

Notes

THE GUNNA (V.C. 103) RECORD FOR *CAREX APPROPINQUATA* SCHUM. (CYPERACEAE)

Many of the late 1930s and 1940s records of J. W. Heslop Harrison from the Isle of Rhum (v.c. 103) and elsewhere in the Hebrides are now widely considered to result from the deliberate introduction of plants in an attempt to provide evidence to support his theory for survival of elements of the flora from pre-glacial times (Sabagh 2001, Preston 2004, Pearman & Walker 2004). Several such records are for *Carex* species, some of them purporting to be the first for the British Isles. Perhaps the most surprising were *Carex bicolor* and *C. glacialis* both known from Europe and elsewhere but not from the British Isles. Understandably, these have been treated with considerable scepticism, both at the time and since.

There is, however, a most interesting Heslop Harrison record for *Carex appropinquata* from the islet of Gunna (v.c. 103) in the Inner Hebrides which lies between Coll and Tiree. This record was first published under the name *C. paradoxa* Willd. in *The Flora of the Isles of Coll, Tiree and Gunna* (Heslop Harrison *et al.* 1941) with the statement: "Rare in Gunna, and only recorded once previously from a Scottish locality. This was in Peebles". If correct, this would represent a considerable extension of range since the stronghold for *C. appropinquata* in the British Isles is in East Anglia; elsewhere it is only known locally in Yorkshire, the Scottish Borders and Ireland.

Whilst examining Carices in the Edinburgh herbarium (E), it was surprising to find a previously overlooked voucher specimen which supports this record. The specimen is of a rather immature plant but which, by its general facies and its narrow leaves (to a maximum width of 2mm) and black fibrous basal leaf sheaths, is undoubtedly *C. appropinquata*. Indeed there is an added determination slip to that effect signed by Ernest Nelmes, the Kew specialist, to whom Heslop Harrison often sent material for confirmation. The specimen has been in the Edinburgh herbarium for over twenty years and was formerly in the collection of Robert Mackechnie, a colleague of Heslop Harrison who was invited by the latter to botanise with him on Rhum in 1949

(Mackechnie *in litt.* to A. C. Jermy). This specimen, along with others, was bequeathed to the Edinburgh herbarium shortly after Mackechnie died in 1978.

The label states "Carex appropinquata. Island of Gunna, between Coll & Tiree. June 1940. Prof. J. W. Heslop Harrison". However, the label is not in Heslop Harrison's hand but was directly transcribed by the curator from the wrapping covering the specimen (which also contained Nelmes' original signed determination slip) when received for incorporation (D. R. McKean pers. comm. 2006). The curator feels confident that this was done accurately.

There are certain facts which support this record and others which cast doubt upon it. Perhaps the most favourable is that it is a published record supported by a voucher specimen, albeit on a re-labelled sheet. Also, a Hebridean record for *C. appropinquata* is unlikely to have been of value in support of Heslop Harrison's theory relating to pre-glacial survival and, therefore, to have been deliberately planted by him (or even by an associate).

Although there had been an old unconfirmed record from Innerleithen, Peeblesshire (v.c. 78), by Lyell in the 1850s (David 1990), subsequent to the 1940 Gunna record, *C. appropinquata* was not re-found in that general (Borders) area of Scotland until found in Roxburghshire (v.c. 80) in 1967 (Corner 1969). Heslop Harrison was obviously aware of the old record (Heslop Harrison *et al.* 1941) but it seems very unlikely that his specimen could have originated from there.

In the British Isles, *C. appropinquata* has a rather disjunct distribution pattern, so that its occurrence in the Inner Hebrides is quite possible. Also, *C. paniculata* and *C. diandra*, two closely related species, the latter especially being a close ecological associate of *C. appropinquata* as at Malham Tarn (v.c. 64), both occur on neighbouring Tiree (Pearman & Preston 2000). It is also known that Heslop Harrison's party explored Gunna in the summer of 1940 and it was in June of that year that the specimen was collected. Due to the suspicion surrounding many of Heslop Harrison's

records, it is tempting to dismiss anything unusual as being of dubious worth but this is perhaps unfair since there are some of his Hebridean rarities which have been subsequently confirmed, e.g. *Spiranthes romanzoffiana*. There is also his collection of the Asiatic *Carex brunnea* Thunb. from the grounds of Kinloch Castle (Rhum), again confirmed by Nelmes, which he readily conceded (Heslop Harrison 1945 and *in sched.*) as having been almost certainly introduced accidentally with planted bamboo. The voucher specimen for this is also in the Edinburgh herbarium (E) and again originated via Mackechnie in the same way as that of the Gunna specimen of *C. appropinquata*. An annotation on the *C. brunnea* sheet in Heslop Harrison's hand states that it was collected on August 12, 1944.

