

Lanceolate Spleenwort in Westminster

On 10 December 2020 Roy Vickery emailed to tell me of a fern he had found growing on a low wall outside the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, opposite Westminster Abbey. It was one of several wall ferns, including Wall-rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria*, but not immediately identifiable, so the next day I cycled there to investigate.

The site is easy to find (Figure 2). A low wall of granite setts surrounds a raised grass lawn; the ferns grow in a shady crevice beneath the granite coping. Wall-rue is the dominant species. There is also Maidenhair Spleenwort *A. trichomanes* subsp.

quadrivalens, Hart's-tongue *A. scolopendrium*, Male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Black Spleenwort *A. adiantum-nigrum* and Polypody, probably *Polypodium interjectum*. These six species are commonly found on London walls. But the one Roy had noticed is by no means common; it is Lanceolate Spleenwort *A. obovatum* subsp. *bil-lotii* (Figure 1).

Lanceolate Spleenwort is essentially restricted in Britain to the far south-west of England and west Wales, where it grows in crevices in granite rocks and on siliceous walls. Surprisingly the first British record, c. 1700, is from acid sandstone in the

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Figure 1: A (single?) plant of Lanceolate Spleenwort, with Wall-rue on the left

Lanceolate Spleenwort in Westminster (cont.)

Weald near Tunbridge Wells, where it has not been seen since 1885. A site near Bristol was until recently its most easterly station in Britain. In January 2012, I found a few clumps on a Victorian brick wall beside the Regent's Canal at King's Cross. Lanceolate Spleenwort is not in the horticultural trade so it was assumed that this disjunct colony arose naturally from a spore or spores of very distant origin. Though it is fairly common in Brittany and the Cotentin peninsula of Normandy, these sites are very far from London, and spore transport from south-west England by the prevailing westerlies is more likely.



Figure 2: The site at Broad Sanctuary SW1

Redevelopment of the King's Cross site affected this colony and the ferns had disappeared by 2014, so Roy's discovery in Westminster is a welcome surprise. There appear to be four separate clumps on the wall, each with up to a dozen bright green, healthy fronds as long as 10cm long, but mostly shorter (Figure 3).

The occurrence of Lanceolate Spleenwort together with the other four Spleenworts is a bit of a puzzle. The former is a calcifuge that thrives in habitats rich in mineral salts, whereas the others are strict calcicoles that normally grow on walls in decaying lime-rich mortar. The answer may be that this particular wall, built in the 1980s along with the QE II Centre, is part of a prestige project with high quality stonework. The bonding courses are a hard, gritty, concrete-like mortar but the course supporting the coping is exposed in a shaded recess that traps rainwater, and here the mortar disintegrates to the touch, supporting mosses as well as ferns. Presumably this mortar provides some basic minerals while the granite blocks, and salts in their leachate, mimic the natural habitat of Lanceolate Spleenwort. Long-distance dispersal of spores is a well-documented phenomenon. Alighting on a suitable site is much less likely. The Lanceolate Spleenworts at Westminster (and those at King's Cross a decade earlier) are proof that it can sometimes happen.

John Edgington



Figure 3: Two fronds, each about 10cm long, showing lower and upper surfaces

New to Lambeth: Asian Bittercress

In January 2021 the South London Botanical Institute had planned two New Year Plant Hunts, one of which was on Tooting Common. These had to be cancelled, but on New Year's Day I walked around the Common, and managed to find 36 wild plants in flower.

One of these I tentatively identified as Asian bittercress (*Cardamine occulta*), possibly a new plant for the Common. I took a photograph and e-mailed it to Tim Rich, the expert on British Brassicaceae, who rapidly replied confirming that my identification was correct.

Asian bittercress was first reported in the UK as a container-weed in a Coventry nursery in 2014, where it persisted until 2017. It was first found outside a garden centre at Ely station, in March 2019. Soon after it was found in Westminster, and within a few months it had been reported from Cambridge, Chesterfield, Elgin, north Somerset and Co. Wexford.

The plant on Tooting Common was growing at the base of a small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) planted in 2017 when the rather decrepit Chestnut Avenue – chestnut in this context being horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*, not sweet chestnut, *Castanea sativa* – was removed and replaced with small-leaved limes. I assume the bittercress was introduced with these trees, and as it is annual, it seems the plants found in 2021 represent the third or fourth generation of the species on this site. Several seedlings suggest that it will persist for at least another year.

