

Notices of the Rare and most Remarkable Plants in the Neighbourhoods of Dunster, Blue Anchor, Minehead &c., by Miss Isabella Gifford originally published in the *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society* for 1855, edited and updated with a biographical introduction by Clive Lovatt, April 2020.

Biographical introduction

I was introduced, so to speak, to Miss Isabella Gifford through a common interest in the plants of Leigh Woods, which clothe the Somerset side of the Avon Gorge. As noted in Captain Roe's *Flora of Somerset* (1981) she had gathered a specimen of the alien perennial *Epimedium alpinum* there in 'about 1850'. This would have made it the last observation at this site after first being found around 1830. Roe described her as 'among the leading botanists' in the early days of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (SANHS), which was formed in 1849, and he indicated that the specimen was in the Taunton Herbarium, now housed in the Somerset Heritage Centre, but at the time held by SANHS. I wanted to discover the basis for the date and if it could be more precisely fixed, and what might have brought her from her home in Minehead to Bristol. To do this I needed to know more about her. Hopefully, this biographical introduction will become a foundation for building more knowledge of her contribution to Somerset botany.

An obituary in the *Journal of Botany* for 1892 (30: 81-83) was a good start and after following some of its leads, I found a collection of material about her (and many other Victorian naturalists) which I would otherwise not have had access to on the [Natstand website](http://www.natstand.org.uk/index.htm) of Richard and James Middleton (<http://www.natstand.org.uk/index.htm>). Her main claim to fame (at least to the outside world) is that she was one, perhaps the last, of a group of ladies who became local collectors and experts on the seaweeds around the British coast. All were rewarded by the male professionals they served, either by grateful mention in their publications, or for the best, by having relevant genera named after them: in Miss Gifford's case, posthumously, a genus of brown algae, *Giffordia*. For these reasons, a photograph (unknown to her obituarists and to modern-day Somerset botanists) of her appears in *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's daughters and Botany in England 1760 to 1860* by Ann B. Shteir (1996). Isabella Gifford wrote two editions of an illustrated introductory but serious work called *The Marine Botanist* (published 1848 and 1853), the latter of which is a confident enlargement of the earlier edition.



Isabella Gifford (ca. 1823–91). (Courtesy of Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh)

Figure 1 Miss Isabella Gifford, perhaps not long after the reading of her paper on Minehead plants, by when she would have been about 30. Reference to successive 10-yearly [Censuses on the Natstand website](#) show that her reported age failed to keep pace with the passage of time. They also show that her date of birth was likely to be in mid-1825 and not in about 1823 as stated generally and in the caption here (Shteir 1996). In her *Journal of Botany* obituary, a cousin apologised that there was no picture of her, save an old one in crayon that was not adequate for printing. Accordingly, they relied on a description by a fellow botanist, that she was ‘of medium height, with fair hair and complexion, and a delicate refined face’. The description fits.

Miss Gifford’s paper on the ‘rare and most remarkable’ flowering plants and ferns within easy travelling distance of her home in Minehead was published in the SANHS Proceedings in 1856, volume 6(2): 131-137). It was delivered to the members at the Society’s annual meeting (a three-day affair) during the evening of Tuesday 21 August 1855. As related by a cousin in her obituary over 35 years later this was her ‘field day’, ‘a long-ago scientific meeting at Dunster, where a paper of hers was read, and her collection of the plants of West Somerset exhibited’. Whilst the

gentlemen are explicitly recorded as reading their own papers, a lady evidently might not do so. Hers was therefore read by the Reverend William Arthur Jones – the General Secretary of the Natural History section of the Society. The published meeting report also records that ‘The following were exhibited at the Temporary Museum and presented to the Society’ and amongst them was ‘A collection of marine algae, ferns and other plants – Miss Gifford’.

Miss Gifford was born in Wales around 1825 and moved with her parents from Falmouth to Minehead in 1848, as dated records in the new edition of her *Marine Botanist* testify. Her obituary states she was schooled at home by her mother, who had a literary bent, and that her scientific interests were encouraged. The family, perhaps supported by Captain Gifford’s military pension, lived on The Parks, evidently at 3 Cranwell Villas, one of a short series of ‘new build’ terraces of a few modest houses each, on the western edge of Minehead. The plant records round Minehead in her paper must therefore have been made between 1848 and 1855. Some additional discoveries of equal merit were made later.

In inverted commas in her published paper, she uses the now unusual phrase ‘flowers of the waste’, in this context meaning wild, uncultivated places. It does not appear to be from the Bible, but it does twice appear in the 1840s in incidentally botanical poetry written by women who had an evangelical mission in encouraging self-improvement. Either or both may have been the source. In *Eliza Cook’s Journal*, a weekly penny ha’penny publication of 5 January 1850, we have it as part of the journal editor’s poem, ‘On receiving a bunch of Heather, Gorse and Fern’. It also appears in Mrs Jane Loudon’s popular *British Wild Flowers* (1846), in a couplet which describes the narrow inferior ovary of a willow-herb: ‘Flowers of the waste, the *Epilobium* throw/ a rosy veil o’er what is drear below’.

