

*THE
NORTHWESTERN
NATURALIST*

New series



Volume 27 No.2 2026

CONTENTS

Notice of A.G.M.	2
Bryophyte and Lichen Section Report, 2025	
Phil James.....	3
Fern Section Report	
Mike Canaway.....	4
Vascular Plant Section Report, 2025	
Dave Earl	9
Centenary, Northwestern Naturalist - Part 1	
Alexander Mansfield.....	11
The Preston Society.....	12
Nelson Naturalists.....	13
Altrincham and District Naturalist Society.....	15
Society Diary	
Calendars of Meetings of Affiliated Societies.....	17

Contributions for the next issue by the beginning of August please!

North Western Naturalists' Union A.G.M.

2.00 pm Saturday 7 March 2026

Library Meeting Room 2, Bolton Central Library,

Le Mans Crescent, Bolton, BL1 1SE

After the AGM there will be a talk by David Earl.

North Western Naturalists' Union

Bryophyte & Lichen Section Report 2025

Saturday 15 February, Ness Botanic Gardens, Cheshire.

For the first meeting of the year, six bryologists led by Gail Quartly-Bishop gathered to explore Liverpool University's Ness Botanic Gardens which occupy a 64 acre site in Ness, Cheshire. The gardens comprise numerous habitats and on a cold, showery day it was decided to concentrate on the areas near the Visitor Centre. Investigation of the various structures and substrates in this relatively small portion of the gardens resulted in the identification of 21 mosses and 9 liverworts, including *Microlejeunea ulicina* and *Cololejeunea minutissima*. It was agreed that this site has considerable potential for further study and will warrant a return visit.

Saturday 12 April, Mere Sands Wood, Ormskirk, Lancashire.

Mere Sands Wood is a 42 hectare Lancashire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve near Ormskirk, Lancashire. This large site contains a mosaic of habitats including deciduous and coniferous woods, heaths, ponds and sandy, wet meadows. On a pleasant, sunny day, an enthusiastic group of mixed experience, again supported by Regional Recorder, Gail Quartly-Bishop, returned an impressive list of 55 records from two monads. Of the records, 7 were new for the site.

Wednesday 23 April, Crompton Moor, Oldham.

The purpose of this meeting was to liaise with the Friends of Crompton Moor and determine the scope for biological recording within the Crompton Moor Nature Recovery Project. Initial contact having been made via the NWNLU Fern Section, it was agreed that the Bryophyte and Fern Sections would collaborate on this work and also involve the British Pteridological Society (BPS). Accordingly, Dr. Mike Canaway, Fern Section Secretary, Roger Golding of the BPS and the author met Bob Kenworthy and colleagues of the Friends of Crompton Moor to agree how best to investigate this large area.

The area known as Crompton Moor lies between Shaw and Saddleworth, in the borough of Oldham. The Recovery Project works to protect and enhance the wildlife within a 76 hectare Grade A Site of Biological Importance and covers wetlands, peatland and heathland restoration and maintenance of drystone walls. We were most grateful to Bob and his colleagues for guiding us around this large site, where it was clear that the quarries, moors and heaths would afford great scope for fern and bryophyte recording. It was agreed that another joint meeting should be held later in the year, when the ferns would be fully grown.

Saturday 10 May, Lindow Moss, Cheshire.

On a hot and sunny day, three bryologists, Gail Quartly-Bishop, Ellen Jones and the author attended this meeting as a contribution to the Lindow Moss Biological Recording Day organised by the Lindow Moss Landscape Partnership.

Lindow Moss is one of the largest lowland peatlands in Cheshire and includes varied habitats, including a large area of peat bog, wet heath, fen, oak-birch woodland, open water pools and ditches. Guided by local naturalist Jackson Bird, the group concentrated initially on the compartments undergoing peat restoration and rewetting. In these compartments, 8 *Sphagnum* species were recorded, an encouraging total and an indication of successful restoration. Eleven liverworts were recorded, including *Mylia anomala* and *Riccia fluitans* in the ditches and wetter areas but, following the dry spring weather, all species on the large areas of exposed peat and those in the woodland, on a largely sandy substrate, were very desiccated. Nevertheless, in addition to the *Sphagnum* species, 20 mosses were recorded on the day.

Sunday 13 July, Beacon Fell Country Park, Lancashire.

Three members, including Clare Shaw, Regional Recorder for Vice-County 60, met to explore Beacon Fell, a Country Park consisting of 110 hectares of woodland, moorland and farmland. Beacon Fell summit is 266 metres above sea level. Despite some rain having fallen about a week before the meeting, the bryophytes still bore the mark of the very dry spring. The epiphyte flora on two Field Maples near the Visitor Centre included *Metzgeria violacea* which had turned blue, confirming the persistent dry conditions. In the conifer plantation near the car park, the bryophyte flora was both sparse and dry but abundance increased in the deciduous woods at the southern end of the site. It was here, just before the end of the meeting, Clare spotted a small patch of the liverwort *Colura calyptrifolia* growing on a sapling. This species, the frequency of which is increasing as an epiphyte, was definitely the highlight of the day. Thirty-two species were recorded during the day, a most satisfactory total given the challenging conditions.

Sunday 10 August, Crompton Moor, Oldham.

Following the successful scoping meeting in April, this recording meeting was arranged in conjunction with the Fern Section and the North West Group of the British Pteridological Society. Four bryologists attended, including Regional Recorder, Gail Quartly-Bishop. The bryological effort was concentrated on Brushes Clough Quarry, Pingot Quarry and the adjacent woods in monad SD 9510. The quarries contained an interesting mosaic of habitats, including shaded crevices and overhangs, flushed exposed rocks, streams and dense shrubs. The recording returned 9 liverworts, 4 *Sphagnum* species and 25 other mosses. The group was much encouraged by the day and agreed to plan a return visit to explore more of the 76 hectares of Crompton Moor. We were again indebted to Bob Kenworthy and The Friends of Crompton Moor for their warm welcome and hard work ensuring access to the quarries.

