64gryHgVkSwFBk3HGeq7VZAE%3D&reserved=0)

**We hope that at least some of our indoor and outdoor meetings from our 2022 programme can go ahead as planned and we look forward to you joining in with them**