

Scheuchzeria palustris, L. Its occurrence  
as a British plant, with a fresh record.

BY

GEORGE W. SCARTH, M.A.

With Plate LX.

SCHEUCHZERIA PALUSTRIS is associated with *Triglochin* in the family or tribe Juncagineae of the cohort Helobieae. It is the only species of the genus, and the genus is not particularly like any of its nearest allies. The species is, therefore, somewhat isolated, presumably an old and decadent type. Like many such it has a wide but rather sporadic distribution. Its range extends right round the northern hemisphere, viz., Western, Northern, and Central Europe, Siberia, and North America (Rocky Mountains, Labrador to Hudson's Bay, New Jersey to Wisconsin).

In Britain it has been recorded from about nine localities, some of them in close proximity. Our knowledge of it was summarised in 1904 by Mr. A. Bennet in the "Transactions of the Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club." The history of the plant is briefly as follows :—

In *Yorkshire* it has been recorded from—

*Leckby Car (near Boroughbridge).*—It was discovered here in 1787 by the Rev. James Dalton, the earliest record for Britain. As late as 1892 Mr. J. G. Baker still recorded it. In 1903 Mr. Fisher wrote that it was extinct, and if there was any doubt as to the matter then, there is now none, for Leckby Car is drained and planted.

*Thorne Moor (near Doncaster).*—Discovered in 1832 by Mr. S. Appleby. One plant was found in 1870; it was sought in vain in 1877–1878; in 1890 a Moss Litter Company leased the moor and removed the peat, and Mr. Lees pronounced the plant undoubtedly extinct. A great fire in 1896, which destroyed 1000 acres of peat moss, made doubly sure of the fact.

*Wetherby (Mid-West Yorks).*—Mr. Bennet noted the following record in Don's *Herbarium Britannicum*, issued 1806, "Marsh near Wetherby, Rev. J. Dalton." There is no mention of this locality in Lee's *West Yorkshire Flora*, and no recent records.

[Notes R.B.G., Edin., No. XXII, November 1911.]

*Malton (E. Yorks).*—In the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, there are specimens in herb. Col. Jas. Brodie, which he had received from the Rev. Jas. Dalton, and which are labelled apparently in Col. Brodie's own handwriting, "Found by Mr. Dalton, near Malton, Yorkshire." This seems definite enough, and neither Leckby Car nor any other recorded Yorkshire station can be described as near Malton in any sense of the word. Strange to say, however, there seems to be no other record for this locality, and, according to Mr. Bennet, "two or three good botanists have lived at Malton for many years"; nor is there any mention of Malton in Wilkinson's account of Dalton's herbarium in possession of the York Philosophical Society. This might be explained by the fact that these specimens were the last of Mr. Dalton's stock, as he states in a letter attached to the sheet, the rest having been supplied to Don for his Fasciculi. He may not again have gathered specimens at Malton, when Leckby Car was so much more convenient for him. At any rate, this is a rather problematical record. If it is authentic, we have no knowledge of the exact locality. Mr. Bennet suggests Terrington Car as the only place he can think of; but it can scarcely be supposed that the plant still exists and has escaped observation since Dalton's time.

For *Northampton* there is one old record. The Rev. M. J. Berkley wrote to Mr. H. C. Watson in 1844 that the plant had been found in a marsh (presumably Everton Car) in the North of Notts. There are no recent records to justify a hope that the plant may still exist there.

*Shropshire* has yielded four sites :—

*Bomere.*—Discovered, 1824, by Mr. J. Jeurwine. In 1881 Mr. Beckwith and Mr. La Touche could only find a few plants; in 1892 Mr. Druce, the Rev. E. F. Linton, and Mr T. P. Blunt could find none. It is assumed to be extinct.

*Shomere.*—Adjoining the above locality, where it is said to have been found the same year by the same gentleman. Mr Bennet could discover no records for the site.

*Welshampton Moss.*—In 1866 the Rev. O. M. Fieldon found three specimens here; in 1893 he could not find any, and in 1898 he wrote that he did not think he had seen it there within the last fifteen or twenty years.

