

Report

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 9 MAY 1998

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at the Reardon Smith Lecture Theatre, National Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cardiff, at 11.45 a.m. The President, Mr D. A. Pearman took the Chair in the presence of 109 members.

Apologies for absence were read and Minutes of the 1997 Annual General Meeting, published in *Watsonia* 22: 139–141 (1998), were accepted as correct, approved and signed by the President.

REPORT OF COUNCIL

The President took members through the Report of the Council, which had been previously circulated to members, commenting on the main achievements of the Society during the year. He also mentioned the post of Co-ordinator and reported on C. S. Crook's impending resignation from the post and the possible appointment of a part-time, temporary replacement. The Treasurer then reported that, as only summary accounts had been published in the Annual Report, full sets of accounts were available at the meeting and on application to him. He further reported that he had found the accounts in good order when he took office and then gave a short account on the Society's financial activities and income. He was pleased to report a small surplus for the year but thought this could be considerably increased if more members took out Deeds of Covenant. Finally he thanked all those who worked so hard for the Society on a voluntary basis. Mr R. G. Ellis was congratulated on producing the Annual Report and Mr M. E. Braithwaite on his first Treasurer's Report and Accounts. The adoption of the Annual Report was proposed by Mr E. F. Greenwood, seconded by Mrs A. P. Daly and accepted unanimously.

PRESIDENTS' AWARD

David Bellamy (President Wild Flower Society) and David Pearman (President B.S.B.I.) had both recommended Mr P. R. Green, Mr I. P. Green and Miss G. A. Crouch for their *Atlas Flora of Somerset*. Although there were other strong contenders, both Presidents thought the breadth of coverage, especially of aliens, was quite outstanding. The award would be presented at the Wild Flower Society's A.G.M. in November.

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

Mr D. A. Pearman, in proposing Mrs M. E. Briggs as President, commented on her great qualities so admirably demonstrated during her 25 years as Hon. General Secretary and was certain that she would bring the same qualities to her new appointment. He was also delighted to welcome our first lady President. The election of Mary Briggs as President of the B.S.B.I. was approved by acclamation.

In response, Mrs Briggs reported that the B.S.B.I. had been a large part of her life and had been very dear to her heart for more years than she cared to remember and was quite overcome by the honour bestowed on her and was almost (but not quite!) speechless with emotion. As her first task as President she was pleased to thank David Pearman for the tremendous amount of work he had undertaken during his three year Presidency. She mentioned in particular *Atlas 2000* and reported that he would continue to oversee the project. Under his leadership we had also taken the great leap forward of appointing paid staff and he would continue to play a pivotal role with our Co-ordinator post.

ELECTION OF HON GENERAL SECRETARY

Council had nominated Mr R. G. Ellis. His election was carried unanimously by acclamation.

ELECTION OF HON. TREASURER

Council had nominated Mr M. E. Braithwaite. His election was carried unanimously by acclamation.

The President then praised the work of the Editors of *Watsonia* and *B.S.B.I. news*, the compiler of *B.S.B.I. abstracts*, and all Representatives on Council and other Committees for the hard work they carried out, voluntarily, on behalf of the Society. She gave special thanks to Dr B. S. Rushton, who was retiring after 14 years as an Editor, and since 1991 the Receiving Editor, of *Watsonia*. This was greeted by applause.

ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

In accordance with Rule 11 nominations had been received for Miss A. Burns, Mr A. O. Chater and Mr T. J. James. Profiles had been published with proposers and seconders, and election of these members was proposed by Mr M. Walpole, seconded by Mr C. R. Boon and approved unanimously.

ELECTION OF HONORARY MEMBERS

The President mentioned that two members had been nominated for Honorary Membership of the Society this year. Both had made outstanding contributions to the Society and to field botany in general in the British Isles and Europe. Sponsors for both gave short appreciations of their respective candidates (to be published in *B.S.B.I. news*) and their election was carried unanimously with warm applause.

The two new Honorary Members (and sponsors) were: Mr R. S. R. Fitter (D. McClintock represented by D. A. Pearman) and Dr B. E. Jonsell (Dr F. H. Perring).

ELECTION OF HONORARY INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

The President warmly thanked Mr J. Coats, of Greaves West & Ayre, Chartered Accountants, Berwick-upon-Tweed for his exemplary examination of our accounts. His re-election was proposed by Mr M. E. Braithwaite, seconded by Mr D. A. Pearman and carried unanimously.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 1.15 p.m.

GWYNN ELLIS

FIELD EXCURSIONS HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE A.G.M.

