

OBSERVATIONS ON THE PLANT LIFE AND HABITATS AT COSMESTON COUNTRY PARK -
NOTES FOR 1980

As reported verbally at the 1979 A.G.M., the plan to attempt regular monthly visits during that summer for the purpose of compiling records of seasonal plant distributions, had not met with much success. However, new interest had been kindled in some quarters and about twenty members attended the second joint field meeting with the parent society on 26th June, 1980. Once again the main feature of interest on that occasion was the great abundance of the common spotted Orchid, - *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, particularly in the fens at the edge of the western lake where a great many forms of variation flourish including some pure white examples.

It was here also that the meeting inspected the area selected by some of our members early in the year to accomodate specimens of the Bee Orchid - *Ophrys sphegodes*, then considered to be under threat from the bulldozing operations planned by the Country Park management for their developments in the immediate vicinity. Transplanting was undertaken in February 1980 in response to a request for advice and assistance from Mr. Ian Smith, Park Warden. About twenty-five individual plants were lifted and then re-planted away from the area under threat and, at the time of writing this report at least ten plants are surviving. This, despite the prolonged period of windy drought which followed the transplanting and the apparent die-back of all but one specimen. (It may be noted that in established sites elsewhere in the county bee orchids were reported to be evident in much reduced numbers - M.E.G. verbal report).

Returning to the June field meeting, members were disappointed to find that the interesting community of limestone species starting to become re-established on sown slopes to the north of the eastern lake were only in evidence by their mangled remains since instructions had been given to mow this area the day before, notwithstanding the efforts made by the writer to ensure the date and time of this field meeting had been properly recorded in the park site diary well in advance. This mis-match of efforts precluded the possibility for example of observing the slender Flowered Thistle - *Carduus tenuiflorus*, growing unusually distant from its normal sea cliff top habitat. More importantly it may be noted that current park management activity appears to place more emphasis on the development of lawn-like pathside appearance than the development of the more appropriate natural sward since mid-June mowing cannot allow the production of seed heads. A species list as observed during a visit made in early spring together with a comment on the species composition of this area has been compiled by Dr. M.E. Gillham and is included as one of the appendices to this report.

Another list concerning a particular habitat is in preparation by the writer and this will include the Greater Butterfly Orchid - *Platanthera chlorantha*. Although only three plants of this species have been observed so far, the siting brings the number of species within this family growing in the Park to seven in all to date. (20 plus plants of Twayblade - *Listera ovata* were found by Warden I. Smith).

↑ should be 200+, i.s.

Observations on the Plant Life and Habitats at Cosmeston Country Park (cont'd.)

The distribution of plants in the semi-heptangular hawthorn scrub field lying on the slope adjacent to the golf course is considered to be of particular interest and it is understood that the Park Management have agreed to leave this site generally undisturbed.

The second appendix to these notes consists of an alphabetical list of all species noted to date, compiled by the writer from data collected over a period of five years and from an early (1976) survey by Dr. M.E. Gillham.

This may be considered a "raw list", by no means complete and without annotation.

The problem of location of species is left unresolved since the Key Diagram in the Teachers Information Pack prepared by the Environment and Planning Department County of South Glamorgan, was intended to cover the first phase of development only so that a complete revision will be needed for the alphanumeric map reference when it becomes necessary to cover the subsequent phases. However, plants of particular interest or scarcity have been indicated to the Park Management and their locations identified personally or by letter and photographs as in the case of the Stemless Thistle - *Cirsium acaule*. (35 plants were counted in the exposed lias which resembles a limestone pavement-type habitat near the bluff above the south side of the western lake. See letter dated 14.10.79 I.O.P. and letter 29.2.80 M.E.G.).

The 338 species listed may provide a helpful indication of the different kinds of plants which may be encountered in the Country Park and may serve as a basic schedule which can be corrected and amended as fresh data come to hand.

The section has already undertaken to provide the Cosmeston Country Park Management with reports and lists as we believe will be appropriate to the establishing and maintaining of a proper liaison to encourage and develop interest in and study of plant life and habitats. Other interested bodies e.g. the Glamorgan Naturalists' Trust have also requested information.

It is proposed, therefore, that the report be made available to bona fide enquirers who direct their requests to the Section Management Committee.



29th December, 1980.

COSHESTON COUNTRY PARK 22nd February, 1980

COMPOSITION OF THE SOWN SWARD ON BEVELLED, TOP-SOILED SLOPE NORTH OF EAST LAKE
IN ITS SECOND YEAR.

This sown (probably to to ryegrass, ?timothy, red and white clovers) in September 1978 Sward did, not grow that autumn, so 1979 the only growth year. Not all plants showing in February - there will be more in Spring - but already 56 species.

In spite of treatment of the ground before sowing with "Roundabout", said to be the most effective of all non-selective herbicides - killing all it touches - but presumably not seeds (most of which would have been set by Autumn) and possibly not underground parts of perennial. The list 17 months after sowing includes good limestone grassland natives such as red bartsia, eyebright, yellow wort, ox-eye daisy, knapweed & wild carrot.

Also a hedgerow element with lesser celandine, wild arum, primrose, hedge parsley, hedge bedstraw, greater willow herbe and false brome grass, bush vetch, hemp agrimony

Ordinary settled pasture species include bent grass, red fescue, cocksfoot, timothy, bird's foot trefoil, black medick, narrow-leaved vetch, yellow suckling clover, creeping cinquefoil (or this among, lime lovers), yarrow, ragwort, dovesfoot cranesbill, mouse-ear chickweed and ribwort plantain.

Arable weeds include Brassica, spear thistle, prickly ox-tongue, weld, greater plantain yellow parsnip, the 2 docks, narrow-leaved vetch, dandelion and coltsfoot.

Short-lived ephemerals, likely to be squeezed out eventually include scarlet pimpernel, funitory, annual meadow grass, chickweed, buxbaum's speedwell, groundsel, charlock, spotted medick (an uncommon sp. frequent here) & cut-leaved cranesbill.

<u>Limestone spp.</u>	<u>Hedgerow species</u>	<u>Pasture spp.</u>
Blackstonia perfoliata	Anthriscus sylvestris	Achillea millefolium
Centaurea nigra	Arun maculatum	Agrostis tenuis
Chrysanthemum leucanthemum	Brachypodium sylvaticum	Bellis perennis
Daucus carota	Epilobium hirsutum	Cerastium vulgatum
Euphrasia sp.	Galium mollugo	Dactylis glomerata
Potentilla reptans	Primula vulgaris	Festuca rubra
Odontites verna	Ranunculus ficaria	Geranium molle
	Vicia sepium	Lolium perenne

<u>Arable spp.</u>	<u>Ephemeral weeds</u>	
Brassica ? oleracea	Anagallis arvensis	Lotus corniculatus
Cirsium vulgare	Fumaria officinalis	Medicago lupulina
Ficris vicioides	Geranium dissectum	Plantago lanceolata
Pastinaca sativa	Galium aparine	Phleum pratense
Plantago major	Lamium purpureum	Ranunculus repens
Reseda luteola	Medicago arabica	Rumex acetosa
Rumex crispus	Poa annua	Senecio jacobaea
R. obtusifolius	Senecio vulgaris	Trifolium dubium
Taraxacum officinale		T. pratense
		T. repens

Tripleurospermum paritimum	Sinapis arvensis	Vicia angustifolia
Tussilago farfara	Stellaria media	Veronica persica