Miss Gifford is not known to have been a member of the Botanical Society of London (BSL), but it was already beginning to fail in the late 1840s and its membership records from then on are fragmentary. Certainly, she joined its successor organisation when it was reformed in Thirsk in 1857 and remained for over a decade a member of what eventually became the BSBI. So too did Miss Atwood of Clifton, Bristol, but I have been unable thus far to establish any more personal connection between these two exceptional lady botanists, who had they met, or corresponded, would have found that they had a lot in common. During this period, the Thirsk (and later London) Exchange Club, serving the whole country, had as few as between 25 and 60 members, less than the Somerset Rare Plants Group now boasts. A few of Miss Gifford’s distributions, including Minehead *Fumaria* spp., *Fumitoria*, are mentioned in the Exchange Club reports.

Even early on, she was clearly sufficiently well known as a vascular plant botanist to be twice paid a visit by Charles C Babington, when he was botanising in the area. Babington was the author of the leading national flora of the day, the *Manual of British Botany*. These visits were on 2 July 1849, for tea (though only her parents are mentioned), and on 27 June 1850 for the evening (when Miss Gifford is specifically noted as present). On each occasion Babington’s *Journals*, edited and published posthumously in 1897, indicate that he had been (and perhaps continued to be) in the company of his friend Reverend WH Coleman, a BSL member and co-author of the *Flora Hertfordiensis* (1849, the Preface signed by him in January). Coleman, as Babington noted, was temporarily resident in Dunster in mid-1849, suggesting that he might have known Miss Gifford before Babington and introduced him to the family.

Murray's Flora of Somerset (1896) has more of Coleman's local plant records than it does of Miss Gifford's. It is often said that the survivors write the history: both are known to have produced local lists in manuscript, and it is Coleman's that survives. According to the Atlas Flora of Somerset (1997) there is a catalogue in the library at Kew with 640 plants found by him within 10 miles of Minehead and Dunster. This was one of the many such marked-up copies of the London Catalogue (no 118 of 1849), a sort of 16-page recording card, sent to HC Watson for tabulating in his ledgers by vice-County and eventual summarisation in his Topographical Botany (1873-1874). Miss Gifford's list, perhaps also written in a copy of the London Catalogue had 550 (see below). However she is only mentioned in Watson's list of contributors as indirectly supplying him with specimens through the Exchange Clubs, and in the first edition, before being corrected in the 2nd (1883) she appears as J Gifford through a misreading of her herbarium labels (see Plate 2). As she indicated in the title of her paper, it only included the rare species and those most worthy of mention, about 15% of the total.

Miss Gifford was familiar with the published local plant list of Duck from Portishead near Bristol (1852) and the recent Supplement to the Yorkshire Flora (1854) – but not, so far as she indicates, with Swete's Flora Bristolensis (1854) or the work of St Brody in Weston-super-Mare towards his Flora of Weston that was published in 1856. Her introduction (below) also quotes from HC Watson's Cybele Britannica (1847-1859). This was privately printed in a small edition (100-200?) and distributed on request to interested botanists.

Miss Gifford looked forward to the coalescence of such local work into a County Flora and indeed Murray, who had commenced work on the first Flora of Somerset just over a year before her death, extracted a number of records (14 traced) from her list and included them in the Flora completed in 1896. More records were taken from specimens she had distributed to leading botanists such as Watson (pioneer plant geographer and inventor of the Watsonian system of vice-Counties), Boswell-Syme (who expertly wrote the text for the third edition of Sowerby's English Botany), and Jenyns (known as Darwin's Lifelong Friend). She was also prescient enough to see changes in the flora and, like Peter Marren in his influential Plantlife report (2000) *Where have all then flowers gone?* she clearly stated that the loss of a rare native plant would never be a fair exchange for the arrival and spread of a foreign weed.

Her later life was described as very quiet, even unworldly, and she suffered from rheumatism and neuralgia which more and more confined her to home, the conservatory and garden, and her collections and correspondence. At Christmas 1891 the two Isabella Giffords, mother and daughter, who still lived together at The Parks, Minehead, succumbed to Russian Flu within a day of each other during a resurgence of the pandemic.

The following year her executor presented SANHS with 'a large collection of Botanical specimens gathered by Miss Isabella Gifford, late of Minehead, and including a well-mounted series of Peat Mosses, together with a great number of Marine Algae'. As if to emphasise their value, the note added, 'These were prepared by Miss Gifford herself'. They were described in the published accessions list as 'The Botanical Collections formed by the late Miss Gifford of Minehead'.

The flowering plants and ferns in the Taunton herbarium have recently been photographed by the herbarium group of the Somerset Rare Plants Group, but at the time of writing, they have not been catalogued or indexed. Liz McDonnell was able to pick out the specimen of *Epimedium alpinum* from Leigh Woods mentioned in Roe's Flora of Somerset, but it was remounted, probably soon after 1910, and its original label and the date of collection are missing. I have also seen three more Gifford collections from amongst the Exmoor material sequestered by Graham Lavender, all undated.

Two have a label in her hand but only one appears in her list and can be used as an illustration there. *Asplenium septentrionale* from Porlock was a specimen for exchange, so she marked it 'Ex Hb I Gifford'. The other, although more certainly from her personal herbarium, is not in her list. *Asplenium obovatum* (as *A. lanceolatum*), Lanceolate Spleenwort, near Minehead, would have made a good addition (in the Somerset Rare Plant Register it is currently VC5 rare, VC6 absent) and therefore must probably have been found after 1855. The relevant part of a consolidated remounted sheet is shown below to illustrate what we all know, and as JW White of Bristol wrote in 1898, 'Finality in field botany is fortunately unattainable'.



