



# New Flora of the Isle of Man Newsletter

Issue 4  
March 2011

Its March already and the surveying season is nearly upon us again. We hope that we will have a good selection of training events on this spring, particularly reinforcing grasses, sedges and rush identification, but they should also be a chance for us all to catch up, compare notes and have a chat.



The oldest (1877) of the five wings of  
The Kew Herbarium

The winter has been a busy time for the flora, with thousands more of your records to add to our growing database. There is still a lot more to do, but more than two thirds has been inputted, with thanks to help from Linda Moore and Richard Jameson. If anyone wants a complete copy of the flora data-base so far I am happy to send it to you. (Too big for an e-mail but I can post a disk).

Work on the Manx Herbarium with Kate Hawkins and Joyce Quilliam is now almost complete, with all the Island's historical collection mounted on bleach free paper and

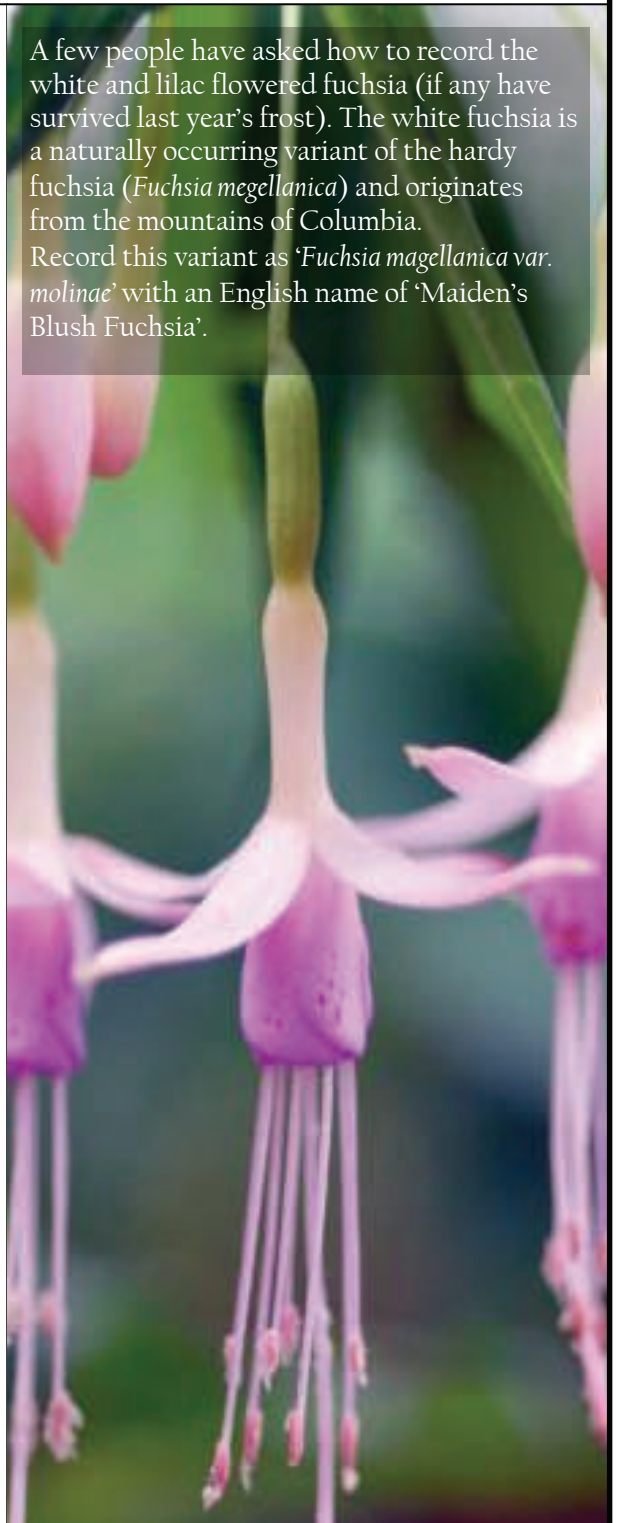
put into a sensible botanical order. We have also catalogued the collection so those records with a tetrad location will end up in the Atlas.

Visits to the London Natural History Museum Herbariums and Kew Herbariums were kindly sponsored by the Manx Heritage Foundation. The Natural History Museum has the largest Manx collection off Island, and while somewhat unsorted in places it was quite possible to retrieve most Manx specimens within the four day time limit. Interesting nuggets have come to the surface such as a maidenhair fern that was found at the base of Glen Maye waterfall, no doubt gone due to some rapacious Edwardian collector!