Saturday 6 September, Pennington Flash

Two members, Gail Quartly-Bishop and the author, met to explore this 200-hectare country park. Recording concentrated on the woodland between the car park and the Bridgewater Canal, which forms the northern boundary of the site. As found at a number of meetings this year, the dry spring and summer had left much of the bryophyte flora dry and relatively inconspicuous. However, 20 mosses and 4 liverworts were recorded.

Saturday 25 October, Lyme and Wood Country Park, Haydock.

This 274 acre country park is the site of two former collieries. In addition to established secondary woodland, extensive areas of new woods have been planted and angling ponds created. On this occasion, three members met to undertake a reconnaissance of the site and to assess its potential for future recording. Although only a small part of the park was explored, 13 mosses and 4 liverworts were found. It was agreed that further investigation, concentrating on the areas of more mature woodland, will be worthwhile.

Saturday 6 December, Yarrow Valley Country Park, Lancashire.

Yarrow Valley Country Park covers over 300 hectares between Chorley and Coppull on land previously used for mining, textiles and other industries. Habitats within this large area include semi-natural and planted woodland, small ponds with reedbeds and large ponds, known here as lodges.

On a showery day, the author led the last meeting of the year, accompanied by Regional Recorder Gail Quartly-Bishop, Ellen Jones, Sam Rayner and Sam Turner. Starting at the Birkacre car park, the group investigated the wooded bank along the north side of Big Lodge before working along the River Yarrow towards Drybones Wood. Following the recent heavy rain, it was pleasing to find the bryophytes lush and fully hydrated, a welcome sight after such a dry spring and summer.

In monad SD 5715, 25 mosses and 4 liverworts were recorded, the mosses *Pulvigerella lyellii* and *Campylopus flexuosus* and the liverwort *Metzgeria temperata* being new records for the site. In monad SD 5714, which included a stretch of riverbank, 17 mosses and 8 liverworts were recorded. *Pulvigerella lyellii*, a widespread but uncommon epiphyte, spotted by Sam Rayner, was the find of the day. After such a successful and enjoyable day, it was agreed that this large site has much to offer and should be revisited.

Phil James

North Western Naturalists' Union

Fern Section Report 2025

Wednesday 23 April and Sunday 10 August Crompton Moor, Oldham.

Planning for the 2025 season began early when in January I received a request from Bob Kenworthy for assistance with recording the ferns and bryophytes at Crompton Moor. For background the site is one of the largest wildlife sites owned by Oldham Council spanning some 65Ha and widely used for outdoor recreation. The conservation management of the site is delegated to Friends of Crompton Moor, of which Bob Kenworthy is a leading member, and is a volunteer group formed in 2010 with the object of conserving and protecting the environment, fauna and flora of Crompton Moor. Having agreed to help I soon discovered the extent of the task involving two quarries and five woodlands as well as extensive moorland. Hence I contacted Phil James to see if he could organise a visit of the NWNLU Bryophyte and Lichen section and I also contacted Roger Golding of the Northwest Fern Group. Phil will doubtless report on the bryophyte element.

We subsequently arranged a scoping meeting with the Friends group including Bob and Secretary, Marian Herod and others to visit the site in April where we were warmly welcomed and taken on a tour of the site. Most of the ferns were still dormant from the winter but I did spot a plant of *Polypodium* with some of last year's fronds still present and I was able to take a small sample and determined this by microscopy to be the often under-recorded *P. interjectum* (Intermediate Polypody), a new site and tetrad record. We also saw *Asplenium scolopendrium* (Hart's-tongue) and *Polypodium vulgare* (Common Polypody) which were not seen on the later visit. Following this and further discussion between the group leaders, a field meeting was organised for 10 August.

We met at the main car park and following the usual introductions we were led by Bob towards the large Brushes Quarry. We soon found *Dryopteris filix-mas* (Male-fern) and *D. dilatata* (Broad Buckler-fern). Continuing along the North facing wall we found *Struthiopteris spicant* (Hard Fern, formerly *Blechnum spicant*), *Athyrium filix-femina* (Lady-fern), *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern), *Pteridium aquilinum* (Bracken), *D. affinis* subsp. *affinis* (Golden-scaled Male-fern) and *D. cambrensis* (Welsh or Narrow Male-fern). (N.B. taxonomists disagree on the taxonomic status of the *D. affinis* group who may regard some species mentioned here as subspecies of *D. affinis* and the English names given and may vary also among authorities, or not even exist). Initially retracing our steps we continued down to Pingot Quarry that often has a large waterfall entering from one corner, however on the day it was but a small version of its former self due to the extended dry weather at the time. In the copse at the bottom of the quarry we found *D. paleaceolobata* (Greater Scaly Male-fern) and possibly a new record for the Manchester area. At this point the party split into two with the bryologists remaining near the waterfall to continue their investigations whilst the fern group was escorted by Bob Kenworthy upwards towards the moor. Bob first showed us some recently built leaky dams above the waterfall that mostly contained *D. dilatata* (Broad Buckler-fern) and *Athyrium filix-femina* (Lady-fern). Climbing steadily upwards we continued to a site of *Lycopodium clavatum* (Stag's-horn Clubmoss). This is an uncommon species in the area sometimes forming spreading colonies on relatively open ground. This, however, was partly concealed, growing among heather and bilberry. A good find, originally by Marian Herod of the Friends group. Following a lunch break Bob took us to see a wet coniferous plantation where the ferns in the ground flora were predominantly *D. dilatata* (Broad Buckler-fern) however we also found some plants of *D. borrieri* (Borrer's Scaly Male-fern) some of which was considered by Roger to be *D. borrieri* morphotype *foliosum* and another undetermined plant of the *D. affinis* group which he subsequently determined as *D. affinis* morphotype *convexa*. After battling through the conifers we exited over a wire fence on to a track leading off the moor and thence back to the car park after a productive field trip, 16 taxa of ferns having been recorded in total. Finally, Bob thanked us all for our efforts on behalf of the Friends of Crompton Moor.