Figure 2 *Asplenium obovatum* (as *A. lanceolatum*), Lanceolate Spleenwort, collected by Miss Gifford near Minehead, Taunton Herbarium. Undated but must be after 1855, as despite its great rarity in Somerset, it does not appear in her list.

A copy of an original Gifford label from an Exchange Club specimen of *Erodium maritimum*, Sea Stork's-bill from Minehead (from the herbarium of Augustin Ley, Birmingham University), is also included in its place in the list because this one at least has a date, but it is a decade after Miss Gifford's list of rare and remarkable plants had been published.

Notices of the Rare and most Remarkable Plants in the Neighbourhoods of Dunster, Blue Anchor, Minehead &c., by Miss Isabella Gifford

Miss Gifford's introduction to the Plant List

I am quite aware that in offering so slight a sketch as the present to the notice of this Society, I can give but a very imperfect idea of the rich and varied Flora of this part of Somerset. It is only after a careful enumeration of species, and by a comparison of their greater variety or frequency in the adjoining districts, that the Flora of any particular district can be correctly estimated. Were such comparison fully carried out between Somerset and Devon, I have no doubt that the number of species in this county would equal those recorded in Devon, and that this district, from its bordering the sea, would afford many species not found in any other parts of the county.

On reference to my lists, I find upwards of 550 flowering plants and ferns recorded as growing in this district. Arranging these according to their 'types of distribution' [as elucidated by the author of the *Cybele Britannica*, Hewett C. Watson], ten, or perhaps more, belong to the *Atlantic type* – that is, species that have their headquarters in the south-west of England, and run out northward and eastward; two to the *Germanic type*, viz., *Ophrys apifera* and *O. muscifera*; and one only to the *Highland type*, *Lycopodium alpinum*, which reaches its southernmost limits in this part of the county; three appertain to the *Scottish type*, *Empetrum nigrum*, *Listera cordata*, and *Lycopodium selago*; 108 to the *English type*, species which have their headquarters in England, especially in the southern provinces, and become rare and finally cease altogether towards the north. The rest, with the exception of a few of uncertain type, belong to the *British type*, species which are more or less generally diffused throughout the whole extent of Britain.

The foregoing is necessarily but a hasty attempt at estimating the number of indigenous species; it neither includes varieties nor any species doubtfully wild. In the plants particularly specified, I believe I have named some of those most worthy of notice; but as there is no work published on the botany generally of this county to which reference can be made, I am in doubt whether I may not have called attention to species more universally distributed over the county than I am aware of.

As regards the littoral species, possibly *all* those observed here range along the whole extent of the Somerset coast. In a short list appended to the *Natural History of Portishead*, I see the names of many such. In a county so extensive as this, with such variety of soil and aspect, there is a very wide field afforded for the botanist, and it is not a little surprising, and much to be lamented, that there is no published Flora of Somerset, containing in its pages all the necessary information. In the literature of botany, county or local Floras become of much account – such, for instance, are Leighton's *Flora of Shropshire*, and Mr Baker's recently published supplement to the *Flora of Yorkshire* – books the value of which are well known to botanists.

Before closing this paper, I would beg leave to suggest to persons interested in the science, the benefit which may accrue to its more complete study by their noting down the species occurring in their respective neighbourhoods, in the last edition of the *London Catalogue of British Plants* – the one generally employed for that purpose by English botanists.

The enclosing of commons and waste land, and progress of agricultural improvements generally, must unavoidably destroy the habitats of many rare plants, and in some instances lead to their extinction; such, I fear, is the case with *Chrysocoma lynosiris* and *Lobelia urens*, which used formerly to grow near Axminster. Therefore, it is particularly desirable that a record should be kept of rare indigenous plants. Some few species there are, such as *Veronica buxbaumii* [now *V. persica*], which become naturalized in our fields by the agency of the farmer, who scatters the germ unwittingly along with his clover or other seed obtained from the Continent; and though the botanist may not look with an unfriendly eye upon the foreigner, he still feels that it cannot make amends for our native plants, the growth of our native soil, introduced by no human agency, placed in their appointed spot by the Almighty will, flourishing for long years the 'flowers of the waste', and dying, at the approach of cultivation, like the Red Indian disappearing from his hunting-grounds before the advancing footsteps of the white man.

Editor's Introduction to the Plant List

So far as is possible, the scientific nomenclature has been updated to Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles*, 4th Edition (2019). Standard English names are taken from the same source. Where they differ, original names, both scientific and English, are retained in brackets in the form (as ...).

There has been a great increase in the number of British *Rubus* (bramble) species since the 1850s so it would be difficult to ascribe modern names to the *Rubus* records – of which there are a surprising number. Some though may even retain their original names and others might easily have their names updated by reference to the currently known bramble flora of this part of Somerset. There may even be voucher specimens in Miss Gifford's herbarium in Taunton.