Four field meetings were held over the weekend; all were well attended, and we have to thank our leaders, Miss G. Barter, Mr M. Hampton and Mr J. Woodman for their sterling work. One meeting, on Sunday 10 May, was to the National Botanic Garden of Wales, Middleton Hall, Carmarthen, where over 40 members and guests were shown around the site of this exciting new venture by the director, Prof. C. Stirton. After lunch members were taken to see some of the delights of Pembrey Burrows, Llanelli, by Dr R. Pryce and we thank both him and Prof. Stirton for a very interesting day. A report of the visit to Pembrey Burrows will appear in *B.S.B.I. News*.

FRIDAY 8 MAY, FLAT HOLM

Forty members and guests gathered on Barry Island to embark for Flat Holm. The weather had improved after a wet and windy week, and this enabled the excursion to proceed, as the *Lewis Alexander* would not have taken passengers in winds in excess of force five. In fact, the sea was calm and the weather good, with only an occasional light shower.

On arrival, we were welcomed by the warden, Libby Robinson, who gave us an introductory talk. The island is managed by the Flat Holm Project, which was initiated by the former South

Glamorgan County Council and is now run by Cardiff County Council. The Project staff are working to restore grassland, having cleared much of the bracken and scrub which took over following the cessation of agriculture in the 1940s. Part of the island is now grazed by sheep, and the remainder is dominated by a colony of lesser black-backed gulls.

The Project Officer, Kevin Hogan, and the warden then each led a tour of the island, answering questions but allowing plenty of time for the study of plants and photography. One of the first specialities of the island to be found was *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Bird's-foot Clover) which favours trampled turf on the paths. *Arum maculatum* (Lords-and-Ladies) was frequent in the recently restored grassland and rosettes of *Carduus tenuiflorus* (Slender Thistle) were abundant. Cliff-top turf included *Erodium maritimum* (Sea Stork's-bill), *Cochlearia danica* (Danish Scurvygrass), *Plantago coronopus* (Buck's-horn Plantain) and *Stellaria pallida* (Lesser Chickweed).

The main speciality of the island is *Allium ampeloprasum* (Wild Leek), which is believed to be native, having been first recorded here in 1688. Although not yet in flower it was already conspicuous, especially around the Victorian barrack buildings near the lighthouse. Also in this area were *Ranunculus parviflorus* (Small-flowered Buttercup), *Medicago arabica* (Spotted Medick) and an established introduction, *Ornithogalum angustifolium* (Star-of-Bethlehem).

An unexpected pleasure was to find *Paeonia mascula* (Wild Peony) just coming into bloom. Although better known from the nearby island of Steep Holm, one plant was discovered here in 1982 and is now fenced to protect it from grazing. One of its progeny grows in the farmhouse garden and this was much photographed, a rare opportunity as it flowers for only a few days each year.

Both tours ended at the farmhouse, where mugs of tea were provided by the resident volunteers, and our guides were thanked. Members who were unable to attend this meeting may arrange their own visit by telephoning the Flat Holm Project on 01446 747661. Places are sometimes available on boat trips organised for other groups, the dates and times being determined by the state of the tide.

GILL BARTER

FRIDAY 8 MAY, PORTHKERRY PARK

About 20 members and friends gathered at this country park on the coast of the Vale of Glamorgan near Barry where the botanical riches can be found on the Lias Limestone cliffs and behind the pebble bar at the bottom of the cliffs.

West along the vegetated inland part of the pebble bar *Trifolium striatum* (Knotted Clover) was just coming into flower but its common associate here, *T. scabrum* (Rough Clover), could not be seen. In a damper area further along, where there is occasional inundation by the sea, *Alopecurus bulbosus* (Bulbous Foxtail) was demonstrated, the swollen stem bases being clearly visible.

Moving east, still behind the pebble bar, below the start of the cliffs, eyes were down in search of *Poa bulbosa* (Bulbous Meadow-grass) which was spotted by the sharp eyes of Mary Gilham and Franz Hopkins. On closer inspection several patches of this diminutive grass could be seen along the more trampled ground. All the plants here are the viviparous variety, *P. bulbosa* var. *vivipara*, the proliferating spikelets being well-formed already. Nearby *Medicago polymorpha* (Toothed Medick) was discovered which, although not recorded from this site before, the party agreed had all the appearances of being indigenous here.

Moving on to the pebble beach, binoculars at the ready, one or two *Sorbus domestica* (True Service-tree) were pointed out to people by the discoverer, Marc Hampton. Marc discovered the population in 1993. A better view was had looking down on them by ascending the 'Golden Stairs' along the clifftop. At the bottom of the stairs was a splendid show of *Lithospermum purpureocaeruleum* (Purple Gromwell) prompting one member to suggest they were planted for the occasion! (He knows who he is.)

