

## FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS – 2005

**Colin R. Pope**

There have been some exciting finds this year and Paul Stanley has been particularly active in this respect. The Isle of Wight Helleborine, Prickly Shield Fern, Dense-flowered Fumitory and Slender Bird's-foot Trefoil have all reappeared after a long absence. Well-established populations of two very rare horsetail hybrids have also been discovered. This report refers to some of the more remarkable finds, principally those of native species, archaeophytes and established aliens. 1km square grid references are included in the accounts.

An oddity which does not appear in the list was the discovery of a sea bean (*Entada gigas*) washed up on Shanklin beach at Horse Ledge on 20 January (TJ). This is one of the West Indian drift seeds which very rarely reach our shores, carried in the Gulf Stream. The large, tough seeds are well able to make the trans-Atlantic crossing unaided but they do not germinate in this country, excepting under greenhouse conditions.

### Hybrid Horsetail (*Equisetum x willmotii*)

This very rare hybrid between Water Horsetail and Great Horsetail (the fourth British record) was found by Paul Stanley dominating around 50m of roadside verge at Beacon Alley, Godshill, just east of the bridge across the River Yar (5181). It has clearly been present here for a long time. Neither parent was present. Confirmed Pat Acock. New to the Island.

### Hybrid Horsetail (*Equisetum x font-queri*)

A strong population of this rare and distinctive hybrid between Marsh Horsetail and Great Horsetail was found on a flushed cliff ledge to the north of Rocken End 4975 (PS). Both parents were present in the general vicinity but Marsh Horsetail was very scarce. Confirmed Pat Acock. New to the Island.

### Adder's-tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*)

Found to be growing in quantity in Albany Cemetery, Parkhurst 4989 (PS). This military cemetery is known to contain unimproved neutral grassland but it is so intensively mown that it is remarkable that Adder's-tongue fern has been able to tolerate this management.

### Hard Shield-fern (*Polystichum aculeatum*)

Another remarkable find by Paul Stanley at the end of the year. He found five or six plants in Brighstone Forest, at Calbourne Bottom 4284 in a most uninspiring spot beneath secondary scrubby woodland amongst ivy, (confirmed A. Paul). The plants had been rendered slightly more conspicuous by recent forestry operations in the area. Further investigations may perhaps shed light on the possible origin of these plants. Last confirmed from the Island in 1871.

### Prickly Poppy (*Papaver argemone*)

Six small plants recorded from the south-western corner of Carisbrooke Castle near the footpath to Froglands Lane 4887 (SB). Not previously recorded from here.

### Dense-flowered Fumitory (*Fumaria densiflora*)

There has been no record of this fumitory for well over a hundred years and no herbarium material has been tracked down to support the few earlier records. Therefore, it came as a surprise to find a number of plants making a fine show, growing in a field on Bowcombe Down, alongside of the Tennyson Trail 4687 in a well botanised stretch (PS).

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### Annual Knawel (*Scleranthus annuus*)

Recorded from set-aside land south of Presford Farm, east of Shorwell 4682 (PS). Not previously recorded from here.

### Night-flowered Catchfly (*Silene noctiflora*)

Over 50 plants were found growing at the top end of Easton Field above Freshwater Bay 3385 (PS), a previously unrecorded site. This field, acquired by the National Trust and arable for well over a century, is being converted to permanent grassland.

### Giant Knotweed (*Fallopia sachalinensis*)

Two clumps at the base of cliffs at Shanklin, south of Appley Steps 5880, some stems reaching 2.5m in height, (DD). Not previously recorded from this site.

### Hybrid willow (*Salix x multinervis*)

A hybrid between eared willow and grey willow. One bush in Chilton Chine 4082 (JT). The second confirmed Island record.

### New Zealand Bitter-cress (*Cardamine corymbosa*)

This alien, first recorded from the Island in 2004, was recorded from a further two sites. A weed in a garden centre at Freshwater, 3487, and naturalised on a gravel path at Flamingo Bird Park, Springvale, 6291. Both PS.

### Perennial Wall-rocket (*Diplotaxis tenuifolia*)

A good flowering clump at the inner entrance of Bembridge Fort, 6288 (CL, MW). Last confirmed from the Island in 1966 but appearing more frequently now on the Hampshire mainland.

### Wall Pennywort (*Umbilicus rupestris*)

Frequent over approximately 3m on an earth bank alongside a footpath leading onto Row Down, Brighstone 4383 (MB). This is clearly a long-established site which has previously been overlooked.

### Rue-leaved Saxifrage (*Saxifraga tridactylites*)

Found at two previously unrecorded sites at Shalfleet: at Shalfleet Manor Farm and on a nearby wall by the Yarmouth Road. Both 4189 (PS).