For ease of access, the list (83) is divided into the following sections with the number of entries in brackets: ferns (21), trees and shrubs (1), orchids (8), grasses (1), and other plants (40). Brambles (12) are listed as Appendix 1. Within these categories, plants are listed in alphabetical order of their scientific names. As will be seen, there are no sedges and only one grass and one shrub. In a popular account, and/or because of the author's inclination, difficult and critical groups such as roses, hawkweeds, and the coastal Oraches are not touched. Being a list of the less common plants, widespread species such as primroses and bluebells are of course unmentioned.

The author's localities are given in the original words wherever reasonably possible. As several plants would often appear for one general locality, reference to the original paper may sometimes be more informative. Editorial insertions are in square brackets. [M] indicates that the record appears in Murray's *Flora of Somerset* (1896). A gazetteer is added as Appendix 2, although a map might be more useful. Notes about the subsequent and current records of some of the plants would make an interesting addition. It would also be particularly helpful in due course to add to this list any voucher specimens which might be found in the Taunton herbarium.

The Plant List

FERNS

Asplenium adiantum-nigrum Black Spleenwort. Grows in the district.

Asplenium ceterach (as *Ceterach officinarum*) Rustyback. Old walls at Stanton, Minehead, and Allerford.

Asplenium marinum Sea Spleenwort. I believe it grows under Bossington Point.

Asplenium ruta-muraria Wall-rue. Grows in the district.

Asplenium scolopendrium (as *Scolopendrium vulgare*) Hart's-tongue Fern. The several multifid varieties of this common fern are frequent in the hedges about Minehead.

Asplenium septentrionale Forked Spleenwort. This fern has been found in the parish of Porlock, and 'on the borders of Devon and Somerset'. I am indebted to the Rev. G. B. Warren, of Exeter, for a specimen, obtained from a station near Culbone, and which, I believe, is the locality alluded to by Newman in his History of British Ferns, as being 'near Glenthorn, about six miles from the boundary of Devon'. All the stations hitherto observed for the fern have been on the Somerset side of the boundary. In North Devon, Mr Warren informs me, he has often searched for it, but has never yet seen or heard of it across the borders, though very probably it may be found on Countisbury or Brendon.

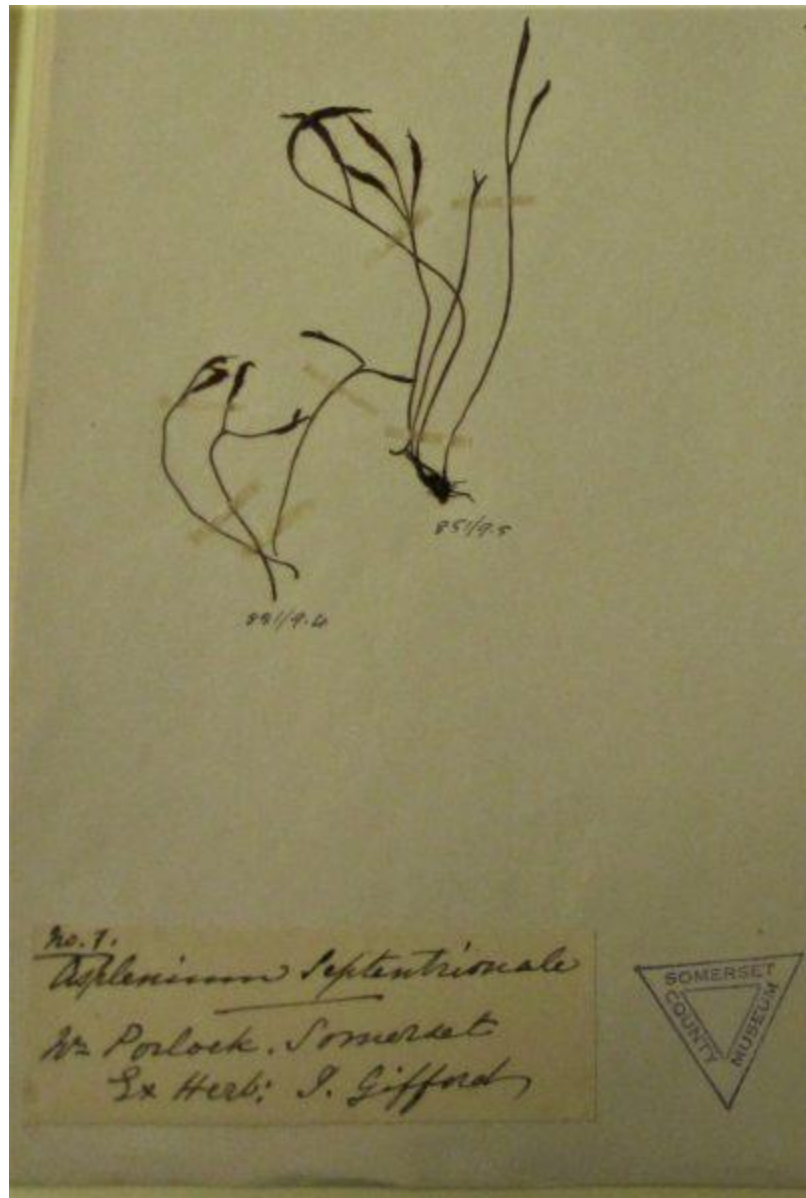


Figure 3. *Asplenium septentrionale* collected by Miss Gifford near Porlock, but marked Ex Herb I Gifford, implying it was a specimen she gave to another botanist. From Miss Gifford's account above, there is a suspicion that by 1855, she had yet not seen it here. From the Taunton Herbarium.

