



Meals and Heals

**THE HERBS AND HEALING
PLANTS OF STONEHOUSE**

by John R. Young

Introduction



The countryside around Stonehouse possesses an abundance of flora and fauna which can be found in gardens, roadside verges, farm land, river banks and environmentally protected sites. It is important that we understand, appreciate and protect the diverse range of plants and animals that inhabit our surroundings for future generations to benefit from the enjoyment, employment and medicinal attributes they bring to our community.

This wildlife can be accessed via a network of core paths and rights of way, where people can explore and enjoy the beautiful surroundings we are so fortunate to have on our doorstep. As well as sixteen public rights of way and two SSSI (Special Scientific Site of Interest) the open countryside around Stonehouse enables us to learn from and discover a wide range plant life, some of which have medicinal properties lost to the passing of time and local awareness.

This project has been initiated to highlight a number of herbs and healing plants found within the boundary of the old parish of Stonehouse. Some of these properties have been known to man for centuries, others more recently in the development of new medical research. All the photographs have been taken at the location in which they were found providing the reader with the opportunity to more readily identify the various species. Those seeking to discover plants resident in this area should do so with care and recognition of the plants status and dangers if handled or consumed. Anyone who wishes to use such plants for their medicinal properties should seek advice before use.

Some of these plants/flowers are rare and are protected by legislation. If collecting flowers you should never uproot wild flowers.



Name of Plant Sweet Violet
Location Bogside (right of way)
Properties

This plant is used in a great number of ways. Both the flowers and leaves can be used in salads whilst boiling in water can be used for bronchitis and coughs. The crystalised flowers are also used in sweets and liqueurs as well as being used as an antiseptic eyewash.



Name of Plant Dandelion
Location Common throughout village
Properties

Common plant used to treat liver and gall bladder problems as well as acne and eczema. Also known in some parts as 'piss a bed'. The sap of the dandelion can also be applied to corns, verrucas and warts. Cooked like a spinach the young leaves can be used in salads. The roots can also be chopped into salads or roasted as a coffee substitute whilst the flowers produce wine.



Name of Plant Red Clover
Location Common throughout village
Properties

In days gone by red clover was used to treat coughs however recent research has shown that the plant has anti coagulant and anti-tumour properties. The flowers and leaves can be cooked as vegetables, or used in salads.



Name of Plant Common Comfrey
Location Manse Road
Properties

Plant used in homeopathy for treating fractures, bruises and painful joints as well as circulatory problems. Leaves are used for coughs and digestive ulcers, while a poultice can be applied to sprains, burns, sores, cuts and eczema. The young leaves can also be eaten by cooking them to create a vegetable like spinach. The plant can also have carcinogenic effects.



Name of Plant Round Leaved Sundew
Location Cander Moss SSSI
Properties

Flytrap used to treat (whooping) coughs and bronchial asthma. In the 17th century the leaves were boiled in asses milk to treat whooping cough. The acidic properties of the plant were used by ladies mixed with milk to remove freckles and sunburn. **Note:** Protected species.



Name of Plant Foxglove (poisonous)
Location Common throughout village
Properties

Common plant used in conventional medicines to treat cardiac problems. In homeopathy foxglove is administered to treat a weak heartbeat, dropsy, kidney trouble and tuberculosis. The name is said to derive from 'glove of the fairy folk'. It was thought that the fairies gave foxes the flowers to protect their feet when hunting. The plant was also used in a concoction to make a love charm.



Name of Plant Woodruff (poisonous)
Location Plotcock castle
Properties

Used to treat circulatory disorders while the leaves can be dried to deter insects. Used traditionally in herbal medicine this plant can sometimes cause internal bleeding. Left to stew for a few hours, the whole plant makes a pleasant fruit juice.



Name of Plant Raspberry
Location Manse Road
Properties

Traditionally, drinking raspberry leaf tea was encouraged by midwives to assist childbirth. During world war two a shortage of medical supplies resulted in a rise in the use of raspberries during pregnancy. The properties of the raspberries have toning and relaxation effects on the uterus and muscles around the pelvic area assisting labour. Research has since confirmed the medicinal properties of raspberries which are rich in vitamin C.



Name of Plant Meadowsweet
Location Manse Road

Properties

(common throughout village)
The origins of the name derive from the plant's flavouring properties used to make mead dating to the Bronze age and sacred to the druids. Also applied to treat malaria and fevers, meadowsweet is more commonly used to treat headaches and upset stomachs. The plant contains 'salicylic acid', an ingredient found in aspirin containing anti-inflammatory and pain killing properties. The leaves should be fresh or dried, picked when the flowers are fully opened in late Summer. Meadowsweet can also be stewed at home for the pleasant aroma the plant gives off.