Friday 20 June Garden visit. Macclesfield and Manchester University.

The British Pteridological (Fern) Society (BPS) has an appeal to two groups, the first to botanists and the second to horticulturalists who are interested in garden and indoor ferns, visiting gardens and building up their own collections of ferns. This meeting to Sean

Barton's house and garden in Macclesfield was in the latter category so I will only report briefly although it was not without natural history interest in that, as Yvonne Golding expressed in her BPS report, "Sean's house is like being in a museum, full of taxidermy, fossils, shells, antique books on ferns and interesting art work." After viewing Sean's indoor, greenhouse and courtyard garden ferns, of which there were many, the group went to Manchester University Botanic Garden, now known as The Firs Environmental Research Station. This, according to the University website comprises "a new state of the art greenhouse facility and laboratory as well as the University's living plant collection, a unique and historic resource curated within a range of glasshouse biomes and botanical grounds." Here the group was shown round by the site manager, Oliver Hughes, the group passing through the biomes and then viewing the grounds and the moss house, notable for its *Vandenboschia speciosa* (Killarney Fern) also having been previously visited and reported on by the Bryophyte and Lichen Section.

Saturday 19 July *Lycopodiella inundata* (Marsh Clubmoss) monitoring, Torver, Coniston.

The Northwest Fern group has been assisting the Species Recovery Trust with the monitoring of *Lycopodiella inundata* (Marsh Clubmoss) in Cumbria. This small and scarce clubmoss, as the name suggests, is found only on sites that are permanently wet. This visit concerned five sites at Torver Back Common near Coniston identified by the Species Recovery Trust. En route to the sites, especially along the track to Brackenbarrow Farm all ferns that were seen were recorded as follows: *Asplenium trichomanes* subsp. *quadrivalens* (Maidenhair Spleenwort), *Athyrium filix-femina* (Lady-fern), *Dryopteris affinis* (Golden-scaled Male-fern), *D. borreri* (Borrer's Scaly Male-fern), *D. filix-mas* (Male-fern), *D. dilatata* (Broad Buckler-fern), *D. cambrensis* (Welsh or Narrow Male-fern), *D. lacunosa* (Scaly Male-fern group), *D. paleaceolobata* (Greater Scaly Male-fern) *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern), *Pteridium aquilinum* (Bracken), *Struthiopteris spicant* (Hard Fern, formerly *Blechnum spicant*). Of the five sites designated for formal recording of the *L. inundata*, sites numbers 2 and 5 had no plants but the others were well populated. Site 1: 200 plants, 4 fertile cone shoots; Site 3: 790 plants approximately, 218 fertile cone shoots; Site 4: 320 plants, 50 fertile cone shoots. In addition, on approach to the study area 3 further plants of *L. inundata* were seen as well as *Selaginella selaginoides* (Lesser Clubmoss). On return via Coniston Water, Roger found evidence in the form of a single leaf or quill, washed up on the shore, of the aquatic pteridophyte *Isoetes lacustris* (Common Quillwort). Also, a juvenile plant of *Cystopteris* (possibly *C. fragilis* - Brittle Bladder-fern) was seen near Brackenbarrow Farm that had gone unnoticed previously.

.Saturday 1 November Northwest Fern Group Autumn Meeting and AGM, Crosthwaite Village Hall, Cumbria. (by Laurence Sutton)

This was the 30th AGM of the group chaired by Roger Golding and well attended by 22 members.

A series of talks was given:- Dr Barry Wright on the aspects of fern monitoring, including the particular reasons to monitor a species of fern such as environmental deterioration and

the methods which may be used. The opportunity for undertaking citizens' science and community involvement was emphasized.

Laurence Sutton gave two talks, the first on the finding of a large population of *Botrychium* (Moonwort) species this spring on acid moorland above the upper Calder valley which stimulated the enquiry into the natural history of *Botrychium* species in general and their obligate relationship to mycorrhizal root fungi which determines their life cycle and above ground appearances. It was noted that there are probably more than one species of *Botrychium* in Britain as in Europe and thus samples of the recent plants have been sent for DNA analysis.

The second presentation was an update of the *Woodsia ilvensis* (Oblong Woodsia) monitoring in Upper Teesdale, a re-introduction site from 2000. There was a discussion with regard to the density of the original population based on herbarium specimens and historical accounts, which suggested low numbers of small plants in contrast to accounts from the Moffat area in southern Scotland.

Kieran Heggs gave a presentation on his ongoing research at Edge Hill University on the role of mycorrhizal arbuscular fungi in the roots of the facultative dependent *Dryopteris dilatata* (Broad Buckler-fern) in terms of supporting optimal nutritional uptake from the soil for exchange of sugar back to the fungus in varying conditions of light and shade. It is envisaged that such data will inform conservation measures perhaps through understanding the effects of chemical fertilisers on soil fungi and the health of adjacent plant communities.

Alison Evans gave the group an update and useful insight into her morphometric/taxonomy studies of the *D. affinis* (Scaly Male-ferns) group with a special mention of *D. pseudodisjuncta* and *D. pseudocomplexa*. It was noted with interest how the British distribution of these two separate fern entities frequently coincided. Alison's work coincides too with the ongoing debate about the ranking of the *D. affinis* group distinct morphological entities into species or subspecies.

Roger Golding followed Alison's talk with a short update on his recent findings of a fairly substantial population of *D. pseudodisjuncta* near Bassenthwaite with further discussion on the association with potential *D. pseudocomplexa* in this area (not yet found) as revealed in Alison's talk.