Asplenium trichomanes Maidenhair Spleenwort. Grows in the district.

Athyrium filix-femina (as *Athyrium filix-foemina*) Lady-fern. In one or two varieties in the combes of the district.

Blechnum spicant (as *Blechnum boreale*) Hard-fern. In the combes of the district.

Botrychium lunaria Moonwort. Rev. G. B. Warren of Exeter informs me he has seen this growing near Meyn Farm. [Locality not traced. Perhaps from context, it was near Glenthorn, Somerset, about six miles from the Devon boundary. It might be found on a contemporary map.]

Dryopteris aemula (as *Lastrea dilatata foenisecii*) Hay-scented Buckler-fern. In the combes of the district. [The name given appears to be with 'foenisecii' as a varietal name, but I have not been able to trace it in the specific form given. It was the standing name for this species at the time (e.g. Babington 1847). It might be thought that there was a missing 'and', i.e. that two species were intended, but *Dryopteris dilatata* is too common a plant to have been included in this list.

Dryopteris filix-mas perhaps including *D. affinis* (as *Lastrea filix-mas*). I have gathered the incised variety on Conygar Hill, in Periton Combe, and elsewhere.

Diphasiastrum alpinum (as *Lycopodium alpinum*) Alpine Clubmoss. In this district confined to Dunkery. [Extinct in Somerset since 1927 (Roe 1981).]

Huperzia selago (as *Lycopodium selago*) Fir Clubmoss. In this district confined to Dunkery.

Lycopodium clavatum Stag's-horn Clubmoss. On Porlock Hill. [M.]

Ophioglossum vulgatum Adder's-tongue. Said to be found in meadows near Selworthy. [Not clear from the text whether the record is from Rev. G. B. Warren of Exeter or Newman's *History of British Ferns*?]

Oreopteris limbosperma (as *Lastrea oreopteris*) Lemon-scented Fern. In the combes of the district.

Polypodium vulgare Polypody. I have observed the incised variety called 'Cambricum' in Bossington Woods. [Almost certainly *P. cambricum*, the fertile incised form *Semilacerum*, which has been found wild in several places in Somerset in the last 50 years; Cambricum itself (renamed Cambrian to avoid confusion with the species) is sterile and rare, and was later found, perhaps cultivated, on a wall at West Pennard near Glastonbury.] [M].

Polystichum aculeatum (as *Aspidium aculeatum*) Hard Shield-fern. This species does not, I believe, appear in this neighbourhood. According to a writer in the *Phytologist* for May, 1851, *A. angulare* and *A. aculeatum* rarely grow together in the same district; and *A. angulare* is rare in the North of England, showing its tendency to be tender.

Polystichum setiferum (as *Aspidium angulare*) Soft Shield-fern. This fern in its various forms adorns the hedge-banks of the district.

Pteridium aquilinum (as *Pteris aquilina*) Bracken (as Common bracken). Grows as far up the hills as cultivation is practicable.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Viburnum lantana. Wayfaring-tree (as Mealy guelder rose). Common in the hedgerows about Blue Anchor.

ORCHIDS

Anacamptis pyramidalis (as *Orchis pyramidalis*) Pyramidal Orchid. In the vicinity of Blue Anchor. [M].

Dactylorhiza praetermissa (as *Orchis latifolia*) Southern Marsh-orchid. In the vicinity of Blue Anchor.

Neottia cordata (as *Listera cordata*) Lesser Twayblade. On Dunkery. With the exception of Coddon Hill, near Barnstaple, this is the only station for it in the West of England.

Neottia ovata (as *Listera ovata*) Common Twayblade. In the vicinity of Blue Anchor.

Ophrys apifera. Bee Orchid (as bee orchis). In the vicinity of Blue Anchor.

Ophrys insectifera (as *Ophrys muscifera*). Fly Orchid (as fly orchis). In the vicinity of Blue Anchor.

Orchis mascula Early-purple Orchid. In the vicinity of Blue Anchor.

Platanthera chlorantha (as *Habenaria chlorantha*) Greater Butterfly-orchid. In the vicinity of Blue Anchor. [M].

GRASSES

Phleum arenarium (as *Phleum arenaria*) Sand Cat's-tail. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district.

OTHER PLANTS

Armeria maritima Thrift. At the mouth of the River Hone. [M].

Artemisia maritima Sea Wormwood. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district.

Blackstonia perfoliata (as *Chlora perfoliata*) Yellow-wort. In the neighbourhood of Blue Anchor.

Bolboschoenus maritimus (as *Scirpus maritimus*) Sea Club-rush. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district.

Cirsium arvense (as *Carduus arvensis*) Creeping Thistle. Minehead Warren, common with white blooms, though plants of the usual colours are likewise to be seen in the same spot.

Cochlearia danica Danish Scurvygrass. In crevices of the rocks near the sea under Greenaleigh and at Bossington Point. [M].

Cynoglossum officinale Hound's-tongue. Minehead Warren, common with white blooms, though plants of the usual colours are likewise to be seen in the same spot.

Drosera rotundifolia Round-leaved Sundew. In small patches of boggy ground on the hills of the neighbourhood.