On the other hand certain factors cast doubt on the Gunna record. Firstly, it is surprising that it is unmentioned by Heslop Harrison (1948) in his later review of his own records of noteworthy sedges from the Inner and Outer Hebrides, although he does include its close associate *C. paniculata* for neighbouring Tiree. In addition, Pearman & Preston (2000) discount the record of *C. appropinquata* on ecological grounds stating that "There is no suitable habitat on Gunna for this species". It is also possible that the collection may not have been made by Heslop Harrison in person since

he states (Heslop Harrison *et al* 1941) that in the years 1939 and 1940, the co-authors of that paper (although perhaps not necessarily always present himself) spent three long periods on Coll and Tiree. On the second of these periods (whether 1939 or 1940 is not clear) whilst based on Tiree they also explored Gunna. However in 1939 a party of his students also camped on Coll and "broke new ground on the Isle of Gunna". Perhaps it was the students who were thought, or claimed, to have collected the *C. appropinquata* or, dare one suggest, attempted to deceive by introducing it there?

Unless *C. appropinquata* is re-discovered on Gunna, the record is likely to remain a mystery. Despite suspicion over Heslop Harrison's more unusual records, it is difficult to see how a falsification would have any relevance in furthering his theory of Hebridean plant survival from pre-glacial times. The alternative conclusion is that there has been a mislabelling of the specimen or other mix-up when collecting.

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VALERIANELLA ERIOCARPA DESV. AS A PRESUMED NATIVE IN BRITAIN
– AN UPDATE

In our paper in *Watsonia* (Pearman & Edwards 2002), we suggested that *V. eriocarpa* was a native member of an annual early flowering cliff-edge community on the limestones of Dorset and the hard chalk of the Isle of Wight. We had also looked, without success, on the South Devon limestone at Berry Head, and felt ambivalent about the status of the relatively persistent Cornish records, which are on sand.

Since then there have been several interesting developments, with records from completely new areas.

VC3, SOUTH DEVON.

Ilsham Marine drive, Torquay. SX941632. A. J. Byfield. 2002. A few plants in short therophyte turf on steep S facing road verge bank.

Headland north of Whitsand Beach, Maidencombe. SX927676. D. Buckingham. <1995. A few plants in a relict fragment of unimproved cliff-top grassland. Not searched for again.

VC49, CAERNARVONSHIRE.

Great Orme, Llandudno. SH773824, (c. 20 plants in 2003), SH772827, (c. 30 plants in 2003), SH776827, (c. 45 plants in 2003). W. McCarthy. 1992 and every year since.

On very thin soils over outcropping limestone, south-facing, with a range of species including *Aphanes arvensis*, *Arenaria serpyllifolia*, *Carex caryophylla*, *Cerastium pumilum*, *C. semidecandrum*, *Erophila glabrescens*, *Festuca ovina*, *F. rubra*, *Galium verum*, *Sherardia arvensis*, *Thymus polytrichus*, *Veronica arvensis*.

These new sites then are limestone headlands, with broadly similar communities to the Dorset sites. In addition, one of us (DAP) searched the Gower limestones for two days in

May 2005 without any success, finding only *V. locusta*, and that only in very small quantity. This means that of all the coastal limestone areas in southern England and Wales, only those at Weston-super-Mare and Brean Down (VC6) remain to be searched.

Elsewhere Ted Pratt and David Leadbetter have added some new sites in Dorset, slightly further inland on the Purbeck limestone and at Corfe Castle on the chalk. These are from permanent grassland, albeit over rock and with open areas. Conversely new areas of arable there have produced *Euphorbia platyphyllos* and *V. dentata* but no *V. eriocarpa*. DAP has visited the two Cornish sites mentioned in the *Watsonia* article (Pearman & Edwards 2002). At the Constantine site (SW8675) the sandy wall had become over-grown (though it has just been cleared), and no plants have been seen there for 15 years, but at the second site, at Phillack Towans, near Hayle (SW5538) there are plenty of patches. But here it looks so ruderal, growing on walls, waste lots and around buildings, that it is difficult to see it as a native. A further and more natural site has been discovered by Ian Bennallick below the coast path at Harbour cove, Padstow (SW9177) where it grows on rocks just by the beach with *V. rimosa* nearby! The coastal footpath separates this site from arable fields above, with *Vicia bithynica* on the edge, so the site has more of the flavour of an arable weed refugium.

We still feel uncertain of the status of the Cornish sites, though we tend even more to considering them as persistent aliens, but the records from the new limestone sites are potentially very interesting indeed.

We are very grateful to those named above for the new records and details.

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RUBUS MILESIANUS WHOLLY A GARDEN ESCAPE IN BRITAIN?

Certain members of the *Rubus fruticosus* aggregate characterised by fruit of a kind holding a special appeal to growers have probably long been liable to be taken into cultivation from the wild and in some cases marketed commercially. Unfortunately, it has not been the practice in the past for examples of what nurseries had on offer to be preserved in herbaria: field botanists have collected cultivated taxa only when those have chanced to occur outside the confines of gardens sufficiently to be claimable as 'wild'.