As part of the AGM, field meetings and visits undertaken were briefly reviewed and have been reported individually for the BPS Bulletin. Discussion was held and suggestions were made for meetings in 2026.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Roger Golding for the information he supplied, and also to Laurence Sutton, especially for his write-up of the Autumn Meeting and AGM that I have only edited slightly, both substantially contributing to this report.

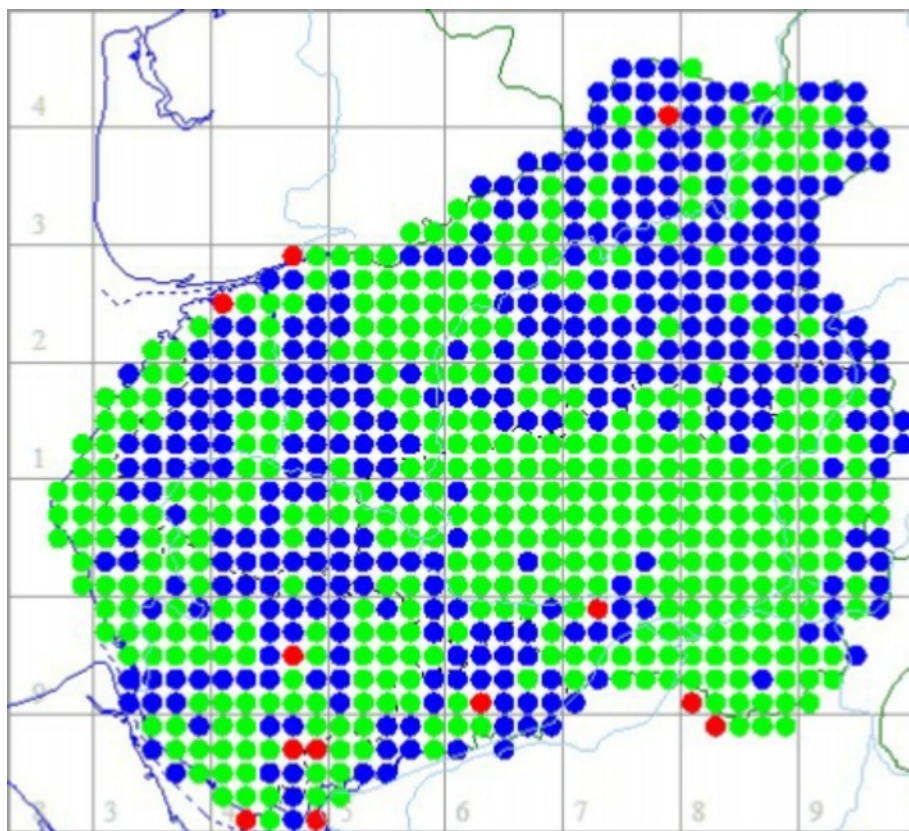
Mike Canaway

N.W.N.U. Vascular Plant Section Report 2025

The latter part of 2025 was very productive regarding the processing of vascular plant records. With retirement having finally been achieved it has been possible to clear a large backlog of records held in emails and notebooks and to make a significant start on processing around 350,000 records held on iRecord. There was also a shift from recording mainly in Greater Manchester to that of searching for species not recorded within vice county 60 tetrads especially on the Fylde peninsula. The targets were mainly species of the genus *Asplenium* combined with general recording. Together with local recorders such as Owen and Carol Fawcett over 14,000 records were gathered for vice county 60 between September and December of 2025.

The iRecord records are steadily being processed generally in taxonomic order extending thus far to the Caryophyllaceae with only around 2,500 Red Campion records to process for the South Lancashire Flora and fewer than 1000 records for this family to process for North Lancashire. It is estimated that the iRecord records will be imported to Mapmate by the Autumn of 2026 after which it will simply be a case of importing verified records after the end of each month. When time permits updates will steadily appear on the South Lancashire Flora section of the NWNNU website.

We can see the results of the importing the iRecord records by scanning the Common Mouse-ear Chickweed map inserted below.



Note the pre-2000 red symbols are to some extent from marginal, remote or limited access areas of vice-county 59. Note the quantity of recent records (blue 2000-2019, green 2020 onwards) for Merseyside with our local recorders now building on the earlier work of botanists such as the late Vera Gordon.

The iRecord imports mainly cover post-2000 records but also include around 700 or more records made by the late Cynthia Barber during the 1970's and 1980's (some supported by images) which have been uploaded to iRecord by her son Nicholas.

Looking at the combined 2025 results for Greater Lancashire the total records processed thus far comes to 48,147. Of these 29,318 were added directly to Mapmate (including 1,633 records from a Wyre Estuary Winter Bioblitz). This indicates that 18,829 have been received via imports mainly from iRecord and to some extent from spreadsheets supplied by local recorders. The sets of data also include records by bioblitz's at Astley Park, Chorley; Withy Grove Park, Bamber Bridge; Rivington Gardens and the Tawd Valley Park at Skelmersdale. In addition, details of museum specimens held at Manchester Museum (mainly from the Victorian era) including that of Caper Spurge collected by Charles Bailey at Chat Moss in 1874.

We will cover interesting finds at our AGM in March. New records are mainly that of planted trees and shrubs in suburban parklands together with a few garden escapes.



But a most outstanding find was that of Pillwort by a pond margin at Shaws Moss, near Rochdale (SD9313, M Elford, 2025, confirmed F Rumsey).

There is a record from near Ormskirk accredited to Charles Bailey in 1924, but the date could be an error, and it is highly likely that this species has not been seen in VC59 since the Victorian era.