Asian bittercress is most easily confused with hairy bittercress, *Cardamine hirsuta*; the differences between the two are summarised in the table below.

Preliminary observations suggest that Asian bittercress flowers earlier than the native hairy bittercress. In early February its flowering was coming to an end and its seedpods maturing, whereas hairy bittercress was still coming into flower and few plants had ripening seedpods.

Since finding the Tooting Common plant, I've wandered around trying to find Asian bittercress elsewhere. It's said that in Europe '*C. occulta* occurs primarily in anthropogenic habitats such as flower beds and pots, roadsides and pavements, often where there is irrigation'. Therefore the planters which proliferate on Lambeth's pavements would appear ideal for it, and, indeed, on examining these, it appears that Asian bittercress is widespread throughout the borough, and I've also seen it in a planter in Chelsea. However, apart from the Tooting Common plant, I've only seen it twice outside a planter, as a pavement-weed.

Roy Vickery

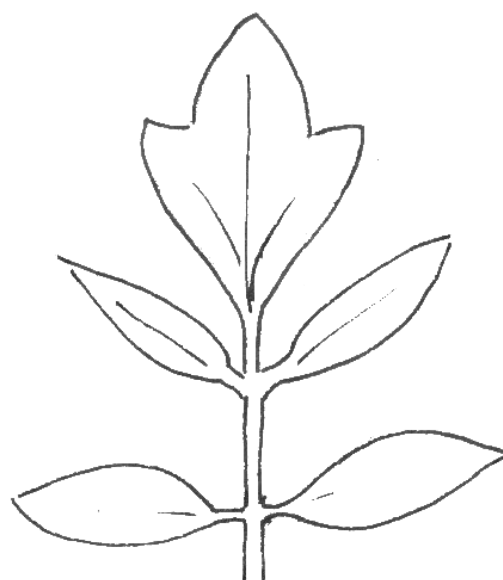


Figure 1: *C occulta* leaf

Drawn by Helen Firminger

	<i>Cardamine occulta</i>	<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>
Basal rosette leaves	Usually absent	Often poorly defined, but usually present
Terminal leaflet	With 3(-5), usually acute lobes Note: leaves of young groundsel (<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>) seedlings can look superficially similar.	Unlobed, or with rounded, poorly defined lobes
Stem branching	Many lax, 'straggly' branches	Stiff branches, mostly from the base of the plant.
Habitat	Usually confined to planters	Pavements, bare ground and planters

SLBI field meeting

Visit to Alice Holt Forest, Bentley, Hampshire

A “rule of six” lockdown field meeting was held at Alice Holt Forest, Bentley, Hampshire on 17 October 2020, comprising just five participants and the leader. We met at Bentley station, crossed the railway line to Platform Two and took a public footpath from the end of the platform into the forest. There was an SLBI visit to this site some ten years ago. A repeat meeting was planned but thwarted by Lockdown Two.

Leading off the path to the right shortly after entering the forest is the entrance to Butterfly Conservation’s reserve Bentley Station Meadow (www.hants.iow-butterflies.org.uk), so we made a detour, noting a number of wild flowers that support the life cycles of butterflies and provide nectar. Devil’s-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), typical of damp meadows and a species SLBI has met before at Malham Tarn, was still in flower. There were a few late-season flowers on Bush Vetch (*Vicia sepium*) and Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), but other identifications had to be done on vegetative characteristics or seed pods.

Returning to the main tarmac path we went uphill then took a small track left through the arboretum, emerging at a top track, turned right to a crossways and followed the main track back down to the station. Being autumn, attention naturally turned to fungi, with a total of 29 species recorded once I had identified those I took home in the trug (see Table 1).