Echium vulgare Viper's Bugloss or *Lycopsis arvensis* Bugloss (as *Lycopsis vulgaris*). Minehead Warren, common with white blooms, though plants of the usual colours are likewise to be seen in the same spot. [The name *Lycopsis vulgaris* does not appear in British floras of the period and must be an error. *Lycopsis arvensis* Bugloss and *Echium vulgare* Viper's Bugloss (using their Latin names in Babington's Manual of 1847) both occur at Minehead Warren and on nearby beaches, though neither have been recorded with white flowers here. Current records from Miss Gifford's area have no mention of white flowers for either plant. Only might have been otherwise worthy of mention but only the latter is mentioned as sometimes having white flowers in CTW, Sell & Murrell, and in the spur for a 'list to end such lists' that appears in McClintock's *Supplement to The Pocket Guide for Wild Flowers* (1957). On this particular basis it seems far more likely that the plant intended was *Echium vulgare*. However, normally with an error of this sort it would be the specific name that is a mistake, particularly with 'arvensis' and 'vulgaris' appearing so frequently amongst British plants; and *Echium vulgare* requires two mistakes. It is difficult to be certain, but my preference is for *Echium vulgare* – after all, Miss Gifford did record white-flowered Creeping Thistle there too.

Empetrum nigrum Crowberry. On Porlock Hill.

Erica tetralix Cross-leaved Heath. In small patches of boggy ground on the hills of the neighbourhood.

Eriophorum angustifolium (as *Eriophorum angustifolia*) Common Cottongrass. In small patches of boggy ground on the hills of the neighbourhood. *iophorum vaginatum* Hare's-tail Cottongrass. In small patches of boggy ground on the hills of the neighbourhood.

Erodium cicutarium Common Stork's-bill (as Common hemlock stork's bill). Frequent with white blossoms on Minehead Warren. [This seems highly likely to be the habitually pale-flowered *E. aethiopicum* (formerly *E. lebelii*), Sticky Stork's-bill, still occurring on Minehead Warren and nearby beaches, but nowhere else in Somerset.]

Erodium maritimum Sea Stork's-bill. Exceedingly common in sandy and grassy places close to the sea. It also grows at some distance from it, on the summit of Grabhurst, on Minehead Hill, and on a wall near Alcombe – three rather unlikely situations for this species. [M].