A rare documented exception is *R. bartonii* Newton, a member of Series *Vestiti* widespread as an unquestioned native in Wales and western parts of England with a marked peak of abundance in Cardiganshire, v.c. 46 (in which it is the commonest bramble). Cultivated at the former Long Ashton Research Station, near Bristol, and some years ago placed on the market under the trade name 'Ashton Cross' (Eedes & Newton 1988: 127 fn.), this has won favour comparatively widely by reason of its heavy cropping despite rather acidic fruit. Isolated occurrences of it well outside its presumptive natural range, as on Barnes Common in Surrey, v.c. 17 (Norman 1999), can be credibly attributed to garden outcasts or dispersal by birds from cultivated sources; elsewhere, though, some supposedly native populations of the species may be more suspect in status than is at first sight apparent. In the Isle of Man, for example, in the one place in which it occurs in quantity, in a shady ravine opening on to the sea, a habitat which seemed good grounds for regarding it as a member of the native flora (Allen 1986), the population has subsequently been found to extend into an adjacent garden, the owner of which turns out to have long prized this particular bramble for the very qualities for which it has been promoted commercially. In the light of this finding, the status of this species in the island as a whole has come into question.

A more extreme possibility is that some supposedly native species are garden escapes in Britain (and Ireland too, for that matter) in their entirety. One of those, it has belatedly become apparent, could well be the recently-described *R. milesianus*. Robust and distinctive enough to have gained a place in the herbaria of *Rubus* specialists since as early as 1867 (Watson 1958: 194), its recorded occurrences all lie

along an arc of some 235 km in length extending across the far south-east corner of England, from Bournemouth to Canterbury. Most of these appear to have taken the form of solitary bushes only, a pattern especially characteristic of larger-fruited species such as this that are consequently more than ordinarily prone to dispersal by birds – though in two instances secondary spread by tip-rooting has clearly taken place on an extensive scale.

In addition to their large size the mature fruits of *R. milesianus* are also notably delicious. It is thus a species particularly likely to have been taken into cultivation from the wild. The possibility that it may have occurred as a garden escape has nevertheless been raised hitherto only in the case of one anomalous-looking urban record (Allen 2004: 170). Subsequent scrutiny of all the recorded occurrences, however, has revealed a suggestive association with areas notable for a concentration, at least by the mid-nineteenth century, of large detached houses standing in grounds spacious enough to have contained a sizeable kitchen-garden extending to a range of soft fruit. Even one of the two populations of considerable extent, that on Southampton Common, v.c.11, is suspiciously confined to the neighbourhood of the Common's north margin, the part adjacent to that city's leafy, late-developing suburb of Bassett.

At first sight the other substantial population, by far the larger of the two in extending across 3 × 2 km of wooded countryside in north-east Hampshire, v.c.12, has no comparably suspect character. Although that area has its south end as the type locality – the extensive grounds of a mansion, Tylney House (now a hotel) – the readiest assumption is that the plant owes its presence in those to overspill from the adjoining woodland. Equally, however, the reverse could be the case. Given the impressively rapid rate of spread by tip-rooting of which *Rubus* species are well-known to be capable, it would not have been difficult for one as robust as this to have colonised that large tract of country within a relatively short span of years. The more or less continuous character of the population could be seen as providing support for that alternative interpretation.

But if the status of *R. milesianus* in Britain is wholly that of a naturalised escape, there remains the question of from where it

originated. Did it arise in cultivation (as the widely-grown *R. laciniatus* Willd. is supposed to have done, in the absence of contrary evidence) or does it exist somewhere as a native? After a century and a half in which Britain has been explored increasingly intensively by *Rubus* specialists, it is hard to believe that so conspicuous a species still lies undiscovered in such situations here. Mainland Europe accordingly seems much likelier as the source. And to where more precisely that might have been, the recent surfacing in **BM** of an unmounted gathering from southern France of what has every appearance of being a weak example of this same taxon provides a clue. These specimens were collected in 1925 by a then leading Swedish batologist, C. E. Gustafsson, in or near Carmaux, a town in the north of *dép.* Tarn, in the south-western foothills of the Massif Central. They are accompanied by a label in the handwriting of the collector with a determination that he probably arrived at by himself from the keys and descriptions in *Rubi Europae* (Sudre 1908–

1913): *R. micans* subsp. *heterochrous* var. *nitidipilus* Sudre, a taxon described in that work from another locality in that same *département*. As no authentic material of that has been located, it is impossible to say whether that determination is correct (which could have nomenclatural implications, if it is). The specimen does, however, provide a possible homeland for *R. milesianus* – assuming that the plant found by Gustafsson was not an escape there as well. In addition it reopens the possibility that Watson (1958) may have been correct after all in identifying the British plant with *R. koehleri* subsp. *lapeyrousianus* Sudre, a taxon described (and known only) from *dép.* Ariège, at the east end of the Pyrenees. Though Ariège is two *départementes* distant from Tarn and situated alongside a different mountain range, the separating distance is not so great as to make such an identification geographically altogether unlikely. However, that question too cannot be settled for similar lack of an authentic specimen (Allen 2004).

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