June Chatfield



Figure 2: Dyer's Mazegill



Figure 3: Pestle Puffball



Figure 1: Parasol

Figure 4: Admiring parasols



Table 1: Fungi identified at Alice Holt Forest

Type	Name	Comments
Gilled toadstools	Common Inkcap (<i>Coprinus atramentaria</i>)	
	Fibre-cap (<i>Inocybe</i> sp.)	“
	Sulphur Tuft (<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>)	
	Deceiver (<i>Laccaria laccata</i>)	
	Amethyst Deceiver (<i>L. amethystina</i>)	
	a Bell (<i>Galerina</i> sp.)	
	a Bonnet (<i>Mycena</i> sp.)	one of over 100!
	Weeping Widow (<i>Lacrymaria velutina</i>)	
	Parasol (<i>Macrolepiota procera</i>)	(Figure 1)
	a Milkcap (<i>Lactarius</i> sp.)	exudes a white milky liquid when broken
	Common Yellow Brittlegill (<i>Russula ochroleuca</i>)	
	Buttercap (<i>Rhodocollybia butyracea</i>)	has a greasy cap surface
	Poison Pie (<i>Hebeloma crustuliniforme</i>)	
	Coal-gas or Sulphur Knight (<i>Tricholoma sulphureum</i>)	bright yellow toadstool with a very strong smell of coal gas, quite unmistakeable
	Bulbous Brown Webcap (<i>Cortinarius</i> cf. <i>suillus</i>)	
Sponge gills	Dyer's Mazegill (<i>Phaeolus schweinitzii</i>)	on pine (Figure 2)
	Matt Bolete (<i>Boletus pruinatus</i>)	on pine
Sponge brackets	Birch Bracket (<i>Piptoporus betulinus</i>)	
	Turkeytail (<i>Trametes versicolor</i>)	on dead wood and logs
	Hairy Curtain Crust (<i>Stereum hirsutum</i>)	on dead wood and logs
Other	Pestle Puffball (<i>Lycoperdon excipuliformis</i>)	(Figure 3)
	White Saddle (<i>Helvella crispa</i>)	
	Crested Coral (<i>Clavulina coralloides</i>)	
	Yellow Staghorn (<i>Calocera viscosa</i>)	
	Peeling Oysterling (<i>Crepidotus variabilis</i>)	
	toadstools (<i>Hyaloscypha leuconica</i>)	tiny, on larch cones
	Hazel Woodward (<i>Hypoxyton fuscum</i>)	
	Beech Woodward (<i>H. fragiforme</i>)	
	Violet Bramble Rust/Brand (<i>Phragmidium violaceum</i>)	seen as maroon patches on bramble leaves and below in summer as yellow spores, and in autumn and winter as black spores produced by alternating generations, as is common in rusts

Daily exercise

Having reached my 84th year, and having lived in Spain for the past 20 years (where I help to run the Malaga Glass Museum), I have had no recent opportunity to visit the SLBI. My fondest memories go back to the time – I think during the 1970s - when Mr Lousley lectured to us and took us to see the flora of the North Downs. My recent confinement to my home, thanks to Covid-19, means that my only access to nature is my garden. For those who do not know this coastal area of southern Spain, it may be helpful to know that it never freezes. Totally atypically, however, in February 2020, we had a heavy hailstorm which tore several plants to pieces.

In your letter of 20 April 2020 you suggest that members may like to send photographs of plants. I thought I might send images of two plants that are now in full flower here in my garden, in mid-April. One is of our Bottle-Brush tree (*Callistemon* sp), a native of Australia which I planted as a tiny sapling some ten years ago. Nowadays I can easily pass under its branches. I wonder whether there are sheltered spots in which it might grow outside in Britain?



In terms of its cultural requirements, it has been undemanding. I simply water it about once a week along with the rest of the garden, except during the variable wet period in early winter and early spring.



My second choice is the Lemon-scented Jasmine, *Jasminum azoricum*, which actually hails from Madeira, and does not tolerate frost. It lives up to its name in producing beautifully perfumed flowers, a little later than one of our other jasmines, White Jasmine, *Jasminum polyanthum*, but before the other two, Italian Jasmine, *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, and Common Jasmine *Jasminum officinale*. It differs from the other three jasmines that we have in the garden in its large flowers, each with up to ten petals. It grows and flowers well against a north-west facing wall and benefits from occasional watering.

I hope that people will forgive my choice of plants, which although thriving in my garden in a Mediterranean climate, are actually wild species, and not the product of horticultural meddling so far as I know.

Ian Phillips

SLBI helps local high street grow back greener!

The SLBI has recently started its community planting along Norwood Road (where the Institute is located, in Tulse Hill), Norwood High Street and on Norwood Works, Lambeth's largest industrial estate. We were awarded £15,295 from the Mayor of London's 'Grow Back Greener Fund,' earlier in the year, to carry out the work.