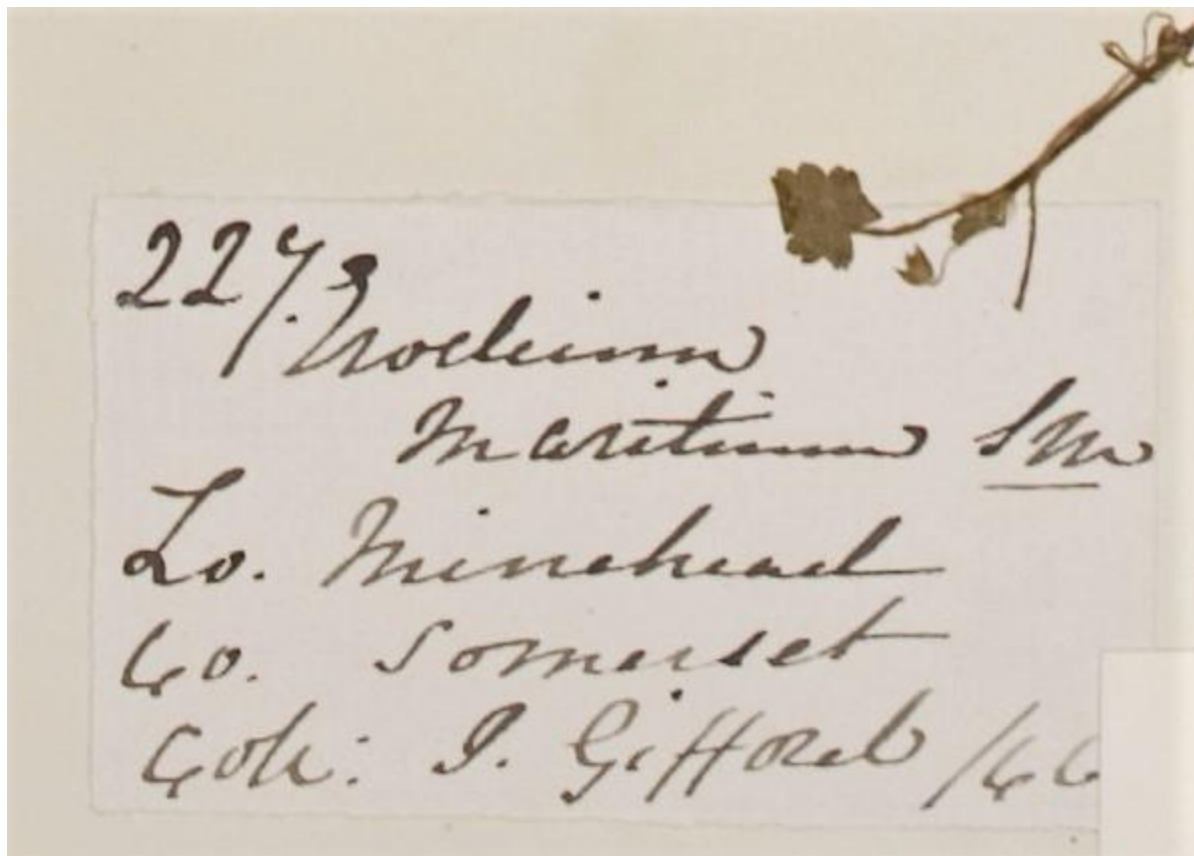


Figure 4 The label of a specimen, in her own hand, of *Erodium maritimum* collected by Miss Isabella Gifford at Minehead in 1866 from the herbarium of Augustin Ley in the Birmingham University Herbarium. Image from the [website Herbaria at Home](#). Her numbers are difficult to read and have caused errors amongst the few other of her collections on this website. Her initial 'I' is also sometimes incorrectly read as 'J'. She did not live in Minehead in 1846. In 1866 she was one of the 25 members of the London Botanical Exchange Club, the successor to the Thirsk BEC. The number 227 is the *London Catalogue* number, used to facilitate exchanges, but the gathering is unmentioned in the 1866 LBEC report. Unfortunately, the numbering of this species did not change between 1846 and 1866. 'Lo.' is an abbreviation for 'Locality'; 'Co.' for 'County'; and 'Coll:' for 'Collected by'

Euphorbia paralias Sea Spurge. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district.

Honkenya peploides (as *Arenaria peploides*) Sea sandwort. Very sparingly on the Warren near Minehead. [M].

Hypericum elodes Marsh St-John's-wort. In small patches of boggy ground on the hills of the neighbourhood.

Juncus maritimus Sea Rush. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district.

Lathyrus aphaca Yellow Vetchling. In the neighbourhood of Blue Anchor. [M].

Lathyrus nissolia Grass Vetchling. In the neighbourhood of Blue Anchor and in the vicinity of Minehead.[M].

Lathyrus sylvestris Narrow-leaved Everlasting-pea. In the neighbourhood of Blue Anchor. [M].

Lysimachia maritima (as *Glaux maritima*) Sea-milkwort. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district.

Lysimachia tenella (as *Anagallis tenella*) Bog Pimpernel. Often occurring with *Sibthorpia*, bordering the little rivulets which run down the sheltered combes in the district.

Melittis melissophyllum Bastard Balm. In the woods on the road-side near Cutcombe.

Myosotis ramosissima (as *Myosotis collina*) Early Forget-me-not. Minehead Warren, common with white blooms, though plants of the usual colours are likewise to be seen in the same spot. [It might be thought that *M. discolor*, Changing Forget-me-not is more likely, but only *M. ramosissima* seems to occur on the beach; and McClintock's Supplement to The Pocket Guide for Wild Flowers (1957) allows for it to sometimes have white flowers.] [M].

Narthecium ossifragum Bog Asphodel. In small patches of boggy ground on the hills of the neighbourhood. [M; interpreted as hills near Minehead].

Papaver cambricum (as *Meconopsis cambrica*) Welsh Poppy. Near Stowey Mill and in Culbone Woods, near Porlock.

Plantago maritima Sea Plantain. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district.

Salsola kali. Prickly Saltwort. Appears occasionally on the Warren near Minehead. [M].

Salicornia spp. (as *Salicornia herbacea*) Glassworts. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district. [In this period, annual Glassworts were not subdivided into different species. Several species have been recorded in recent years, mostly in the marshes at Porlock and Bossington.]

Sibthorpia europaea. Cornish moneywort. This delicate little creeping plant is one of the rarest plants of the district, and until the last few years it was only known as a native of Cornwall. It may be observed bordering the little rivulets which take their course down the sheltered combes. It generally grows associated with the tiny little ivy-leaved harebell, *Wahlenbergia hederacea*, and *Anagallis tenella*.

Silene uniflora (as *Silene maritima*) Sea Campion. Blue Anchor.

Suaeda maritima (as *Schoberia maritima*) Annual Sea-blite. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district. [*Schoberia* is used in the 2nd edition (1847) of Babington's *Manual of British Botany* but is replaced in the 3rd by *Suaeda*. This may give a lead to identifying what book Miss Gifford primarily used when compiling this plant list.]

Trifolium squamosum (as *Trifolium maritimum*) Sea Clover. Observed by Mr Babington when botanising at Blue Anchor some years ago. [Babington's published *Journals* relate that on two occasions whilst botanising in the area he visited the Giffords at Minehead, on 2 July 1849, and 27 June 1850. On the latter occasion he had just found the clover at Dunster Marshes, as also reported in the *Botanical Gazette* (2: 251). Visits to Blue Anchor are recorded on 30 June 1849 and 26 June 1850.]

Triglochin maritima (as *Triglochin maritimum*) Sea Arrowgrass. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district.

Tripolium pannonicum (as *Aster tripolium*) Sea Aster. Occurs as a maritime plant in the district.

Veronica chamaedrys Germander Speedwell. Minehead Warren, sometimes with white blooms, though normally of the usual colour.

Vicia bithynica Bithynian Vetch. In the neighbourhood of Blue Anchor. [M].

Wahlenbergia hederacea Ivy-leaved Bellflower. Often occurring with *Sibthorpia*, bordering the little rivulets which run down the sheltered combes in the district.