Additional discoveries were further populations of Musk Stork's-bill with new records for Lytham (SD3428) with plants having last been seen in the local area on a railway bank between St. Annes and Blackpool by RS France in 1931. Two new populations were also found at Bispham (SD3139 & SD3240) whilst the population by the Preston Prison traffic lights has now spread to turf edges and is thus less vulnerable to weedkiller applications. Also, along the Preston Ringway, by the North Road traffic lights is an abundance of *Poa infirma* (Early Meadow-grass) on a patch of bare ground with further populations of this scarce grass occurring in the dual-carriageway gaps of Preston New Road to the east of Freckleton. With time this species could well increase on our road networks in northwest England.

Finally, as the backlog of records is steadily added to Mapmate we can look forward to a vascular plant Flora of Greater Lancashire covering vice county 59 and modern-day Lancashire steadily appearing on our website over the forthcoming years.

Centenary of The Northwestern Naturalist

Part 1

The Beginnings of The North Western Naturalist Union & The Northwestern Naturalist

You might well assume that the Union was formed first and its newsletter *The Northwestern Naturalist* followed but our eagle-eyed Secretary spotted that the first Edition of the newsletter was published in 1926 but the Union was not formed until 1929, this led to our Editor digging out the first few editions to learn more about the early history of the NWNLU.

The first edition in March 1926 started with “An Appeal” from the Editor, Arthur Augustine Dallman and a statement of intent:

“The Northwestern Naturalist proposes to give prominence to the work and activities of the various scientific, archaeological and educational societies and institutions of the area”

and then listed over 110 different societies and institutions ranging from the Warrington Photographical Society to the Liverpool Microscopical Society to the Burnley Natural History Society.

By September 1928, Volume III No 3, the Editor noted that our area did not have a formal union unlike Yorkshire Naturalists Union or Northumberland and Durham had with The Northern Naturalists Union, and sought the views of the readership concluding:

“We need hardly add that such projected organisation would have the warm support of those responsible for the conduct of this journal”

This proposal “*aroused considerable attention and we gather that there is an appreciable measure of sympathy in the direction indicated*” or so says Vol III No.4 December 1928.

A year later Vol IV No 4 Dec 1929 recorded that:

“the representative meeting held at Manchester on October 26th resulted in the formation of a Union of Scientific Workers and National History Societies associated with the fourteen counties of the area”.

So, the NWNLU was born...and the three years between the publishing of the first *Northwestern Naturalist* and the birth of the Union is explained!

It’s great to note that at least seven of the original groups are still in existence and remain affiliated to the NWNLU and we will continue with the original intent by giving them the opportunity to present their histories over the next few editions of the newsletter.

Alexander Mansfield

The Preston Society

The Preston Scientific Society was founded in 1876, during the reign of Queen Victoria and the dawn of an era of scientific and technological awakening. The original society only lasted 4 years and closed, still with 100 members. It was then re-established in 1893, when it flourished. Its objective was the “advancement of natural science”. The first lecture in the town hall was about the River Darwen. The Society had sub committees covering Natural History, Photography, Astronomy, Records and Surveys, and Botany. The Botany section was later subsumed into the Microscopists and Natural History section.

The various sections used to meet on specific nights of the week initially at the town hall, then they took rooms in Cross Street in 1897. In 1898 membership was over 700 and at this point the Society took up rental of a club on Fishergate. This became the Society’s headquarters with a lecture room and rooms with specimen cabinets and aquaria for the culture of plant life. In 1928 the Society was given notice to leave the building and so purchased rooms in Ellesmere Chamber on Church Street being opened by the mayor in January 1929 and were used until 1982.

The Society delivered a programme of lectures and organised outings. Examination of minutes and reports reveal lectures, for example, on “British Ferns”, “The Apparent Intelligence of Plants” and “The Art of Bird Preserving”. One excursion is listed as “by horse drawn brake through the Trough of Bowland”, other trips to such places as Cockerham, Ingleton and Claughton. Places still visited by the Society today, just that the mode of transport is very different! The natural history section had its own plant collections and published a booklet on the *Flora of Preston and District*. Two of the members collaborated on a booklet called *The Birds of the Ribble Estuary*. The Society continued to hold meetings and deliver lectures throughout both world wars and now is in its 133rd season of illustrated talks.

Throughout, the success of the Society has always been dependent on the interests and activities of its members – one of whom to mention has to be Harry Sharrock who joined in the early 1950s and remained a member till his death in 2017 (see obituary vol. 19.2 2018). He was an enthusiastic and expert all round naturalist and was a great mentor to many in the Society and served as Honorary President from 1982 onwards. Many of his records were used in the 1985 publication by the Society of the *Birds of the Preston Area 1973-1984*, which covered 240 species. At this point the Society had its own recorder, Paul Morgan, who was instrumental in putting the publication together, the first since the 1950s.

Over the years many sections evolved into separate societies. In 1980 the name was changed to “The Preston Society” as it was felt scientific sounded stuffy and Victorian and in 1982 the photography section folded leaving just natural history. It was unaffordable to keep the chambers, so again alternative accommodation was sought, and for some years the conservative club on Church Street was used before moving to Penwortham. However, by 2006 membership had dwindled to just 25 and funding was low. Owing much to the drive and vision of Steve Halliwell, the secretary at the time,

changes were made. The Society was renamed The Preston Society – Birdwatching and Natural History to give clarity to the activities of the group. There was a focus on publicity and a pay on the door policy was introduced. Membership had increased to 121 in 2010. Since then, membership has fluctuated, though numbers remained high during Covid, due to the accessibility of the talks on Zoom and YouTube – people joined from all over the UK including the Isle of Harris and St Albans. Though this helped the Society to survive the pandemic, it was felt that talks needed to revert to in person post Covid. Membership became more local again, as befitting the organisation. Initially numbers were low as people adjusted to going out and socialising again. Currently the Society has a membership of 74 with 40 to 50 regularly attending talks.