The Institute received the grant in partnership with the Station to Station Business Improvement District, which serves almost 500 businesses within the Tulse Hill and West Norwood area.

'Pavement Plants for People' is a project that will transform many grey pavement areas of the high street into a greener environment to be enjoyed and cared for by the local community, who have little nearby access to open space and nature. The educational community project will include:

- ♦ adding 'depaved' plant beds, planting areas of pavement with beautiful, pollution tolerant (and sometimes edible), wildlife friendly plants;
- ♦ incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS – or 'rain gardens') that reduce local flood risk;
- ♦ planting trees & shrubs in painted oil drums around the industrial estate.

The aim is to provide a greener, cleaner space that improves the physical/mental wellbeing of local residents,

improves air quality, increases biodiversity, creates important wildlife habitats and helps combat climate change.

Planting will be done by school children and other local community groups, organised by the SLBI Education Team, helping people to learn gardening skills, environmental knowledge and the importance of plants. An education trail will be created and information boards will explain the project, ensuring lasting impact.

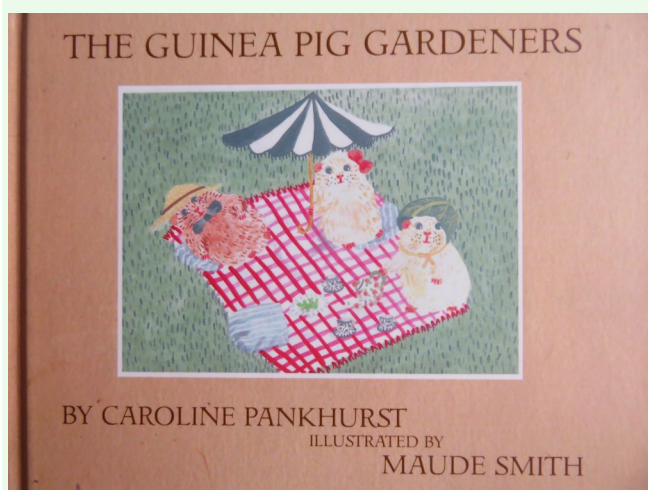
The grant provides a great opportunity for the SLBI to work with its local communities of Tulse Hill and West Norwood in making the high street a better place, not just for local people but also for the environment. We already welcome many local people into the SLBI so are really happy that we can now take our work outside on to the local high street. We look forward to working with Station to Station, Lambeth Council and local community groups and schools on this very exciting project.

The project will be match funded by both infrastructural support from Lambeth Council and a commitment to maintenance from Station to Station and its businesses, with work taking place between now and September 2021. If you would like your local business, community group or school to take part, please get in touch with us.

*Caroline Pankhurst,
SLBI Education & Project Manager*

Book review

The Guinea Pig Gardeners; Caroline Pankhurst & Maude Smith, Jelly Bean Books, 2020



'Humph', I said when I reached the end of this glorious little book – 'Is that the end?', I thought to myself. I wanted to find out more about the antics of the beautifully busy botanical guinea pigs Maisie, Daisy, Mrs. Guinea Pig and Humphrey. These considerate (and rather eccentric) Guinea Pigs really just want a decent picnic tea party, but whilst getting everything ready, they never forget the needs of their little garden friends; Bella, Donna, Cyril, Robin, Rosemary and Mr. Bumble. Teamwork and an understanding of how nature works were two of my take-away messages from this delightfully illustrated book which – I believe – deserves a place on every gardener's bookshelf. This book will appeal to young and old alike (my 9 year old daughter and I sat in our back garden and read it together). Caroline and Maude have done a terrific job of creating a genuinely lovely and wonderfully humorous classic.

Michael Holland

Memorials of botanists

The gravestone of Frank (Francis) Kingdon-Ward 1885-1958

Frank Kingdon-Ward (K-W) was an explorer, plant collector and author who died suddenly on 8 April 1958, aged 72, after a stroke. Just the week before he had been contemplating a 23rd expedition to northern Iran, the Caucasus or even Vietnam. Over a period of nearly fifty years, Frank explored the then unknown frontier territory of Tibet, northwestern China, Burma (Myanmar) and Assam (now part of north-eastern India). In the process he collected and catalogued over 23,000 plants, and is held by many horticulturists today as the last of the great plant hunters. He was buried in St. Andrews and St. Mary Churchyard Grantchester, south of Cambridge. It was in Cambridge in 1904 that he had entered Christ's College, obtaining his degree in Natural Sciences Tripos.

