

Edward Lhwyd and the plants listed from Glamorgan in Camden's *Britannia*

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Abstract

Recent authors have attributed to Edward Lhwyd (c.1660–1709) seven records of plants from Glamorgan first published in the second edition of Richard Gough's revision of Camden's *Britannia* (1806). If correctly attributed, the records of the native *Centaureum pulchellum* and the alien *Antirrhinum majus* and *Centranthus ruber* would be the first from Britain. However, a close examination of the publication history of successive editions of *Britannia* suggests that the records have no connection to Lhwyd. Although their source is unknown, they very probably date from the period between 1789 and 1806.

Keywords: *Antirrhinum majus*; *Centaureum pulchellum*; *Centranthus ruber*, first records; John Ray

Introduction

In his account of the history of botany in Glamorgan (v.c.41), Carter (1955) discussed the nine plants which appeared as "Rare plants found in Glamorganshire" in the final edition of Camden's *Britannia* (Camden, 1806). He listed these in the context of the contribution made by the great polymath Edward Lhwyd (c.1660–1709) to Edmund Gibson's revisions of *Britannia* (Camden, 1695, 1722), implying that these records were amongst the materials Lhwyd collected for that work in the 1690s. Ellis & Wade (1994), in an introductory chapter to the *Flora of Glamorgan*, explicitly attribute most of these records to Lhwyd. They include *Antirrhinum majus* and *Centranthus ruber* from the walls of Margam Abbey, and *Centaureum pulchellum* on the county's seashore. These are significant records, as they would be the first British records of the native *C. pulchellum* (Pearman, 2017) and of the two alien species (Stace & Crawley, 2015), predating the next records by some decades. But are they correctly attributed to Lhwyd? To establish their origin, we need to delve into the protracted publication history of Camden's *Britannia*, which extended from the late 16th to the early 19th centuries.

Publication history of *Britannia*, with special reference to the plant records from Glamorgan

William Camden's *Britannia* was initially published, in Latin, in 1586 and revised five times before his death in 1623; it was first translated into English by Philemon Holland in 1610. It is primarily an antiquarian work, with descriptions arranged by

county. In the 1690s Edmund Gibson (1669–1748) of Queen’s College, Oxford oversaw a major revision of the work. Despite his youth, Gibson recruited a distinguished team of contributors and advisors to help with the project and he proved to be a tactful and accurate editor (Walters & Emery, 1977; Roebuck, 2020).¹ Edward Lhwyd, Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, was persuaded to contribute; he translated the Latin accounts of the Welsh counties afresh and added to them. His work is described by Roberts (2022), Walters & Emery (1977) and Walters (1984). Lhwyd was born in Shropshire and his links were with central and North Wales; he had never travelled south of Cardiganshire. He therefore applied for a grant from the publisher to allow him to undertake a seven-week tour of the counties in South Wales in August–September 1693, covering the country from Monmouthshire in the east to Pembrokeshire in the west, including Glamorgan. He also solicited information from many correspondents, and finished his revision of the Welsh chapters in 1694 (Roberts, 2022). Lhwyd’s substantial and scholarly additions to the work concerned the antiquarian subject matter rather than natural history. It was John Ray who prepared a list of the “More rare plants growing in Wales” along with plant lists for the individual English counties (Raven, 1942). Ray had originally hoped that Lhwyd would provide the botanical records for the Welsh counties, but Lhwyd explained to a correspondent that Ray undertook the work “upon my unwillingness of being at unnecessary trouble” (Gunther 1945: 242).² Gibson’s edition was published in 1695, with Ray’s list of Welsh plants printed at the end of the accounts of the Welsh counties.

The species included in Ray’s list of “More rare plants ...” in the 1695 *Britannia* were largely from North Wales and included some that he had himself recorded and several montane plants credited to Lhwyd, including that later described as *Lloydia serotina* (now *Gagea serotina*). *Antirrhinum majus*, *Centaurium pulchellum* and *Centranthus ruber* do not appear in the list, and none of the few records from South Wales is attributed to Lhwyd.

Stimulated by his work on Camden’s *Britannia*, Lhwyd developed an ambitious plan to write a multi-volume History of Wales which would include a British dictionary, an *Archaeologia Britannica* and a natural history of Wales. In connection with this he raised enough money to allow him to undertake a ‘Great Tour’ of Wales between 1697 and 1701, plus visits to Scotland, the Isle of Man, Ireland, Cornwall and Brittany (Roberts 2022). However, he published only one of the volumes he planned, *Glossography* (Lhuyd, 1707), before his early death.

A further edition of Gibson’s *Britannia* was published in 1722, largely differing in its arrangement rather than its content (Walters, 1984). Another edition appeared in 1753. Ray’s list of rare Welsh plants was reprinted in the 1722 and 1753 editions.

In 1789 there was a further edition of *Britannia*, prepared by the antiquary Richard Gough (1735–1809) and again retranslated from Camden’s Latin edition. Ray’s Welsh list no longer appeared in this edition, but there were plant lists at the end of each Welsh county, as had been the case for the English counties in the

¹ Amongst the editorial crises he faced was the loss in the post of the text for four of the Welsh counties sent from Oxford to London by Lhwyd; Gibson and his advisor Martin Lister tracked the package down by a search of the London inns at which the Oxford coaches and wagons called (Walters & Emery 1977: 135).