The Society's aims haven't changed particularly over the years, with the advancement of the study, appreciation, and enjoyment of natural history, and the promotion of conservation of the natural environment its current mission. The Society has a winter programme of Monday evening talks, and spring and summer evening walks. In addition, there are field outings twice a month at the weekend with occasional coach trips and holidays. Currently the society sends in its bird records from all its outings to BirdTrack and individual members send in plant records to iNaturalist. Over the last 3 years we have participated in the Wader Conservation World Watch. A moth trapping day has also been held over the last 2 years and 168 different species have been recorded.

Over all the years it is interesting that the challenges faced have been similar for different generations – finances, accommodation, membership numbers, socio-demographic profile – and through it all the Society has survived through the dedication of its volunteers and the support of the membership & will, hopefully, for many more years to come.

Nelson Naturalist's Society

Nelson and District Naturalist's Society was founded in 1908, subscription one shilling per season for a programme of nature rambles and lectures. Membership grew quickly and in 1914 a special lecture on 'The Housefly' was advertised with the release of 1000 handbills. At first specimens were brought in to illustrate points of interest, then in 1921 a magic lantern projector was purchased.

The Society sought to promote natural history more generally lobbying the committee of the Free Library to improve the natural history section, the Parks Department to add name plates for plants and to use a room for a museum. A petition was sent to the Prime Minister supporting the 'Access to Mountains Bill', an early but failed attempt to obtain freedom to roam in upland areas.

In 1929 the Society held a Grand Reunion to celebrate 'the coming of age of the society' with a concert, dancing, games and supper. The 1934 Christmas social drew in 140 adults and 12 children. Ice creams at 1 o'clock in the morning after the dancing were a great success, few refused one, the children were delighted with them and the adults too.

During the Second World War nine members were in the armed forces and a Comfort Fund was established to send them parcels. The restriction of transport services at

summer rambles was difficult and they were confined to the local area. At the same time the demands of the war effort put pressures upon the natural world. Brierfield Wood was cut down and meadows and footpaths were ploughed up. Members set to replanting trees and charting paths so that they could be restored when peace returned. Lecture fees were donated to the Aid to Russia Fund and the Society tried to transfer its deposits to War Certificates but the money was returned as Societies like ours could not hold these certificates.

Recording began soon after the Society was formed. An area was fixed upon about 10 miles radius of Nelson which made a good day's walk of anything up to 20 miles there and back, sometimes using the railway or bus. Recorders were appointed and botany classes held to assist members in developing their skills of identification. Many of these early records have become the historical part of national databases which enable assessments to be made of changes in species distribution through factors such as habitat loss and climate change.



An early photograph of members out on a field trip.

The membership swelled to 150 members in 1951 when an Annual Competition of lantern slides, pressed flowers, insects and essays was started as well as the society magazine 'The Pendle Naturalist'. In 1966 the name of the Society was shortened to its present name: Nelson Naturalist's Society. The 50 years Jubilee was celebrated in 1968 with a film show in sound and colour - 'Highland Birds', followed by refreshments and dancing.

These are just a few of the facts gleaned from the society's minute books. A hundred years is a long time and there are several names which span a large part of this time in the history of the Society. Isaac Hartley, founder member and Holmes Ellis were both fellows of The Royal Microscopical Society. Rennie and Gordon Woods were at the forefront of wildlife photography, Gordon played 'Tim' in the Romany series broadcast by the BBC. Arthur Turner, botanist, wrote a monograph of a local lime rich flush in a peat bog where he spent his summer holidays. Alan Brindle, was 30 years keeper of entomology at Manchester Museum.

In recent years nearby natural history societies have folded and Nelson Naturalists now 118 years old, is only holding on with a close group of members who continue to enjoy meeting up for a series of 8 winter lectures and monthly summer field trips. We are able to support planning questions, publication of the East Lancashire Butterfly Report, the East Lancashire Moth Report and Newsletters.

Altrincham and District Natural History Society

The society was formed in 1908 to promote the knowledge, observation, recording and protection of all forms of nature. For some of the early years the Society was known as the Altrincham and District Natural History and Literary Society.



The aim and the primary activities of the Society 'AltNats' remain the same today as when it was founded. The focus has always been on natural history related lectures or presentations and on field trips to find and identify all aspects of fauna, flora, fungi and other natural objects.

Initially, presentations will have been primarily lectures with limited visual material. Subsequently lantern slides provided new opportunities, gradually followed by overhead projectors, slide projectors and finally digital presentations. The recent limitations of Covid resulted in much use of Zoom (or similar) technology allowing people to interact without actually meeting in person. Zoom has also provided new opportunities for a wide variety of talks to be given remotely, and for continued participation of people no longer able to attend meetings in person.

Field trips have also continued in a similar way, with local sites visited on Tuesday evenings, and full day trips at the weekends to places like Pennington Flash, Rixton clay pits, Ainsdale, Millers Dale, Loggerheads, Hilbre, Rostherne and many others.

There have also been residential trips, often led by Vincent Pedley, to places including Holy Island in the north-east of England and Trearddur Bay on Anglesey.

There have been many members who have made major contributions to the Society. My relatively recent period with the Society means that I may not attribute fairly to all. The first president was John Hil Kirk.

The well-known Cheshire naturalist Thomas Coward, was involved in the very early years and became president in the late 1920s. Thomas wrote a number of books on Cheshire, particularly ornithological. On his death in 1933, the 14-acre Cotterill Clough Nature Reserve was bought, by public subscription, in his honour.

Phil Newton was another significant naturalist and photographer. He was secretary of the Society for about 40 years and president in the late 1950s.

Hilda Summersgill was president of the Society from 1968 until her death in 2023. She was a major contributor to the success of the Society in the latter part of the 20th century, with her great expertise and enthusiasm. There are many others not mentioned who have contributed significantly to the success of the Society.