The grave

The modest headstone can easily be overlooked, surrounded by the clipped evergreen shrub *Berberis callicantha* (Black-berried Barberry) with glossy, holly-like leaves, which is directly behind. When its yellow flowers appear around May it must almost cloak the headstone, and unbeknownst to most onlookers, is one of Frank's own introductions from his 1924-25 Tsangpo expedition in SE Tibet.



Not far from the grave, on a south-facing wall, there is a rose planted on 10 February 2016 to honour and remember the man. It is a new rose named by the breeder Rosa 'Frank Kingdon-Ward' and planted by Matthew Biggs, an author, radio and tv broadcaster.

Places unvisited

Kingdon-Ward was born in Manchester on 6 November 1885, the son of Harry Marshall Ward, an eminent botanist who became Professor of Botany at Cambridge and founded the University's new Botany School. It is likely that Frank realised his destiny at an

early age, as he overheard a conversation between his father and a colleague who had just returned from the far east. One phrase stuck out "*There are places up the Brahmaputra where no white man has ever been*". In 1909, as luck had it, a family friend arranged a teaching post for him at a public school in Shanghai. Frank had no wish to teach but took the job as Shanghai was nearer to the Brahmaputra than England.

The Brahmaputra flows through what is now Tibet, India, and Bangladesh to its confluence with the Ganges (Ganga) River, before emptying into the Bay of Bengal. At that point it remained a mysterious puzzle in terms of cartography, geography and the plants that grew there. By his own admission Frank was disillusioned with teaching, which was a mercifully short-lived episode. He had already taken extended leave when he was offered a place on a zoological expedition funded by the Duke of Bedford up the Yangtze in western China. He donated a small collection of herbarium specimens to the Botany School in Cambridge, but none were new to science. However, "*It was not only his ability to become part of the country through which he travelled that made K-W an outstanding explorer, but also his genius for absorbing and describing it. He has an easy vivid writing style. As an apprentice traveller on the Bedford expedition, he demonstrated the keenness of eye and mind that remained with him throughout his long career*". On his return K-W published his first book *On the Road to Tibet*, and was elected fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

A new career beckons

Unexpectedly, in 1911, an expedition became possible that would open the door to a career for which he knew he was born. Arthur K. Bulley, a rich Liverpool cotton broker and founder of the nursery firm Messrs Bees Ltd, offered him a post collecting hardy plants and seeds in the Yunnan Province of southwest China. In total he made 22 expeditions into a previously unexplored, unmapped confusion of river, gorge and wilderness for numerous sponsors, spanning an incredible 45 years. He was undoubtedly multi talented, and collected vast numbers of plants, seeds, bulbs and photographs of not just the flora, but of places and people. Importantly, he possessed the gift of writing up romantic, but scientifically accurate, accounts of his trips. Kingdon-Ward is famed for discovering what he thought was '*the finest flower I have ever seen*' the Himalayan blue poppy, *Meconopsis betonicifolia*, as recorded in his book *The Land of the Blue Poppy: Travels of a Naturalist in Eastern Tibet*.

K-W's explorations really began in 1913 when he explored and collected plants in Yunnan and Tibet,

which he described in his book *The Mystery Rivers of Tibet* (1923). The following year he made the first of several trips to north Burma, as described in *The Farthest Burma* (1921). During WW1 he served in the Indian Army reaching the rank of Captain, but shortly after Armistice Day was back in north Burma to continue exploring Yunnan and Sichuan Province.

The riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges

Kingdon-Ward's 1924-25 expedition was probably his most renowned because a great mystery had hung over the "riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges". It was rumoured that there were Falls of the Brahmaputra that exceeded the height of the Niagara Falls and this became known as "the great romance of geography", as it was coupled with danger and suspense. The Brahmaputra is a trans-boundary river which flows through what is now Tibet, India, and Bangladesh to its confluence with the Ganges (Ganga), and empties into the Bay of Bengal. At the time it remained a mystery in terms of cartography, geography, and botany. Near to Lhasa (Tibet) the river is at an altitude of 12,000ft before dropping to a mere 1,000ft above sea level in Assam as rivers cut gorges at various depths.

F-W Bailey and H. Morshead's 1913 exploration had already proven the course and identity of the river but failed to solve the mystery of the gorge itself. Previously Bailey, who was Political Officer for Sikkim, an explorer, and skilled gardener had been generous enough in giving advice. The Sikkimese pundit Kintup, who at the request of the Survey of India, ventured there thirty-five years earlier, was also unable to penetrate the sharp and steep-sided gorge's depths.

In the company of Lord Cawdor, who part-funded the expedition, the year would prove to be long and arduous. Cawdor had a real interest in surveying and map-making as well as being the photographer. He also oversaw the medicine chest as malaria (K-W contracted malaria in his earlier trip and it never left him), stomach upsets, fever, fleas and altitude sickness were the norm. Cawdor was often alarmed how freely K-W would use the morphine tablets!

This division of duties left K-W to concentrate on plant collecting and selecting dried, pressed specimens. Cawdor became frustrated, struggling to appreciate that botanising and plant collecting cannot be rushed. As he was collecting for both the Natural History Museum and Kew Gardens, he took most of what he saw, whether it was appropriate for gardens or not.

Discoveries

He discovered the largest and most impressive *Primula florindae* (Giant Tibetan Cowslip), naming it after his first wife Florinda (nee Norman-Thomson) whom he married in 1923 and divorced in 1936. Plants new (and some discovered before) to science included *Berberis tsangpoensis*, and 97 species of magnificent Rhododendrons, including *R. leucaspis*, *R. auritum*, *R. vena-*

tor, *R. montroseanum* and *R. scopulorum*, on just this expedition alone.

K-W and Lord Cawdor came within just 600 yards of discovering the Rainbow Falls, hidden below in slipperiness, treacherous conditions around a tight bend, estimating the drop to be about 40ft because of the qualities of the spray, noise, and level of the river below. In the 1990s a botanical team, with modern equipment, retraced K-W and Lord Cawdor's footsteps to further explore the area. In 1998 the team at last found the falls, measuring them at 70ft, twice the height which K-W had thought. They named the falls the 'Hidden Falls of Dorje Pagmo' in honour of a Tibetan Goddess, in the deepest gorge in the world.

The next 30 years

Between 1926-1956 K-W concentrated his flora surveys and mapping high in the mountains and gorges of Burma (Myanmar), Upper Assam and Tibet in search of plants suitable for gardens back home and elsewhere. He not only had to find plants in flower, but return to the exact spot to collect the seeds, for which he had a remarkable memory. In 1947 K-W married Jean Macklin, who shared his sense of adventure and proved an excellent collector herself. Theirs was a wonderful partnership. Frank had someone at last to share each triumph or despair. On Mount Sirohi in Manipur, Frank named the *Lilium mackliniae* (Shirui Lily) in honour of his wife. On 15 August 1950 they were caught at the epicentre (near Rima) of one of the biggest earthquakes ever recorded, in southeastern Tibet. It had a magnitude of 8.6 (now recalculated) on the Richter scale. They were lucky to survive and Macklin wrote a vivid account in *My Hill So Strong* (1952).

Legacy

Kingdon-Ward wrote 25 books and journal articles, (some of which are in the SLBI library), probably out of necessity to fund his expeditions. Conveying his love of the natural world, he shared his experiences, taking us to the Himalayas, seeing dramatic scenery, gorges and raging rivers, treading in his footsteps in search of new plants and, for the gardener, blooms to die for, such was the demand for rare beauties. He was an extraordinary and talented man.

Frank Kingdon-Ward received many honours. In 1930, the Royal Geographical Society awarded him their founder's medal. In 1932, the Royal Horticultural Society awarded him the Victoria Medal of Honour and in 1934, the Veitch Memorial Medal. And in 1952, he received the OBE for his services to horticulture, after which, in 1957, he was made an Honorary Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Gardeners.

The help from local guides and porters is not always acknowledged, but without them these expeditions would have been impossible.

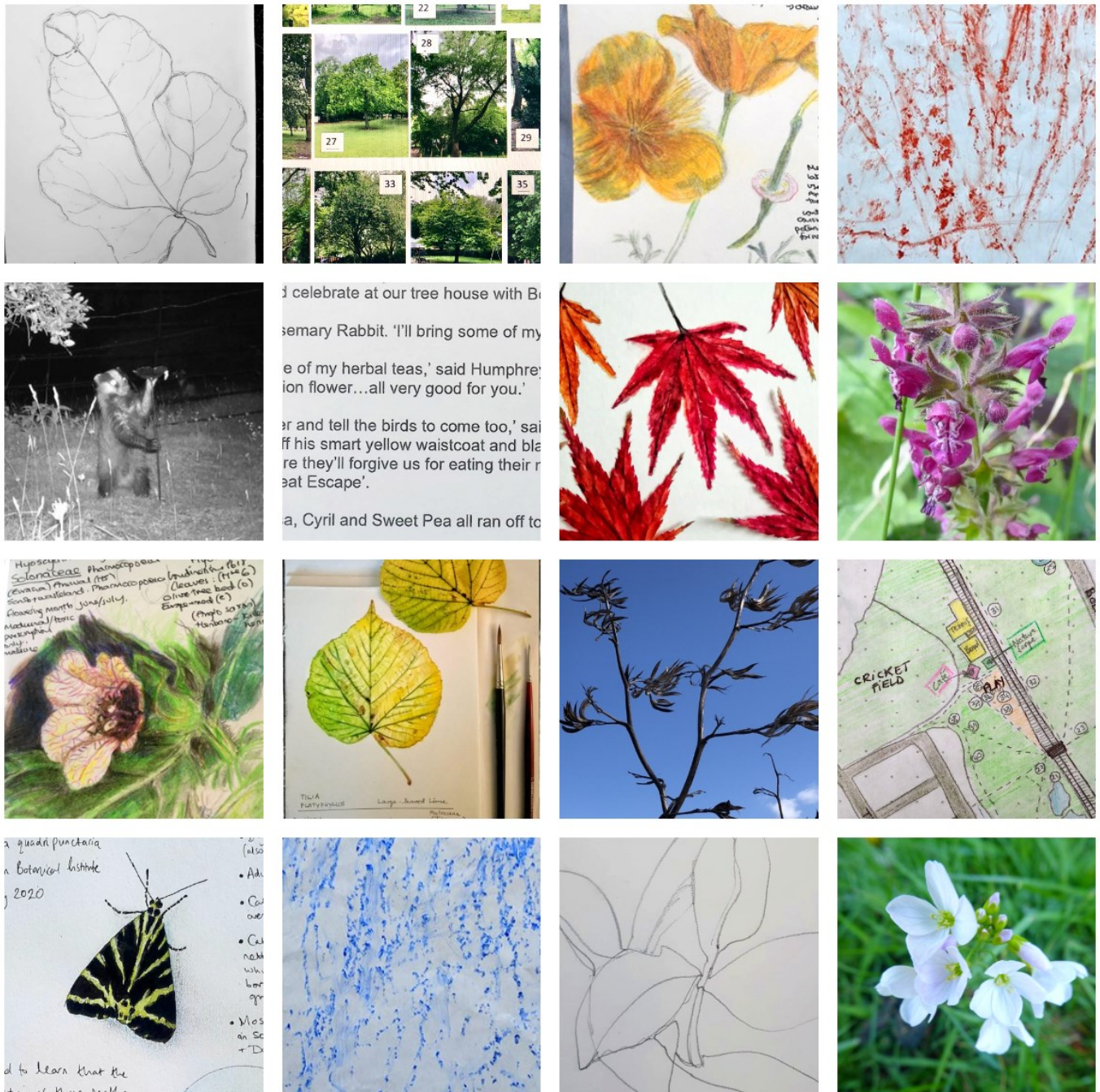
Nicky Nicoll

A welcome boost during our 110th year!

We'd like to thank our supporters that took part in our Big Botanical Challenge last year which raised approximately £4,000, and to everyone that donated to the SLBI during our 110th anniversary year. Between January and December 2020 we raised a tremendous total of **£12,397** in donations, all of which will go towards supporting the SLBI's important education and learning programmes. We've been greatly warmed by the generosity of our members and supporters during such a difficult year, so a big thank you to everyone for keeping us going!

Julia Minnear

A sample of some of the work that was produced during our Big Botanical Challenge 2020. Challenges included taking bark rubbings, nature journalling, sketching, plant identification, plant recording, photography, story writing, and tree mapping.



Obituary: Isa Tyszkiewicz



Isabel Tyszkiewicz, known to everyone as Isa (or Isa Tysz, pronounced 'Tish') died at the age of 88 in August 2020. She was a keen supporter of the SLBI, and a trustee from 2011 to 2017. Isa was born in Poland, but at the start of World War Two her family left for England to escape the Nazi and Soviet invasions.

Many will have been aware of her strong Roman Catholic faith which influenced all she did. She attended Mass at St Anselm's, Tooting Bec, two or three times a week, and fully participated in parish activities. She explained that, to her, 'it was important to leave things better than she found them'. Perhaps because of this she was unafraid of change. When the Institute created the role of Project Manager she welcomed and did her utmost to ensure that Caroline Pankhurst was supported and made to feel at home.

It seems that Isa's primary natural history interest was in geology, especially palaeontology, and she attended classes, lectures and field meetings to further this interest. She later extended her interests to botany and found the SLBI. Here again, she fully participated in our activities, particularly in the herbarium. This included the routine conservation freezing, and the preparation and photography, of specimens for inclusion in the Herbaria@Home project. When the need arose she gladly transport-

ed our *Hieracium* (hawkweed) specimens to East Anglia, so that they could be examined and re-identified by David McCosh, an expert on the genus. When the time had come to redecorate the downstairs herbarium rooms, Isa generously supported the restoration of the cabinets.

As trustee Isa took an alert interest in discussions, but was more concerned with thinking of ways she could give practical help. If a kettle needed defurring, or a seat cover needed repair, Isa got on and did it. When a new trough was needed for the carnivorous plants in the greenhouse, trustees' discussions were cut short when Isa quietly announced that she would cover the necessary cost.

In return, her enquiring mind was stimulated by attending workshops and lectures and June Chatfield's residential field meetings. She was happy to share textbooks from her home, bring in notes from other classes, or lend her illuminated magnifying glass, all without hesitation, if it helped someone else to understand more or to see better. Education for her was a reciprocal process whereby she gladly offered something she knew or could give in return for the new knowledge she had gained.

She developed an interest in the plants, particularly the trees, of Tooting Common, near to where she lived, and was delighted, shortly before her death, to see a recently discovered clump of fritillaries; 'always one of my favourite flowers'.

Plain-spoken, with a deep faith, and an equally deep commitment to all she undertook, Isa gave us a great deal. Jill Wilson, who worked closely with Isa in the herbarium, remembers: *'It was clear for all to see that Isa was a very kind, positive, generous person and the SLBI was truly fortunate to have her as a loyal member, trustee and volunteer. Physically she was quite small, but she will leave a big gap at the Institute and will be missed very much by all who knew her. Remembering Isa, her wonderful nature, and the wide variety of things she did for the SLBI and those around her, generates an almost tangible energy. Her memory definitely brings a broad smile to the face and a warm feeling inside.'*

Contributions by Sophie Gould (Isa's niece), Nick Dunne of St Anselm's Church, Tooting Bec, Jill Wilson, and others at the SLBI. Edited by Roy Vickery and John Hewitt

People news

New Trustee: Maria Vorontsova

Maria Vorontsova, informally known as Bat, is a plant taxonomist working at Kew Gardens and also a Londoner. She studies grasses (botanical family Poaceae) worldwide. Her main research project is a ten-year multidisciplinary work on the grasses of Madagascar. She also has a long-standing interest in the history and philosophy of science, female participation in taxonomy, and decolonising the natural sciences in sub-Saharan Africa. Other interests include building new ways to make plant science useful and relevant to ordinary Londoners.



Maria Vorotsova

Support us

Thank you for being a member of the SLBI. Your annual membership fee is helping to support the future of botanical education for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Here are some of the other ways that you can continue to support our work:

- ◆ Tell a friend about the SLBI, or perhaps give them a copy of the *Gazette*!
- ◆ Make a donation
- ◆ Volunteer with us
- ◆ Fundraise for us
- ◆ Buy SLBI greetings cards or tote bags
- ◆ Buy a gift membership or event voucher for a friend or loved one
- ◆ Hire the Institute or garden for your event (when we re-open)
- ◆ Consider leaving a gift in your Will



To find out more, please visit www.slbi.org.uk/support-us or get in touch by email:

info@slbi.org.uk

Our Gift Memberships are now available in a beautiful greetings card format. Visit www.slbi.org.uk/join