### Sherard's Downy-rose (*Rosa sherardii*)

Plants recorded from the southern end of Bleak Down, 5180; Newmans Lane, Chale Green 4779; and by the side of Town Lane, Chale Green 4880. These may not be native sites. All PS.

### Slender Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus angustissimus*)

There have been two likely, but unconfirmed old records of this nationally scarce plant. This year, Geoff Toone discovered a population at the edge of a set aside field south of Presford Farm, Shorwell 4682 (Confirmed Fred Rumsey).

### Toothed Medick (*Medicago polymorpha*)

Recorded from the verge of the Newport Road just outside of a garden centre at Apse Heath 5783 a new site (PS).

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### Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

Increasingly reported from the Eastern Yar. Abundant alongside of a bend of the River Yar at Redway 5384 (mo).

### Early Gentian (*Gentianella anglica*)

2005 was a bumper year for this species, making it a good time to survey previously unrecorded sites. A single plant was found in flower of Brook Down on the early date on 27 March (CP). It was encouraging to find plants in the chalk grassland south of Windy Gap car park, St Catherine's 4975 (CP). There are old records from here but none for a long time. Several locations were found on the north side of West High Down, between Warren Farm and the Coastguard Station 3085/3185 (AM). A previously unknown population was discovered on Cheverton Down, north of Shorwell 4484 in the vicinity of an area subject to active quarrying (CP). There were about 350 plants on the site at Golden Hill, Freshwater 3487, discovered in 2004, (AM).

### Common Calamint (*Clinopodium ascendens*)

A single plant seen by the Forest Road, outside Newport 4890 (SB).

### Monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*)

A single plant growing in weedy vegetation by the Lukely Brook at Westminster Lane, Newport 4988 (SB).

### Green Field-speedwell (*Veronica agrestis*)

Reported as a weed in a garden at Sandford 5481 by the lady who first discovered this plant on the Island when she lived at Sainham, (AC).

### Ox-tongue Broomrape (*Orobanche picridis*)

A population of broomrape which appears intermittently on the south facing roadside chalk cutting on Afton Down 3685, has been suspected of being Ox-tongue Broomrape in the past but referees felt unable to confirm this. In 2005 the plant put on a fine show and confirmation of this species was obtained from Fred Rumsey (PS).

### Venus Looking-glass (*Legousia hybrida*)

Recorded from an arable field south of Whitecroft 4985 (DB).

### A Lawn Lobelia (*Pratia pedunculata*)

Recorded as a lawn weed in a front garden in Galley Lane, Brighstone 4282 (PS). This alien species has not been previously recorded from the Island.

### Greater Burdock (*Arctium lappa*)

Reported from a patch of rough ground between Yafford and Limerstone 4482, a previously unrecorded site (MB).

### Smooth Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris glabra*)

Recorded from two previously unknown sites. A set-aside field opposite Presford Farm, Sandy Way, Shorwell, 4682 (GT). Just two plants in a derelict arable field at Brook Hill, 3984 (PS).

### Opposite-leaved Pondweed (*Groenlandia densa*)

Found growing in the pond by the Longstone Cottage, Mottistone 4084 (PS).

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Slender Club-rush (*Isolepis cernua*)

Frequent in bare wet ground on a flushed ledge at Rocken End, 4975 (PS).

Distant Sedge (*Carex distans*)

Local in a base-rich flushed ledge at Rocken End, 4975 (PS).

Annual Beard-grass (*Polypogon monspeliensis*)

Frequent on disturbed ground around farm buildings at Redway Farm, 5384 (BS, SB).

Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*)

A small population was discovered on the cliff near Warden Point, at the north end of Totland Bay 3287 (PS). The site was subsequently visited by KM who found more plants, suggesting there is a scattered population. Clearly these plants have colonised from Headon Warren cliffs but it is encouraging to report a natural extension of its range.

Green-flowered Helleborine (*Epipactis phyllanthes* var. *vectensis*)

Perhaps the most exciting find of 2005, because this is the orchid originally found at Ventnor and named the Isle of Wight Helleborine at the time. A single flowering plant was growing by the footpath in Eaglehead Copse 5887 (PJ), and confirmed by Professor A.J.Richards. Peter Jupp had first found the plant here, whilst on holiday, two years previously but its identity could not be confirmed. It did not reappear in 2004, so there was great excitement when he once more found it in 2005.

AC	Mrs A. Cowley	KM	Keith Marston
AM	Anne Marston	MB	Margaret Burnhill
BS	Bill Shepard	mo	Botany Group of IWNHAS
CL	Chris Lipscombe	MW	Maureen Whittaker
CP	Colin Pope	PJ	Peter Jupp
DB	David Biggs	PS	Paul Stanley
DD	Dave Dana	SB	Sue Blackwell
GT	Geoff Toone	TJ	Tony Jeffrey
JT	Jesse Tregale		

My thanks to everyone who submitted records; not all of them are referred to here.

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