² Lhwyd was concerned that the time spent working on *Britannia* was diverting him from his own projects, and in particular delaying the completion of his *Lithophylacii Britannici Ichnographia*, his illustrated account of fossils which was eventually published in 1699 (Roberts, 2022).

earlier editions of *Britannia*. In his Preface, Gough acknowledged “the help of some young friends, who have exerted their utmost diligence in collecting the plants peculiar to each county from books and the researches of themselves and other botanists, who have multiplied since Ray in the same proportion as the science has improved”. The list of “Rare plants found in Glamorganshire” comprised just two species, “*Adiantum capillis veneris* on rocks and moist walls: at *Barry* island and *Porth Kirig*” and “*Polypodium vulgare* γ *Cambricum* on a rock in a wood near *Dennys Powis* castle not far from *Caerdiff*”. Although no source or date is given, both these were well-known records which had been published in numerous earlier works. The *Polypodium* was originally found by Richard Kayse of Bristol (Lovatt, 2010/11; Edgington, 2013) and initially published by Ray (1686: 137) as *Polypodium Cambro-britannicum pinnulis ad margines laciniatis*. It was then repeated in later publications such as Ray (1688: 18–19, 1690: 22, 1724: 117), Morison (1699: 563), Hudson (1762: 387–388), Withering (1796, 3: 773) and Smith (1800-1804, 3: 1113–1114), and it appears in Ray’s list in Gibson’s Camden (1695). The account in Morison (1699) is the source of the 1668 date for Kayse’s record, which Lovatt (2010/11) was unable to trace; it is the year in which the author of that account says that the plant was brought to him. This fern is now recognised as a lacinate form of *P. cambricum*. *Adiantum capillus-veneris* was first recorded by Edward Lhwyd from the sites cited on his Great Tour, probably in 1697 (Edgington, 2013), and the details were published in works such as Ray (1724: 123), Hudson (1762: 391), Withering (1796, 3: 781) and Smith (1800-1804, 3: 1138).

It was not until the 1806 edition of Gough’s revision of *Britannia* (Camden, 1806) that the remaining seven plants were added to the list of “Rare plants found in Glamorganshire”. In addition to *Antirrhinum majus* (as *Anterrinum album*) and *Centranthus ruber* (as *Valeriana rubra*) “on the walls of Margam abbey” and *Centaureum pulchellum* (as *Chironia pulchella*) “on the sea shore”, already mentioned, they were *Aquilegia vulgaris* (as *A. vulgare*) “near Margam” and *Erodium maritimum* (as *Geranium maritimum*) “on the sea shore”, both with “white blossoms”, *Asplenium ceterach* “on the walls of Bonvilston church” and *Salix repens* “with rounded leaves; on the sand of the sea coast”. The mistakes in the scientific names of the plants suggest that Gough, as editor, lacked botanical expertise, and the description of the white blossoms of *Erodium maritimum* perhaps raises the suspicion that *E. cicutarium* was the plant intended, although G.C. Druce apparently reported *E. maritimum* with white flowers in Guernsey in 1877 (McClintock, 1975).

Should the 1806 records be attributed to Lhwyd?

Having reviewed the history, we can now assess the attribution of the nine species to Lhwyd. The records of *Adiantum capillus-veneris* were clearly Lhwyd’s, well known as such and published in many earlier books. Similarly, the record of the (current) *Polypodium cambricum* was a well-known record but had no connection to Lhwyd. Both species were correctly attributed to their recorders by Ellis & Wade (1994). The source of the remaining seven records is unknown. Lhwyd certainly visited Margam in 1697, so he had the opportunity to record species there.³ However, it seems inconceivable that Gough had access for the second edition of his revision to a

³ In a letter dated 20 December 1697, Lhwyd sent John Lloyd the details of an inscription he had transcribed that year in Margam churchyard (Gunther, 1945).

source of records from Lhwyd which was not known to Lhwyd's contemporaries or to his successors in the 18th century. None of the records were published by Ray (1724) or Smith (1800–1804), for example, and we have not found them in Lhwyd's correspondence or in later studies of Lhwyd (e.g. Gunther, 1945; Roberts, 2022). Lhwyd did not, for example, mention them when reporting the highlights of his fieldwork in South Wales to Richard Richardson on 24 November 1696, though he did list *Asplenium ceterach* as common in South Wales, or in a similar letter sent to Tancred Robinson on 22 September 1697 (Gunther, 1945). The presence of *Centaureum pulchellum* in the 1806 list is particularly revealing, as this was first published as a British species distinct from *C. erythraea* by Withering (1796, 2: 255), as described by Pearman (2017). Any Lhwyd record would need to have had sufficient supporting detail to allow it to be assigned retrospectively to *C. pulchellum*. We can, therefore, see no basis for the attribution to Lhwyd of the records of any of the species listed in 1806 other than that of *Adiantum*. Maybe Carter (1955) did so because he regarded the text of the 1806 edition as reflecting that of Gibson's editions of Camden (1695, 1722), to which Lhwyd had contributed, whereas in fact the plant lists published in 1789 and 1806 are completely different. He may also have failed to appreciate that Lhwyd did not contribute directly to the botanical content of Gibson's edition for Wales, a task he preferred to leave to Ray. Although we have not discovered the source of the records added in 1806, they were presumably sent to Gough after the completion of the first edition of his revision in 1789. It seems likely that they were made at the end of the 18th or in the first years of the 19th century. As such, the records of *Antirrhinum majus*, *Centaureum pulchellum* and *Centranthus ruber* are not especially remarkable. *Centranthus* was known to Martyn (1732), *Antirrhinum* to Hudson (1762), and, as stated above, *Centaureum* to Withering (1796). All were known from several sites by 1800 (Smith, 1800–1804), so the 1806 list is far more characteristic of one made at that period than one made a century previously.

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