

Short Notes

OROBANCHE ALBA STEPH. EX WILLD. IN FIFE (V.C. 85)

Comment is necessary on “An account of *Orobanche* L. in Britain and Ireland” by Rumsey & Jury (1991), particularly on the section dealing with *O. alba* Steph. ex Willd. Here, the authors state that “it is now believed absent from the east coast of Britain” and lament its disappearance from Fife. I may have been the source of this belief, as in Ballantyne (1970) I said – rashly as it turns out – that the species was extinct in all its former v.c. 85 stations.

Happily this is not the case. In view of the confusion, it is as well to document the plant’s localities in Fife. These are all on the north shore of the Firth of Forth, from west to east:–

GR NT1.8: East of St David’s, 1820 (E); Cliffs below St David’s, “fine specimens” (Graham 1840); 1969, J. Carlyle (pers. comm.). This locality is a small rocky bay with cliffs of 15–20 m between Inverkeithing and Dalgety Bay new town. I did not see *O. alba* on a visit on 3 August 1979 but as I did not search the area thoroughly, it may well still be extant.

GR NT2.8: (a) Sibbald (1684) stated that he found “*Orobanche major* . . . Broomrape upon the Buck [back] of Bruntisland”; in 1710 he rephrased this comment to read: “I found it below a rising ground upon the north side of the town of Bruntisland” (Sibbald 1803). (The earlier description is repeated by several authors, e.g. Greville (1824).) Both Sibbald’s localities almost certainly refer to an area near to or on Burntisland Binn, a low hill some 200 m high overlooking the town. Over two centuries elapsed before the next record from here – a specimen in E dated 1906 says “Burntisland”; more specifically, a year later another observer stated “near the Binn, Burntisland, July 1907 (J. Anderson) and later, W. E. Evans” (in an annotated copy of Balfour & Sadler (1871)). There seems to be no further records from this site.

(b) A separate locality from (a) appears to be c.2–2.5 km to its east, between Burntisland and Kinghorn. This is variously given as follows:– near Pettycur, 1837, KNS (Young 1936); “. . . walked to hills east of Burntisland, . . . picked *Orobanche rubra*”, 1854 (Balfour, 1902); near Kinghorn, 1892 (STA); Kinghorn, 1904/07 (E); “on broken ground between Kinghorn and Burntisland”, 1907 (E). There are no further records from this area, which is now occupied by a large caravan site, although neighbouring cliffs (with difficult access) may still provide a haven.

(c) Perhaps the best known site is on top of a grassy cliff at Abden near the old Kinghorn Poorhouse, about half-way between Kinghorn and Kirkcaldy; this is usually referred to as near Seafield Tower, which is some 400 m to the north. The first mention is in 1809 (Maughan, 1811 and in E) and there are records at regular intervals since, mainly in E and BM, to 1903; by this time, it appeared to be almost extirpated, as described by Blackstock, a local naturalist. Commenting on the “rooting-out” of Fife’s rare plants, Blackstock (1895) continued “Fifteen years ago, *Orobanche rubra* [etc.] where plentiful in well-defined stations along the Fife coast. Five years ago, I counted twenty good specimens of the Broomrape at its station near Kinghorn . . . Last year I saw two plants – this year [1893] I failed to discover any”. Ten years later, in 1903, another local botanist said of the same site: “. . . if fortune specially favours us, we may gather a single specimen of the rarest plant in Fife, the red Broomrape” (Young 1903). It was these observations that led me to believe that the species had disappeared about the turn of the century. However, in 1971 J. E. Lousley (pers. comm.) wrote to me to say that he had found the plant on 29 July 1938 (specimen in RNG). I again searched for it, as I had done in the 1960s, without success; then, late in 1985 I was told it had been seen during that summer, and on 23 July 1986 I came across three stunted stems. I have not had the opportunity of returning since.

GR NT2.9: An open circle appears on the map of *O. alba* provided by Rumsey & Jury (1991) for this square but there is none in the *Atlas* (Perring & Walters 1962) and I know of no locality. This record is presumably based on the specimens collected by W. McIvor from “Kirkcaldy” (MANCH, 1847; STA, undated). Nominally this is in this square but the actual station is almost certainly Abden (above).

GR NO4.0: In the *New Statistical Account* (1845) for the parish of Kilconquhar the compiler (the local minister) in 1837 listed several plants from "under Kinraig Hill, on rocks", among them *O. rubra*. While this site is quite suitable, there is no other record from a locality which became well explored. In particular, Charles Howie, who lived not far away and who botanized in east Fife from c. 1834–84, does not mention the species from here. Additionally the minister's botanical knowledge must be questioned as he includes, from elsewhere in the parish, such improbable species as *Silene acaulis*, *Azalea procumbens* and *Adiantum capillus-veneris*! The record in Wood (1862/87) is based on the *N.S.A.*, as is the "Elie" of Sonntag (1894). It seems best to discount this locality.

To summarize, *O. alba* has been definitely recorded in four separate localities in v.c. 85. In two of these it is probably extinct; in the other two, it seems to be surviving, although in small numbers. It needs to be refound in the St David's station to establish its status there, while the Abden site requires to be monitored regularly because of the very small size of the population there.

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G. H. BALLANTYNE
Branksome, 193 Nicol St., Kirkcaldy, Fife, KY1 1PF

RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF A DISCARDED NAME IN *CREPIS* L. (ASTERACEAE)

While reviewing Linnaean names associated with temperate eastern North American species of *Hieracium* and *Crepis* I chanced upon *Crepis vesicaria* L. subsp. *haenseleri* (Boiss. ex DC.) P. D. Sell (1976), a name in current use (e.g. Clapham, Tutin & Moore 1987). The name is no longer correct because of modifications made in Art. 57 of the 1983 *Sydney Code* (cf. Reveal 1983a) conferring priority and transferability to autonyms, a concept supported by Sell when he reluctantly proposed this combination. Accordingly, the following change is mandated.

Crepis vesicaria L. subsp. *taraxacifolia* (Thuill.) Thell. in Schinz & R. Keller, *Fl. Schweiz* ed. 3, 2: 361 (1914), autonym priority established by *C. taraxacifolia* subsp. *haenseleri* (Boiss. ex DC.) Nyman, *Consp.* 459 (1879).

Crepis taraxacifolia Thuill., *Fl. Env. Paris* ed. 2, 409 (1799).

Barkhausia haenseleri Boiss. ex DC., *Prodr.* 7: 153 (1838).

C. vesicaria subsp. *haenseleri* (Boiss. ex DC.) P. D. Sell in *Bot. J. Linn. Soc.* 71: 254 (1976).

C. vesicaria var. *taraxacifolia* (Thuill.) B. Boivin in *Naturaliste Canad.* **94**: 523 (1967).

It is possible that var. *taraxacifolia* is not the correct name for the taxon at this rank. Until there is a catalogue of all infraspecific names for Old World plants (Reveal 1983b) it will be difficult to ascertain autonymic synonymy as required by the *Code*.

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J. L. REVEAL

Department of Botany, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-5815, U.S.A.