

CARAD RHAYADER MUSEUM & GALLERY

LOCAL PLANT ID, HISTORY & FOLKLORE SHEET



Knapweed

This plant was used for a kind of love-divination. Young women would pull out the existing petals, and then put the flower into their bodice. When the as-yet unopened petals began to appear, this would mean that the lover was nearby.



Yellow rattle

When the seed pods of this flower ripen and dry, the seed inside rattles around; in former times, farmers used this sound as their cue to cut the hay.



Ox-eye Daisy

The unopened flower buds can be pickled and used in a similar way to capers. Maud Grieve's Modern Herbal (1931) states that "The taste of the dried herb is bitter and tingling, and the odour faintly resembles that of valerian."



Field Scabious

These beautiful flowers were once used to treat Scabies, hence the rather ugly name of Scabious plants. The flower heads were also used to treat the sores caused by the Bubonic Plague....



Harebell

A patch of harebells is a favourite home for fairies and if one is to walk through such a clump, the fairies cast spells on the perpetrator, giving this flower the names of Dead Man's Bells and Fairies' thimbles.



Cock's-foot

Also called Cat grass because is highly attractive to cats! they enjoy chewing and rolling on it. It is also a folk remedy for treating tumours, kidney and bladder ailments - Although in modern times we know it can cause hayfever.



Lady's bedstraw

Before we invented the mattress, lady's bedstraw was a popular choice for bedding thanks to its soft and springy quality and pleasant scent. According to one medieval legend, the Virgin Mary gave birth whilst lying on a bed of lady's bedstraw and bracken.



Wild Thyme

Romans grew this to help bees – many of the wild thyme plants around Rhayader will be direct descendants from Roman Beekeepers. The Roman poet Virgil also recommends eating thyme and garlic to stop yourself from being tired!



Chamomile

After the Romans left us, the Anglo-Saxons came into control. Chamomile was one of their Nine Sacred Herbs, used for various medicinal purposes. We still use it today to help us sleep!



Red Clover

In the middle ages the clover was considered a charm worn to ward off evil spirits and witches. A four leaf clover was said to have even more power against evil – as well as being very good luck if you managed to find one!



Spotted orchid

one of the three most important plants that were sacred to Druids (who were ancient Celtic priests) and was used at Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year with the shortest night.



Bird's-foot-trefoil

In folklore the birds-foot-trefoil was often associated with evil, probably because people thought it's long black seed pods looked like Devil's claws, or crow's feet. However others thought its three big leaves suggested the Christian Holy Trinity, so perhaps it was good for protection against evil!