One other member of the late 1940s, known much better for his activities elsewhere, notably on the Kinder Mass Tresspass, was Benny Rothman.

Social events have included evening buffets, an annual barbecue hosted for many years by long-standing member Gwen Pennington, and a Christmas walk followed by a pub lunch. The Centenary dinner in 2008 was attended by about 40 people. This major event was organised primarily by two other long-standing and dedicated members, Anne Mason and Margaret Hickson.

Proceedings and reports of observations have been published for much of the period, and many of these are housed in Sale Library or the Liverpool Museum. Some from the early years were particularly detailed, including: 41 species of British earthworms identified in Lancashire and Cheshire between 1931 and 1933!

The Seventieth Anniversary of the Society, 1908 – 1978, included a detailed list of flora, fauna, fungi, mosses and liverworts and galls from an 18 month study of a site at Litley Farm on Arley Green.

Throughout this period there have been other societies with similar interests. These included the Manchester Field Club and the North Group of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Many people were members of two or all of these societies. In addition, Hilda Summersgill was also involved in setting up the group of Hale Ornithologists known as Haloes. Sadly, all of these additional societies gradually lost membership and had insufficient support to continue. The AltNats has provided an opportunity for former members of those societies to continue meeting and sharing their expertise and enthusiasm in the natural world.

Although the AltNats is suffering the same problems as the other societies, we have continued with the key activities and hope to participate in the next centenary of the NWNNU!

SOCIETY DIARY

Please check the details and visit websites and Facebook pages where they are given for further information.

Please note that members of the Northwestern Naturalists' Union are welcome to attend the meetings of all the affiliated societies.

ALTRINCHAM AND DISTRICT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The indoor meetings are held at Jubilee Community Centre, The Firs, Bowdon, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA14 2TQ at 7.30pm. Excursions leave from the Jubilee Centre car park at 6.30 pm or meet at the venue itself. Entrance charges: £2.00 members, £3.50 guests. Please contact us at least 3 days in advance if you wish to attend any of the excursions.

<http://www.altnats.org.uk>, info@altnats.org.uk, 0161 865 0118

BLACKBURN BIRD CLUB

Indoor meetings are usually held on the first Monday of the month at Feniscowles Methodist Church, Preston Old Road, Blackburn, BB2 5ER at 7.30 pm. Outdoor meetings are held to observe and study birds in the field, and are usually led by a member of the committee.

BUXTON FIELD CLUB

We offer a programme of field visits (May-October), talks (October to March) and volunteering opportunities throughout the year. Talks with refreshments start at 7pm at

Buxton Methodist Church Hall, Chapel Street, Buxton, SK17 6HX. Attendance for non-members is £3. For details of our programme, how to join and information about local fauna and flora visit: <https://buxtonfieldclub.org.uk/>

CESHIRE ENVIRONMENTAL RECORDS CENTRE (RECORD)

Any queries contact: Eric Fletcher info@record-lrc.co.uk

CHORLEY AND DISTRICT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Meetings September to April St Mary's Parish Centre Chorley. 7:30 pm start.

See www.chorleynats.org.uk for details or contact the secretary

Paul West 10 Birch Road Coppull, Nr Chorley Lancs. PR75BG, 07708336529, secretary@chorleynats.org.uk

CROAL-IRWELL LOCAL GROUP

We are a local Wildlife Trust group in the North Manchester, Bury and Bolton areas, who have been supporting the Lancashire Wildlife Trust for over 30 years. As volunteers, we manage a nature reserve in Summerseat, enjoy monthly field trips to seasonally interesting sites, and run monthly indoor meetings with a speaker. All are welcome!

Indoor meetings are usually on the first Tuesday of each month, at 7.30pm, and take place at the Cottage, Our Lady of Grace, Highfield Road, Prestwich M251AS. Admission and refreshments by £5 donation. Please bring your own cup! To check/confirm details please message 07377 539882.

GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL RECORD CENTRE (GMLRC)

Any queries contact: Stuart Fraser, Local Record Centre Development Officer

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, Council Offices, Clarence Arcade, Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside, OL6 7PT, Tel: 0161 342 4409 Stuart.fraser@tameside.gov.uk

JOY OF WILDLIFE

The group gets together weekly at sites around Shropshire to record the wildlife that we can find and identify. Outings are on a Wednesday, starting at 10.30am and finishing around 3.30pm. We meet as a group of friends out for the day together doing something we all enjoy. Everyone welcome but children must be accompanied by an adult,

For further details contact Keith Fowler (vc40joyofwildlife@gmail.com). Follow our exploits at <https://wrekinforestvolunteers.blogspot.com/>.

LANCASHIRE & CHESHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

We meet twice per year – Spring and Autumn at World Museum for an afternoon of talks. Meetings are free to attend and membership of the society is currently free.

Contact: Honorary Secretary: Gary Hedges gary.hedges@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

LCES also have a page on the northwest invertebrates site:

<https://www.northwestinvertebrates.org.uk/entomological-societies/lancashire-cheshire-entomological-society>

LANCASHIRE ENVIRONMENT RECORDS NETWORK (LERN)

Any queries contact:lern@lancashire.gov.uk

LEIGH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are in the Derby Room at Leigh Library. There is ample free car parking in the car park next to the library (but please note that you do park at your own risk). Meetings are on Fridays at 7:15pm for a 7:30pm start. Everyone is welcome free of charge but a small donation to our funds from non-members would be gratefully accepted. A varied programme of speakers and slideshows on wildlife subjects is organised, commencing in September running through to May each year.

For all up-to-date information visit our website www.leighos.org.uk. A warm welcome is guaranteed at any of our meetings.

LIVERPOOL BOTANICAL SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held in the Weston Centre, World Museum, Liverpool, starting at 11.00am. Unless otherwise stated field meetings begin at 10.30am. Please check the website for details.