APPENDIX 1: BRAMBLES

Rubus. An interesting but, until lately, little investigated genus. According to Mr Lees, the well-known student of this genus, the woods around Dunster are particularly rich in the various species. [Records from Ilford Bridge may have been provided to Miss Gifford by Lees.] [Unless voucher specimens occur in Miss Gifford's herbarium in Taunton, it might be difficult to ascribe modern names to the *Rubus* records, owing to the great increase in the number of British species since the 1850s. Some though may even retain their original names and others might easily have their names be updated by reference to the currently known bramble florula of this part of Somerset.]

Rubus amplificatus. I have collected this species in the wood surrounding Conygar Tower, together with all the commoner kinds. I. G. Ilford Bridges, near Lynton, with seven other named species, and others [Record perhaps from Lees].

Rubus cordifolius. Ilford Bridges, near Lynton, with seven other named species, and others. [Record perhaps from Lees.]

Rubus fuscus. Ilford Bridges, near Lynton, with seven other named species, and others. [Record perhaps from Lees.]

Rubus idaeus. Growing with *Rubus leesii* near Boniton Wood, and in the woods along the Timberscombe road. [M].

Rubus leesii. Near Boniton Wood, and in the woods along the Timberscombe road. A peculiar species of raspberry, named by Mr Babington in honour of Mr Lees, who first discovered it at

Iford Bridges, near Lynton. The specific differences will at once be seen on examination with the common kind, *Rubus idaeus*, which grows commonly in the same woods.

Rubus lindleianus. Iford Bridges, near Lynton, with seven other named species, and others. [Record perhaps from Lees.]

Rubus rosaceus. I have collected this species in the wood surrounding Conygar Tower, together with all the commoner kinds.

Rubus rudus. Iford Bridges, near Lynton, with seven other named species, and others. [Record perhaps from Lees.]

Rubus sprengelii. I have collected this species in the wood surrounding Conygar Tower, together with all the commoner kinds.

Rubus suberectus. Iford Bridges, near Lynton, with seven other named species, and others. [Record perhaps from Lees.]

Rubus vestitus. Iford Bridges, near Lynton, with seven other named species, and others. [Record perhaps from Lees.]

Rubus villicaulis. Iford Bridges, near Lynton, with seven other named species, and others. [Record perhaps from Lees.]

APPENDIX 2: GAZETEER

Alcombe. SS9745. Now a suburb at the south-east of Minehead, south of Minehead Station and The Strand.

Allerford. SS9047 and SS9046.

Blue Anchor. ST0243. The second railway station east of Minehead. The Blue Anchor Bay has a muddy rather than rocky shore.

Boniton Wood. SS9842 Bonniton Lane, Bonniton and Bonniton Gate marked on current online maps south-west of Dunster.

Bossington Point. SS8949. Presumably now Hurlstone Point, 1km north of Bossington village.

Bossington Woods. SS8948 and SS8947. Presumably, the wooded combes north and south of Bossington but could be Allerford Plantation above Bossington Hall (SS9047).

Coddon Hill, near Barnstaple. SS5829. In Devon.

Conygar Tower. SS99174410: An 18th Century Folly in Conygar Woods on the hill above Dunster Station and Beach.

Culbone Woods, near Porlock. SS8248 and SS8348. Culbone Wood is currently marked on the OS map on the coast to the west of Culbone, but Miss Gifford's site might have included Yearnor Wood, on the east (Porlock) side of Culbone.

Cutcombe. SS9239. Small village extending into SS9339 where the church is.

Dunkery. SS8941. Dunkery Beacon and Hill.

Dunster. SS9943: The castle and church. The first railway station east of Minehead. SS9843: West side. SS9944. North side, and Conygar Woods. Just reaching beach.

Glenthorn. SS7949. Now Glenthorne.

Grabhurst [Hill?]. SS9743 and SS9843. Now Grabbist Hill, the south facing slopes on the west side of Dunster.

Greenaleigh SS9548. Greenaleigh Point. SS9547. Greenaleigh Farm and Moor Wood.

Ilford Bridges, near Lynton SS7448. Close to Watersmeet but name not in current usage.

Meyn Farm. Not traced.

Minehead. SS9746. Square includes Minehead Station.

Minehead Hill. Not traced. Probably to north-east of Minehead or built over (SS9546; Higher Town).

Minehead Warren. SS9846. Warren Road continues into SS9746.

Periton Combe. SS9545, reaching into SS9544. Stream runs down to the north.

Timberscombe road, the woods along the. SS9542 for the village. Timberscombe Road is presumably the road from Dunster to Timberscombe. If so, the woods might be the now coniferised Whits Wood (SS9742) and Vinegar Hill (SS9843) although the latter should be described as near Dunster. South-west of Timberscombe by the road there is Oaktrow Wood SS9340 and other woods which would be better described as near Cutcombe, or Cutcombe Hill.

Porlock. SS8846.

Porlock Hill. SS8746.

River Hone. An old name for the River Avill as it passes the east side of Dunster Castle and divides at Marsh Street to reach the sea either side of Dunster Beach. The mouth of the River Hone would be the area of ponds called The Hawn (presumably Hone and Hawn have the same origin) an in the old marsh above the beach, in SS9945, SS9944 and ST0044.

Selworthy. SS9146. Small settlement at SS918467 with stream in Selworthy Combe flowing south.

Stanton. Not traced.

Stowey Mill. SS9439. In ruins, east of Cutcombe.