Name of Plant Hawthorn
Location Manse Road

Properties

(common throughout village)
Another sacred plant of the druids planted for ancient ritual ceremonies. More recently used in modern times as May Day garlands utilising the hawthorn flowers. This herb is used for the heart and blood circulation. Today the medicinal properties of the hawthorn are used in the treatment of high blood pressure, angina, arteriosclerosis and heart failure. Tea made from the flowers have a calming effect but not as a sedative and is said to be good for insomnia. Thorny plants such as the hawthorn were thought to be excellent 'spirit catchers'. The Haws (berries) can be used to make jelly and can be added to brandy. The leaves can be added to salad.



Name of Plant Agrimony
Location Railway line at Westmains estate

Properties

In 1716 Ferquhar Ferguson was tried for witchcraft on Arran for admitting to use this plant to cure elf people. Agrimony has astringent, diuretic properties. A decoction of the root and leaves was used to treat skin and liver disorders including jaundice.



Name of Plant Nettle
Location Manse Road

Properties

(common throughout village)

For many the nettle is simply a plant to be avoided but this plant is rich in vitamin A and C, calcium, magnesium, potassium and iron and has such strengthens the whole body. The nettle has a wide range of uses from supplementing the iron deficient anaemia (used in pregnancy after 12 weeks), skin conditions such as eczema, to preventing bleeding during labour, period pains or nose bleeds.

In days gone by the plant was apparently used by the Romans who kept themselves warm in Scotland by whipping themselves in the face. This was also done to treat arthritis. The plant was formerly used to make cloth, rope and as a dye. The young leaves and flowers at the top of the nettles are generally used from spring time through to summer and can be consumed as nettle soup or in salad once heated to remove the sting.



Name of Plant Cleavers (Stickywillie)
Location Manse Road

Properties

(common throughout village)

This plant is said to stimulate the lymphatic system and is good for clearing out infections, reducing swollen glands and tonsillitis. Dried or fresh as a juice, Cleavers are used in the treatment of skin conditions and are mildly laxative. In the past this plant was boiled and eaten as a spinach prior to the round hard seeds forming. The seeds were also roasted to make a form of coffee whilst a tea could be made of the leaves to improve sleeping.



Name of Plant Devil's-bit Scabious
Location Double Dykes

Properties

(common throughout village)

Named so as the Devil is said to have bitten off its root to eradicate the plant of its medicinal properties. Used as an expectorant (spit out) syrup to relieve respiratory problems. Also used in homeopathy for skin complaints.



Name of Plant **Broom (Poisonous)**

Location **Railway line**

Properties

(common throughout village)

The name derives from the use of the twigs to make brooms for curling. Broom was used to treat heart muscle, cardiac problems and bleeding, while in homeopathy it is administered to regulate heart rhythms. Although poisonous the flowers are edible and the buds can be eaten in salads, while the open flowers can be used to make wine. The seeds can be dried and ground for coffee.



Name of Plant **St. John's Wort**

Location

Properties

(hybrid square stem/perforated)

Railway line near Westmains estate

Uncommon plant in this area used to treat depression, nervous disorders, intestinal and gall bladder problems and bed wetting. Externally the plant is also used for healing wounds, rheumatism and lumbago. Other uses include red and yellow dyes and the use of the leaves for salads and liqueurs. Currently the plant is being tested for use in the treatment of AIDS. Application can cause dermatitis.



St. John the Evangelist was the patron saint of Scotland prior to St. Andrew. The pagans believed that the plant offered protection against the fairy folk spiriting people away whilst they slept.

Name of Plant **Cowslip**

Location

Properties

Village Bypass / Roman Road

Expectorant used for coughs and bronchitis. This uncommon plant is also used in a traditional recipe for making wine. The flowers can be used to make tea which soothes headaches, while the roots have aspirin like compounds. Fairly rare but common locally.



Name of Plant **Colt's-foot**

Location

Properties

Common throughout village

Used to treat coughs, sores and ulcers while the flower is said to reduce inflammation and ease catarrh. The leaves of this plant are rich in vitamin C and can be eaten in salads while the flowers are used to make wine. The leaves of Colt's foot when dried are smoked as a remedy for asthma. