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AUTUMN 2020

# NWFG

*British Pteridological Society – North West Fern Group*



*Dryopteris cambrensis*, Carrock Fell

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## INTRODUCTION

and a bit about me



with lockdown hair!

## Looking back at 2020

Roger Golding - Secretary

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter of the North West Fern Group. I hope to produce these Newsletters twice a year, in Spring and Autumn. This first one is a bit later than I intended - I was hoping to get it done earlier so as not to coincide with the imminent BPS autumn mailing!

I have just taken over as Secretary from Robert Sykes, who is stepping down for a well-earned rest. A 'non-resident' member of the NWFG for some time, I have recently moved back to the area. I spent much of my childhood in Penrith, but since then I have lived in many places, most recently in Plumstead,

SE London. Following retirement a couple of years ago I moved to a house in Bowness on Solway overlooking the estuary, where I am slowly creating a new garden full of ferns (plus a few other things).

2020 has been a strange and difficult year for obvious reasons. Most Society meetings have been cancelled, including the NW Group AGM, so there has been little opportunity to meet. A few informal meetings have taken place, and I know many members have been out and about anyway. And those of us who are lucky enough to have gardens have found them to be a huge solace in these hard times.



Fern bed under construction, Bowness



## Meetings 2021

Looking forward, we hope to simply move the meetings programme from this year into next year, with the possible addition of one or two more. There will be more information coming out early next year - keep an eye on the Events Calendar on the BPS website: <https://ebps.org.uk/events/category/meetings/regional/north-west/> and of course there will be news of meetings in the Spring edition of this newsletter.

In general, I would encourage everyone in the group to think about venues for future meetings. We particularly need more garden meetings, so suggestions please!

## Southport

Michael Hayward has been organising the BPS stand at Southport for many years and has done an amazing job. He is finally calling it a day, although has expressed his willingness to help out, but he can't do the planning and organisation any more. We need someone – perhaps a small team – to take over this role. If anyone is interested in either taking over or helping out please get in touch with me. I can't take on the role myself, especially as I'm so far away from Southport but am quite happy to be part of a team!.



Ferns at Southport 2019

*Woodsia ilvensis* at Brantwood in 2016



## Possible additional meetings

### 1: Brantwood

We have been asked by Dave Charles at Brantwood for help with the fern plantings. It's been quite a few years since the fern garden was created by Sally Beamish. The original plantings have become rather neglected and need rethinking in some areas. I have had an initial discussion with Dave and Bethan Pettitt, and we think that the NW Group could usefully help out in the first case with a visit to identify and label many of the ferns. Help with the cultivars is particularly needed! It's likely this will be in late spring / early summer once the ferns have grown enough to identify.

## 2: Lycopodiella monitoring

The BPS has been ramping up its fern monitoring plans recently. Coincidentally we have been approached by the Species Recovery Trust for help in monitoring populations of *Lycopodiella inundata* (Marsh Clubmoss) in Cumbria. There are three extant populations in Cumbria - in Wasdale, Torver Back Common near Coniston, and Little Langdale below Blea Tarn. The proposal is that the NWFG monitor each of these populations on a rotating cycle doing one each year if possible, or every two years at least. I anticipate that the Little Langdale site would be a full day meeting, whereas the other two could be combined with additional goodies. For more information see <https://www.speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk/publications>



*Lycopodiella inundata* - Marsh Clubmoss

*Dryopteris aemula*, Ennerdale



## On the wild side

I have been doing some informal monitoring of the population of *Dryopteris affinis* subsp. *kerryensis* in Ennerdale. Lockdown limited travel in the earlier part of the year but I've been able to get in a small number of visits, including meeting up with Alison Evans there on forays to look for *Dryopteris affinis* forms for her research. I have found a few additional plants, extending into a couple of new grid squares. On the last of these visits I came across a small group of *Dryopteris aemula* (Hay-scented Buckler Fern). This has only been found in three sites in Cumbria in recent years so this is an encouraging find. It's an old forestry site and I hope that there may be a population in a more natural setting nearby - searching for this might be the basis for another meeting! In the meantime I have

notified Forestry England and they have agreed to add this site to their constraints map for Ennerdale. Elsewhere, an interesting find is another population of *kerryensis*, this one in the Rydal Water area, only the second UK population; and a nice example of the hybrid between *Asplenium trichomanes* subsp. *trichomanes* and subsp. *quadrivalens* - *A. trichomanes* nothosubspecies *lusaticum* (what a mouthful), also from the Rydal area.

## Cultivars

Enthusiasts like Alec Greening, Ian Unsworth, Julian Reed and others have been hunting out interesting things in the last few years both in gardens and in the wild. Until I moved here a couple of years ago, I hardly ever found wild cultivars (if that's not an oxymoron) despite frequent visits to the North West.

Crested Lady Fern, Ennerdale



Alison Evans measuring a frond, Ennerdale

Since then I have found several. Although most of these are admittedly not particularly remarkable, it does show there are interesting things out there to be found. The best is probably an old Victorian cultivar rediscovered - *Dryopteris oreades* 'Cristata'. Others are two slightly different crested Lady Ferns, one with a red stipe, an interestingly crisped and wavy form of *Dryopteris filix-mas*, and a *Polystichum setiferum* that Robert Sykes tells me is somewhere between a *Tripinnatum* and *Acutilobum* form.

So, that's all for now. For the next newsletter please send me news, interesting items for inclusion and suggestions for future meetings so that I can talk about someone other than myself! All the best, and stay healthy.  
rg@rogergolding.co.uk