Kew Herbarium on the other hand has far fewer Island specimens, hidden away amongst its collection of seven million sheets. There was only time to look over the sheets David Allen had previously found before being defeated by impossible size of the collection. Perhaps one day the collection will be digitally catalogued for easy reference.

We are also working upon a comprehensive checklist of Manx Wildflowers that will form the basis of the narratives for each of the species in the Atlas. Thanks go to Philippa Tomlinson for reordering my notes into a proper database. Once the checklist is complete we should be able to put it on the website ([www.iomflora.sitel1.com](http://www.iomflora.sitel1.com)) for everyone to not only look at, but contribute to as well.

A few people have asked how to record the white and lilac flowered fuchsia (if any have survived last year's frost). The white fuchsia is a naturally occurring variant of the hardy fuchsia (*Fuchsia magellanica*) and originates from the mountains of Columbia. Record this variant as '*Fuchsia magellanica* var. *molinae*' with an English name of 'Maiden's Blush Fuchsia'.

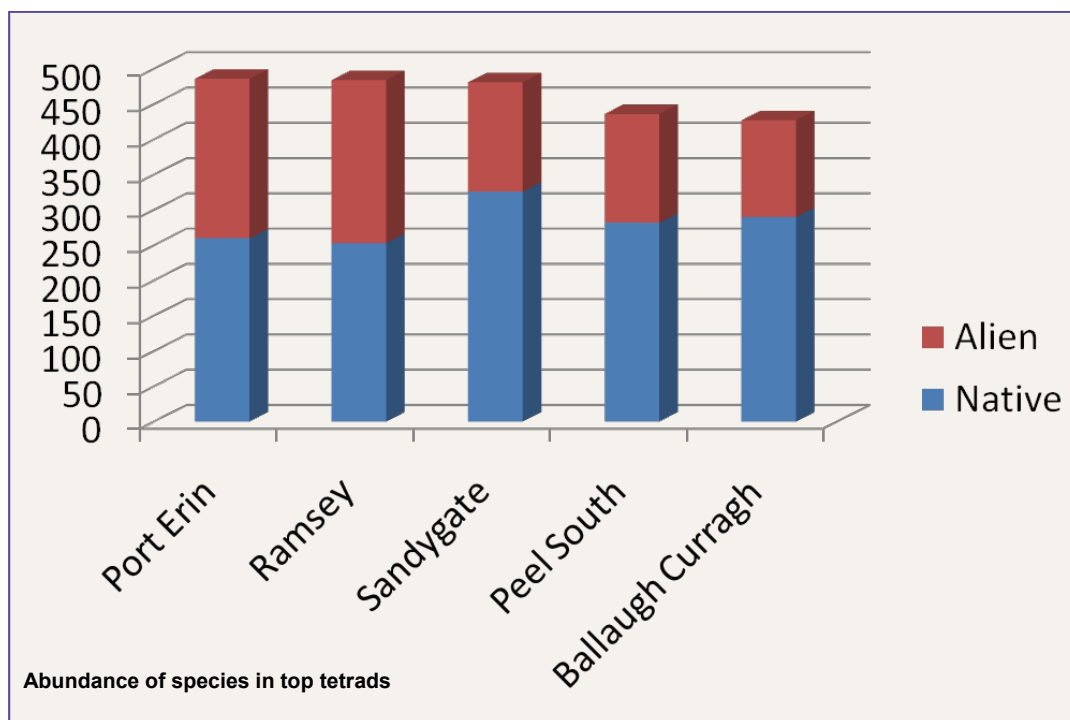


# The Big 500

The race is now officially on as to which Tetrad will be the first to reach 500 species records. The early front runner in 2010 was Ramsey but Port Erin with 486 has now pipped it by two species, with Sandygate not far behind at 481. These records are

compiled from the verified historical database, Larch Garrad's exotics database and New Flora Group records. It is looking quite possible that by the time of publication all three could have reached the 500 milestone.

Just looking at the 'headline' numbers however is not the whole story. If we just look at the native records then Sandygate is some way ahead, with Port Erin and Ramsey behind Peel South and the Ballaugh Curragh.



## So what makes one tetrad more species rich than the next?

Well for one thing the top five tetrads have all been well surveyed over the years by very capable botanists!

If we look at native records however the answer is simple;- good quality wetlands. Thus Peel South has Congary Curragh, the Ballaugh Curragh speaks for itself and Sandygate

tetrad has the Northern edge of the Ballaugh Curragh, the Lhen Trench and some rather good dubs and wet meadows.

Good alien records also rely on one main factor and that is built up areas. Some are better than others, so older urban spaces will have accumulated more species than more recent ones,

and lots of alleyways, waste ground and unmade roads are better than tidier towns. The old tip at Pooyldooie almost certainly contributed the richest source of alien records on the Island before it became a nature reserve.

AD

### Best in Late Winter- Hard Shield Fern

I just mention this because Aline Thomas and I found it in Silverdale last weekend and now is the best time to spot it. Hard Shield fern (*Polystichum aculeatum*) is rare on the Island, having been recorded only a dozen or so times in the last 200 years and generally

occurring in ones or twos rather than large populations.

It is one of the few larger ferns that are true evergreens, so as the last of the male ferns and soft shield ferns start to collapse and die off in March and April it remains fresh. Soft and hard shield ferns both have little bristles at the ends of their leaflets, which is a sure way of telling them apart from the

male and buckler ferns and as the names imply hard shield fern is tough and leathery while soft shield fern is rather soft!

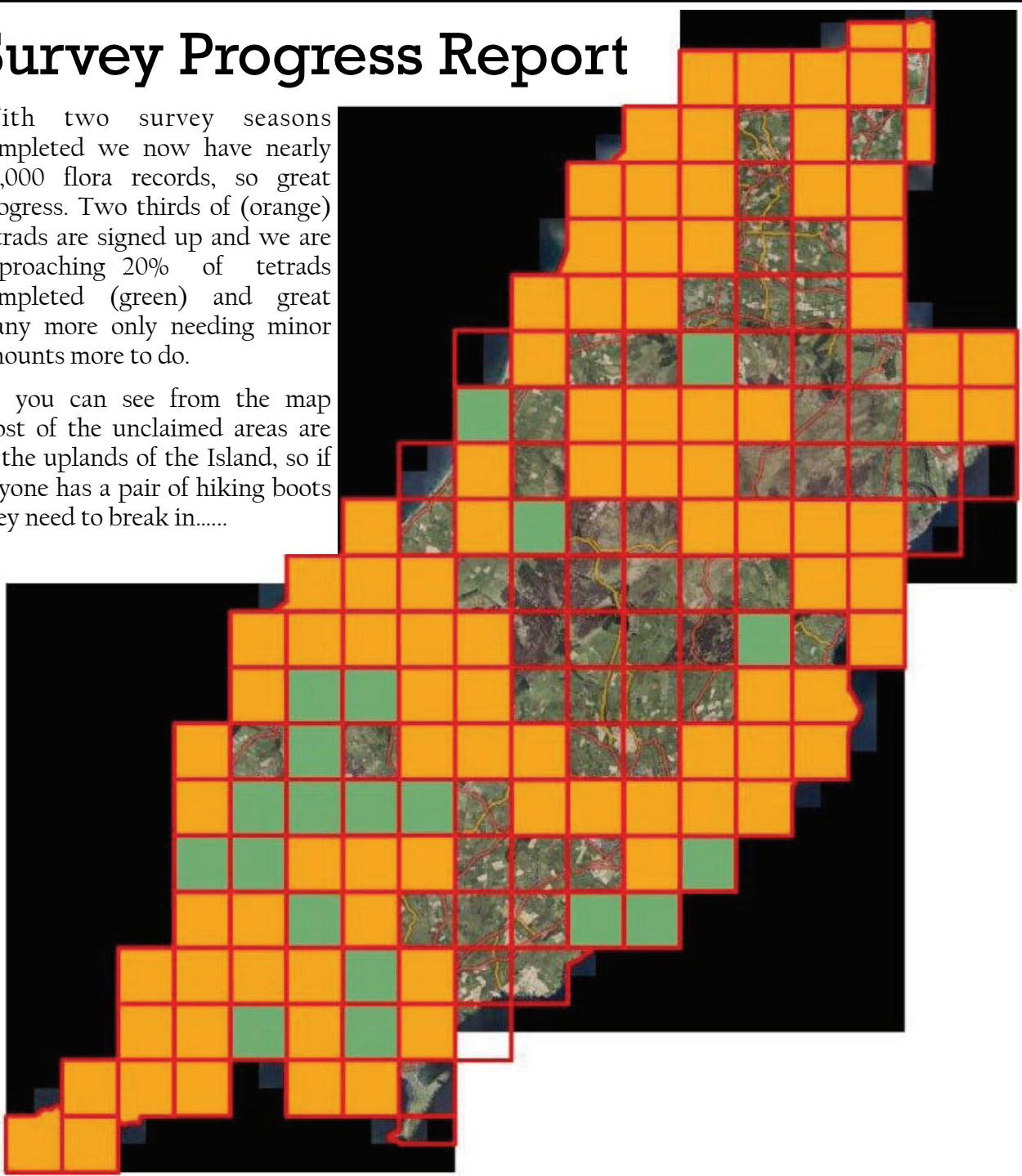
It will mostly be found around the upland fringes, in wooded glens and under hedges. Previous records have come from Spoyt Vane, Garwick Glen, Ballure Glen, Glen Roy and road verges around Mount Murray .

AD

# Survey Progress Report

With two survey seasons completed we now have nearly 20,000 flora records, so great progress. Two thirds of (orange) tetrads are signed up and we are approaching 20% of tetrads completed (green) and great many more only needing minor amounts more to do.

As you can see from the map most of the unclaimed areas are in the uplands of the Island, so if anyone has a pair of hiking boots they need to break in.....



## New Life for old Ponds

Farm ponds or dubs should get a leg up this year with a new Wildflowers of Mann initiative 'Dubs for Wildlife' that aims to help restore old neglected farm ponds in the North of the Island.

As those who have tried a botanical survey of ponds, you will soon find out how much biodiversity can lie within, from aquatics to marginals to the many annuals that germinate as the water levels drop in the Summer. They are particularly important for rare wildflowers when sheep, horses or cattle have some access to them to scuff up the mud and eat away more competitive species such as willows and reeds.

Restoration work therefore will not just mean clearing away silt and scrub but also, where possible restoring grazing.

The project is at the fundraising stage now and with luck work should start at the end of bird nesting season in August.

AD



The Lhagagh , An important wetland though much diminished due to willow scrub.

# 2011 FLORA EVENTS

## March 29th. 7.30pm Wildflowers and Welshcakes.

A spring social for the Flora Group volunteers at the iMuseum (On Kingswood Grove about 50m along from main Museum Gates). A chance to get together for a natter and an update, and as an added bonus there will be talk by Liz Charter on the Wildflowers of Crete, an area she knows very well.

Refreshments-loosely themed around Welshcakes with tea and coffee will be provided, though any offers of supplemental sweet baked goods will be gratefully accepted!

## April 27th. 6.30pm Wildflower refresh at Clypse.

A walk with Andree Dubbeldam above Clypse reservoir for a general look at wildflower identification and recording. For beginners and those who want to ease back into the recording season. Meet at Clypse Reservoir Car Park SC400806

## May 14th. Wildflower Identification Course.

An Liverpool University Course at the Isle of Man College led by Linda Moore. Contact Helen Kneale for more details. ([Helen.Kneale@liverpool.uk](mailto:Helen.Kneale@liverpool.uk))

## May 15th 2pm Grasses and Allies at Langness

A walk around Langness with Liz Charter to renew and refresh our grass, sedge and rush ID. Suitable for the inexperienced, moderately confident and rusty! Meet at Main Car-park SC285659

## June 22nd 7pm Grasses and Allies at Groudle

An evening walk around Groudle Glen and Bay with Andree Dubbeldam to renew and refresh our grass, sedge and rush ID. Suitable for the inexperienced, moderately confident and rusty! Meet at bottom Car Park (by Cottages) SC418782

## June 28th 7pm Cornfield Weeds at Cregneash

A session at Cregneash farm looking at arable weeds. Meet at Main Car-park SC190674

## July 7th 7pm Grasses and Allies at Ramsey

A walk around Ramsey Town and Pooyldooie with Peter McEvoy to renew and refresh our grass, sedge and rush ID. Suitable for the inexperienced, moderately confident and rusty! Meet at Pooyldooie Carpark SC442939

## September 27th – October 1st

British Pteridological Society visit. A great chance to learn about ferns from the experts. We will keep you updated about the associated events and excursions as we find out more.

This newsletter was written and produced by the New Flora of the Isle of Man Working Group. The group are:

Elizabeth Charter (LC)  
Liz.Charter@gov.im  
Andree Dubbeldam (AD)  
andree@manxwt.org.uk  
Kate Hawkins (KH)  
Kate.Hawkins@gov.im  
Stephen Jeffcoate (SJ)  
sjeffcoate@btinternet.com  
Peter McEvoy (PM)  
peter.mcevoy@gov.im  
Linda Moore (LM)  
ecotype@manx.net  
Philippa Tomlinson (PT)  
philippa.tomlinson@gov.im