MANCHESTER MICROSCOPICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

All meetings are held in the Stopford Building (Medical School) University of Manchester M13 9PT, corner of Oxford Road and Aker Street (next to the Holy Name Church), Manchester, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. **All are welcome** – feel free to bring a friend or two. Non-members and members of other Societies are welcome. The Society's library will be available at all Stopford meetings and includes copies of our Newsletters and literature on microscopic history, as well as many books on microscopy and Natural History. See also our Internet site at <http://www.manchestermicroscopical.org.uk>

MARPLE NATURALISTS

Meetings commence at 8.00 pm at United Reform Church, Hibbert Lane, Marple, SK6 7NN. Visitors welcome: individual meetings £5, Children free. For more information:

Jane Michael 07917 434598 gmicsch@gmail.com or Deb Cavanagh 07810 450764 or <https://www.marple.website/community/community-groups-in-marple/marple-naturalists.html> or www.facebook.com/marplenaturalists

Outdoor meetings - arranged separately and announced at meetings.

MERSEYSIDE NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION

Full programme listings are on our website www.mnapage.info and reports of previous trips on our blog at www.NaturalistsNotebook.mnapage.info

NELSON NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held at Higherford Methodist Church Hall BB9 6JZ and start at 7.30pm. Autumn meeting dates: 26 Oct. 9, 23 Nov. 7 Dec.

Enquiries and requests for copies of East Lancashire Butterfly Report contact David Nelson 01282 863012 davidnelson@btinternet.com Visitors welcome £4.

NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION - BRYOPHYTE & LICHEN SECTION

All meetings on Saturdays, starting at 10.30 am and will commence whatever the weather. Bring food and clothing adequate for a full day in rough country and bad weather. Please check with section secretary a day or so before the meeting, in case of cancellation or changes.

“Beginners” are welcome at ANY meeting and there will always be a more experienced field bryologist present who will be more than happy to name and talk through the identification features of species encountered. There will not always be a Lichenologist present.

Contact: Phillip James - epiphyte17@gmail.com

NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION – FERN & LYCOPHYTE SECTION

Contact: Mike Canaway – mikecanaway@gmail.com

NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION – VASCULAR PLANT SECTION

Contact: David Earl - dpearlbsbi@gmail.com

NORTH WEST FUNGUS GROUP

Forays start at 10.30am and are planned so that they can continue into the afternoon. Please bring food and drink. Please contact the foray leader to confirm your attendance and for possible last minute details.

Beginners always welcome at all forays. Forays are not suitable for small children. No dogs. <https://northwestfungusgroup.com/>

OLDHAM MICROSCOPICAL & NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Lifelong Learning Centre, Oldham, at 7.30 pm for more information call Phil Whiteman 01612900722, philipwhiteman333@hotmail.com or <http://www.oldham-wildlife-link.org.uk/micro/>

THE PRESTON SOCIETY: BIRD WATCHING & NATURAL HISTORY

The meetings are at St Leonards Church, Marshalls Brow, Penwortham, PR1 9JA. Enquiries should be made by e-mail to prestonwildlife@gmail.com, or through our website www.prestonsociety.co.uk, or by phone on 07565 497065. There is a charge of £3.00 on the door for any visitors.

ROCHDALE FIELD NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month from September to April at 7-30p.m. at Cutgate Baptist Church, Edenfield Road, Rochdale, OL11 5AQ. Coach trips and local walks are held each month. Details of all these events are on our website www.rochdalefieldnaturalists.org.uk and our Facebook page.

If you would like more information about events or RFNS in general, please email our Secretary (Ian Short) at rfns_enquiries@btinternet.com

SOUTH EAST CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

SECOS is a welcoming society open to birders of all levels, from novices to experts. Our field trips and events provide a wonderful opportunity to connect with like-minded people, explore beautiful natural settings, and share the joy of birdwatching. Whether you're looking to learn more about bird identification or simply enjoy the camaraderie of group birding, you'll find plenty to love at SECOS.

We host monthly indoor meetings from September to April, held on the 2nd Friday of each month at 7.30 pm at Ettiley Heath Church Community Centre near Sandbach. These engaging talks are delivered by experienced birders, conservationists, and photographers, covering topics ranging from local species to global birding adventures. Visitors welcome £5 charge. Occasionally, we host talks via Zoom.

From October to May, we organise excursions to local reserves and birding hotspots on the first Tuesday of each month. Additionally, from September to May, we host Sunday trips to more distant locations. Please check our website for membership details: www.secos.org.uk.

We'd love to welcome you to the SECOS community and look forward to meeting you at one of our events.

WILMSLOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held at Wilmslow Guild, 1 Bourne Street, Wilmslow, SK9 5HD

Monthly on Thursday evening at 7:30 p.m. from September to April and field trips February to September. Visitors welcome to indoor meetings (£6) and field trips (£6)

Contact Steve Osborne on 07922 283 017 steve.osborne42@gmail.com.

Thursday 19 February : Flowers of Peloponnese - Bob Worsley

Saturday 26 February : Quarry Bank Field Trip

Thursday 19 March : Charles Tunnicliffe - David Tolliday

Thursday 30 April : AGM followed by Cutting Peat - Andy Osborne

Saturday 2 May : Fungal Punk Dave Field Trip

Saturday 16 May : Lathkill Dale Field Trip

June tbc : Rostherne Mere Field Trip

Sunday 5 July : Hoe Grange Open Day Field Trip

Saturday 22 August : Teggs Nose Field Trip

WORLD MUSEUM LIVERPOOL

Part of the Tanyptera Project/North-West Invertebrates. This is a regional project aimed at promoting the study and conservation of insects and other invertebrates. Contact www.northwestinvertebrates.org.uk/events for information on fees and booking instructions.