

Our PNHS 2026 New Year Plant Hunt finds

On 3 January we had our third New Year Plant Hunt in Paisley. The weather had been very unkind for the last two of these outings, with snow one year and torrential rainstorms the next. This year however, it was dry and dare I say it, sunny (albeit very cold).



Seven of us started out from Lonend at 10am, checking the carpark before heading towards the White Cart. Progress was slow as we scanned the area looking for flowers and then studying those we found to identify them. It took us 40 minutes to reach the river, during which time we had bagged six species in flower, including Hazel catkins, Annual Meadow Grass, Common Chickweed, Common Mouse-ear, Groundsel and Wavy Bittercress. I was recording using the BSBI app on my phone and was surprised by how easy it was to use.





With the slow pace, we were all beginning to get very cold. We were very glad of a diversion, which turned out to be the highlight of the day. A tiny bird was busy foraging in the tree above our heads. At first we weren't sure what it was but so tiny we guessed it must be a Goldcrest. We couldn't see any yellow crest on its head but on looking it up discovered that in winter the colours of the crest are not so prominent. We were able to confirm our ID later as Bill Gray had managed to capture the bird on camera.



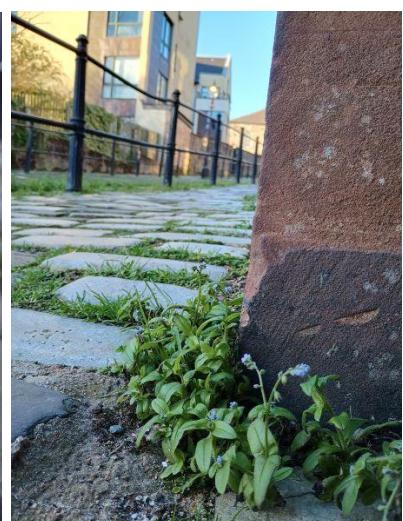
Goldcrest foraging on lichen-covered branch (photo by B Gray)

Some of our group headed home at this stage while the remaining four headed down to the water's edge. The water level was low which allowed us access on to the rocks behind the Watermill Hotel. We added a couple of flowering species to our list there and also a

Harlequin Ladybird, which was tucked into the seedheads of Purple Loosestrife. Before hypothermia set in, we decided to head to a nearby cafe to thaw out with hot drinks and cake. After that we called it a day. However, determined to beat last year's count, I continued the hunt on my own.



I walked up to Dunn Square where the usual gathering of pigeons were looking very picturesque as they flew en masse over my head and settled on the stonework and gardens. I managed to record another two species in flower at the steps there, including a well established Field Speedwell . Next stop was Oakshaw, my favourite place for a wee wander in the town centre. The spaces between the cobbles provide an ideal sheltered and warm spot for wildflowers to grow. I added a few more to my list there and was most excited to find Rue-leaved Saxifrage, one of our rarer species which is becoming more common in urban and brownfield habitats. It was not in flower, but I recorded the location and will check back in the summer and hopefully see it flowering then.



From left: Rue-leaved Saxifrage, Shepherd's Purse, Field Forget-me-not

From Oakshaw, I headed back to Lonend via the University campus, where I spotted my first Daisy of the day. That, and the beautiful colours of sunset in the clouds above Anchor Mill, were a fabulous end to an enjoyable day. We didn't manage to beat last year's count but equalled it with seventeen flowering species recorded.



Report by Kirsty Menzies

Photographs by Kirsty Menzies and Bill Gray.

Plant species in flower

Daisy (*Bellis perennis*)

Shepherd's Purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)

Wavy Bittercress (*Cardamine flexuosa*)

Common Mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*)

Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)

Ivy-leaved Toadflax (*Cymbalaria muralis*)

Common Whitlowgrass (*Erophila verna*)

Common Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

Pineappleweed (*Matricaria discoidea*)

Field Forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*)

Annual Meadowgrass (*Poa annua*)

Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*)

Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*)

Smooth Sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*)

Dandelion (*Taraxacum agg.*)

Gorse (*Ulex europeus*)

Common Field Speedwell (*Veronica persica*)