

Ian McNeill's latest plant record contributions to the Irish Naturalists Journal.

Claytonia sibirica (Pink Purslane)



There are a few records of this plant in Tyrone, but always planted or escaped from gardens with no sign of natural colonisation. However, in 2010, I found it naturalised along the Rock River for a few km downstream from Slatequarry to Drumballyhugh, about 8km WSW of Cookstown. The same stretch of riverbank holds *Campanula latifolia* (Giant Bellflower), also usually classed as an alien in Ireland.

Spiranthes romanzoffiana (Irish Lady's-tresses)

In August 2010, accompanied by Ronnie Irvine, Jim Rutherford, and two local men, Joe and Brendan McKeown, we visited the only recent site in Tyrone for this orchid, at Brookend, on marshland 200m back from the shore of Lough Neagh. It was last seen here in 2003, so it was pleasing to record 15 flowering spikes growing 200m from previous positions on rather drier ground. We wondered if recent wet summers had caused the orchid to 'move home'.



Further to Ian's observations it was again seen by Ronnie and Jim in late July 2010 at the same site but only about three spikes. In the 1920s, there were 5 Tyrone sites for the Lady's-tresses, but, **by 1938, it was known only at Brookend.** It was thought to have died out, until John Harron re-found it at its

Brookend site where it has been seen on many occasions since.



Anchusa arvensis (Bugloss)

This turned up on dumped material at Kilcronagh, near Cookstown, in September 2010 and was last recorded in the county in 1896.

***Tellima grandiflora* (Fringecups)**



This N American plant is grown in gardens. Its lime-green flowers are useful in flower arrangements. It has escaped into the wild in several places in N Ireland, especially in riverside woodland. Near Cookstown, it is abundant along the Killymoon and Ballinderry Rivers downstream from Tullylagan. A few years ago I found a single plant along the Burdennett at Donemana. It has

since spread here and in May 2011 was frequent in the Tullyard area, 2km downstream from Donemana.

***Pseudorchis albida* (Small White Orchid)**

On June 11 2011, Kevin Johnston and I visited the area around Scraghy in West Tyrone to check out a site for *Pseudorchis albida*, one of the plants on the BSBI ‘threatened plants’ list for 2011. The site consists of two parallel ribs of Carboniferous Sandstone rocks, with many big rocks, 2 to 3 metres high, lying across a west-facing slope. The ground is acidic, but supplied with enriching minerals. It supports Butterfly Orchids, Common and Heath Spotted Orchids, Meadow Thistle etc. After a long search Kevin found a spike of Small White Orchid. The search continued and we found three more spikes. This may now be the only site for Small White Orchid in Tyrone as other way sites on rocky ground a few km NW of Cookstown proved blank in 2011.



***Botrychium lunaria* (Moonwort)**

While searching for the Small White Orchid at Scraghy, we came across a Moonwort plant. This unusual little fern has turned up in only two Tyrone sites in the last 30 years (near Lough Doo, 13km W of Cookstown, and at Meencarriga, 2km NE of Scraghy).

***Schoenus nigricans* (Black Bog-rush)**

About 1km W of Scraghy, at Cushey's Bridge, Kevin and I found a colony of Black Bog-rush. Frequent in nearby areas of Co Donegal, but in recent years seen what in Tyrone only at a site W of Lough Lee –about 3.5km NE of Scraghy. It would seem that Black Bog-rush has just recently arrived at Cushey's Bridge, as it was not seen on previous trips and would not be easily missed. Later in 2011, Ian Rippey reported it was 200m or so upstream from Cushey's Bridge.

***Lepidium virginicum* (Least Pepperwort)**

On June 8 2011, stopped at traffic lights in Cookstown I noticed a Pepperwort plant growing by the footpath. I collected a small piece of it and despatched it to Tim Rich, who declared it to be *L. virginicum*. A first for Co Tyrone –maybe for Ireland?

***Epilobium* hybrid (Willow-herb)**

I came across a rather different-looking Willow-herb on Castle Road, Cookstown on July 23 2011, and sent a specimen to T.D. Pennington, *Epilobium* specialist at Kew. He said it was a hybrid, probably *E. ciliatum* x *E. obscurum*. As both *E. ciliatum* and *E. obscurum* occurred nearby, this is likely to be correct.

***Solidago gigantea* (Early Goldenrod)**

A handsome Goldenrod plant, seen at Curran, on the shoreline of Lough Neagh on July 31 2011, keyed out as *S. gigantea*. I would have presumed garden escapes of Goldenrod were all *S. canadensis*, but now know to think again. It is probably a garden cultivar with close affinity to *S. gigantea* rather than genuine species *S. gigantea*.

***Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax)**

On August 3 2011 in the Rakeeranbeg area, a few km SE of Dromore (Co Tyrone), I noticed a pile of coarse builders' rubble dumped in a field. There were a few plants on the dumped material, I thought that they would be common weeds. However, they turned out to be *Chaenorhinum minus*, around 50 small plants of this species. I had seen only two or three plants in the previous 30 years in Tyrone, and now suddenly had 50 at one site. They were growing on mortar, interspersed with large chunks of concrete block!

***Elaeagnus umbellata* (Spreading Oleaster)**

In early September 2011 while botanising in the Ballygowan area, 2km W of Omagh, and looking at a patch of weedy waste ground I noticed *Salix cinerea* (Grey Willow) had formed a scrubby thicket. A more handsome bush among

the willows, I took also to be a willow—the leaves were distinctly willow-like, but bright and shiny olive-green. However, a few small waxy cream flowers and a small red/black berry convinced me it wasn't a willow, but what was it?

I sent a specimen to Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, and they came back with *Elaeagnus umbellata*. A beautiful bush worth a place in someone's garden – from whence, presumably, it had originated.

***Polypogon viridis* (Water Bent)**

After parking my car near the Library in Cookstown I noticed a couple of small grass plants at the foot of a wall. I had come across *Polypogon viridis* in the Cathedral area of Belfast, so immediately recognised it. This grass has been spreading on waste ground and street-side habitats in the British Isles in recent years. Nice to welcome it to Cookstown!

Reference:

Stace, C. (2010) *New Flora of the British Isles* (3rd Edition)