JULIAN WOODMAN

SUNDAY MAY 10, VARIOUS SITES IN GLAMORGAN

This excursion was a pick 'n mix of sites that make Glamorgan special to the leader and many others. The three sites included: The Leys & East Aberthaw Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.S.I.), Cefn Cribwr Meadows S.S.S.I. and Old Castle Down S.S.S.I.

About 45 people gathered in the car park of one of the finest pubs in Glamorgan, 'The Blue

Anchor', in East Aberthaw, walking down to the coast under the railway and by the side of the looming fly ash tip of the power station. The party was jointly led by myself and Marc Hampton, the voluntary warden of The Leys, which is a Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Reserve. On reaching the old limeworks the dry ground in front revealed with some close inspection *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Bird's-foot Clover), *T. scabrum* (Rough Clover) and *Ranunculus parviflorus* (Small-flowered Buttercup).

Over the sea wall on to the beach behind an area of saltmarsh/lagoon and pebble bar, a few small patches of *Frankenia laevis* (Sea Heath) can quite regularly be seen here although not always in the same spots (Marc Hampton, pers. comm.). In the drift line below the low cliff a white flowering form of *Raphanus raphanistrum* subsp. *maritimus* (Sea Radish) was noted as possibly the first mainland record for this subspecies in Britain.

Moving further east below the low cliff the just emerged silvery foliage of *Sorbus domestica* (True Service-tree) could clearly be seen and one of the smaller suckers also had flowers. Towards the end of the beach, several patches of *Adiantum capillus-veneris* (Maidenhair Fern) were seen in wet tufaceous seepages low down on the cliffs.

After lunch the party moved off in a 'loose' convoy of cars to the second site, Cefn Cribwr Meadows S.S.S.I. which is about three miles to the N.W. of Bridgend. We kept in the core of the S.S.S.I. consisting of five adjoining fields of species-rich *Molinia caerulea* marshy grassland. *Scorzonera humilis* (Viper's-grass) is one of the specialities of these fields, a large population having been discovered in June 1996. This was the first recorded site for it in Wales (a second smaller population was discovered on the Gower Peninsula in 1997). Other species that were flowering and are characteristic of these fields include *Genista anglica* (Petty Whin), *Cirsium dissectum* (Meadow Thistle), *Valeriana dioica* (Marsh Valerian) and the cottony seeds of *Salix repens* (Creeping Willow).

Next door to the S.S.S.I. there is an equally spectacular field where *Myrica gale* (Bog Myrtle), *Juncus subnodulosus* (Blunt-flowered Rush), *Pinguicula vulgaris* (Common Butterwort) and *Carex montana* (Soft-leaved Sedge) occur. The fronds of *Thelypteris palustris* (Marsh Fern) were just emerging in a very wet flushed corner of this field.

From Cefn Cribwr, those that were able to, moved on to the third site, Old Castle Down S.S.S.I., an area of calcareous grassland and heathland south of Bridgend. The calcareous grassland is found on the steep slopes of a dry valley, Pant St Brides, where *Carex montana* (Soft-leaved Sedge) was seen in abundance amongst a calcareous sward with *Helianthemum nummularium* (Common Rock-rose), *Thymus polytrichus* (Wild Thyme) and *Festuca ovina* (Sheep's Fescue).

Small areas of vegetation where species typical of more acid conditions grow side-by-side with species of more calcareous conditions were seen including: *Erica tetralix* (Cross-leaved Heath), *Molinia caerulea* (Purple Moor-grass), *Ulex gallii* (Western Gorse), *Calluna vulgaris* (Ling), *Stachys officinalis* (Betony), *Carex pulicaris* (Flea Sedge), *Helianthemum nummularium* (Common Rock-rose) and *Galium verum* (Lady's Bedstraw). More extensive areas of this type of vegetation occur further along the slope. Up on to the plateaux, the pale white/lilac flowers of *Viola lactea* (Pale Dog-violet) were seen along with probable hybrids between *Viola lactea* and *Viola riviniana* (Common Dog-violet).

There ended the day's excursion except for a select group (including the author!) who toasted the end of an enjoyable day in the Blue Anchor. My thanks to Gill Barter for helping with transportation and leading the Flat Holm trip, Arthur Chater for so courteously taking the role of chief recorder at East Aberthaw and Gwynn Ellis for organising people and ferrying on Friday. My thanks also to the owners for allowing us to visit the sites. 'Loose' convoy is a term that can be applied to most A.G.M. field meetings – now I know how a sheep dog feels!

JULIAN WOODMAN