

## BOTANICAL NOTES

By

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### **Wall Rue (*Asplenium ruta-muraria* L.)**

About six small clumps were found on the walls of Belle Vue Cottages, growing amongst the much more frequent Maidenhair Spleenwort (*A. trichomanes* L.). This fern was first noted in late June, but on subsequent visits in July and September it was more difficult to find, despite the precise location having been recorded and photographed. It appeared that a few of the lower fronds had been grazed off by goats or deer. This species generally avoids very acidic rocks, so on Lundy it is only likely to occur on mortared walls, giving it a much more restricted range. This is a new record of a small fern which is common in suitable habitats on the mainland, but has not been previously recorded anywhere on Lundy.

### **Rustyback Fern (*Ceterach officinarum* D.C.)**

This is a very scarce fern on Lundy, rarely recorded and only known from one site on a wall near Stoneycroft where it is struggling to compete with nettles, fuchsias and brambles which are rapidly covering the wall. This species thrives on mortared walls in full sun, so some management of encroaching vegetation is required in order to ensure its continued survival on Lundy. Extensive searching in the area has failed to produce any more colonies of this species.

### **Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant* (L.) Roth)**

This is a common fern on the mainland in wet, acidic areas, but always a very scarce and difficult plant to find on Lundy, with just a few records in some years. A small colony grows in Smith's Point Quarry, but it is very susceptible to grazing. Around seven or eight vigorous clumps were photographed in June, but by mid-July they had been grazed flat; by September there was very little evidence of it. A separate small colony was found in late April just north of Pondsburry, growing amongst clumps of *Molinia* in a fairly exposed position, and this colony seems to have escaped grazing, although it is not thriving due to its very open location.

### **Wood Vetch (*Vicia sylvatica* L.)**

This constitutes a new record for Lundy of a very beautiful plant, always scarce on the mainland, but present in a well-known location at Hartland Point, within sight of its new home on Lundy at the bottom of the beach road. As the name suggests, it does occur as a woodland plant, but is also regularly found on sheltered sea cliffs where it can scramble through grasses and low vegetation. The striking flowers are at their best in June. A small colony seems to have become established here, so a further exploration of the cliffs in this area may reveal more plants. Even when not flowering, the distinctive leaves are very obvious so if more plants are present elsewhere they should be easy to locate.

### **Sea Storksbill (*Erodium maritimum* L. (L'Hér))**

Sea Storksbill is a very common annual plant on Lundy in dry gravelly areas, such as around the Castle, on the Terraces and on the steps down to the Battery. This species seems to be doing very well here, but on the mainland it is becoming increasingly difficult to find as its preferred habitat succumbs to changes in land use; this prostrate, insignificant species suffers from competition from more vigorous species.

**Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum* L.)**

A single clump was found in July near the bottom of the zig-zag path down to Quarry Beach, and perilously close to the area strimmed and kept clear for walkers. It may benefit from some of the management of the bracken on these steep slopes. This species was recorded in the Atlas of the Devon Flora of 1984 but there were very few records subsequently.