*Ellesmere.*—Discovered in 1884 by Mr. Beckwith. In 1892 Rev. E. F. Linton could not find it there.

In *Cheshire* it was discovered on Wybunbury Bog, in 1849, by the Rev. G. Pinder. It was found in 1895 by the Rev. E. S. Marshall, though supposed to be extinct, and in 1904 the Rev. W. R. Linton told Mr. Bennet that he had seen it a few years previously, so that at that time there was still a hope that the plant survived

in that station. Recent search has caused botanists to fear that there too it has gone. The bog has been partly drained. In 1908 Mr. Druce and Mr. A. J. Evans spent two days at Wybunbury in a vain search for the plant, and again this year (1910) they spent a whole day looking for it without result.

In Scotland, *Scheuchzeria* used to be found in the White Myre of Methven, near Perth. It was discovered there in 1833 by Mr. Duff. Writing in the *Phytologist* in 1858, Mr. John Sim says that in June of that year he saw the *Scheuchzeria* growing luxuriantly and plentifully, and brought home "a good supply, above three hundred plants." In the next sentence he says "It is nearly done." Mr. Sim has been severely censured for this act of vandalism. In justice to him, however, it would appear that the "it is nearly done" refers to his "good supply," for he is offering plants for exchange, and, in a later paper, he says that the *Scheuchzeria* was still plentiful in August of the same year. However, the deed is not one which merits condonement, any the less that its author in the same paper expresses the pious opinion that "It is very ungracious of any botanist to root up any rare plant." He gathered it in 1874 for the last time. As it happened, these depredations did not matter very much, for other causes later made it impossible for the plant to survive there. A large colony of black-headed gulls settled in Methven Bog, and caused a rank growth of vegetation, to the detriment of smaller plants. Then, about 1880, to accommodate the gulls, the myre was flooded which would drown the plant if it still existed. It is only on dry summers that the place can be reached, yet it has been searched since then, but without result, in 1888, by Dr. Buchanan White and Mr. Barclay, and again about 1898 by Mr. Barclay and Mr. Meldrum. There are specimens from this locality in the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, dated 1877, and this is probably about the latest date for the plant at this station.

Until this year *Scheuchzeria* has been found at no other station in Britain, and the evidence shows that it is lost and presumably extinct at all these stations. In July of this year, however, I discovered the plant on Rannoch Moor, in the Perth-Argyll area, so that it is still entitled to a place on the British list. It was growing there in fair quantity in a very wet, peaty marsh associated with *Carex limosa* and an intermingling of marsh and peat moor plants, a combination which appears to be characteristic of the habitat of *Scheuchzeria*, both in this country and in regions where it is more plentiful.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY.

- A. BENNET. Trans. Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club.  
 Journal of Botany, 1866, 1882, 1884, 1889, 1896, 1898, 1903.  
 LEIGHTON. Flora of Shropshire, pp. 155-519. 1841.  
 London's Magazine of Natural History.  
 WILKINSON. Hist. Acc. Herbaria of York Phil. Soc. 1907.  
 BABINGTON. Journal of Life, pp. 15, 27, 47, 141, 275. 1897.  
 Life and Letters of A. G. More, p. 341. 1898.  
 B. WHITE. Flora of Perthshire, p. 306. 1898.  
 English Botany, t. 1801. 1807.  
 S. APPLEBY. Magazine Nat. Hist., p. 558. 1832.  
 H. C. WATSON. New Bot. Guide, pp. 213, 626. 1835-7.  
 GARNER. Nat. Hist. Staffordshire. 1844.  
 H. C. WATSON. Cybele Brit., vol. ii., p. 480. 1849.  
 J. SIM. Phytologist. 1858.  
 F. A. LEES. Flora, W. Yorkshire, p. 420. 1888.  
 Proc. Perth Nat. Hist. Soc. 1891.  
 LORD DE TABLEY. Flora of Cheshire, p. 292. 1899  
 Yorkshire Herald, May 11, 1896.  
 FRÜH U. C. SCHRÖTER. Die Moore der Schweiz. 1904.



SCHEUCHZERIA PALUSTRIS. LINN.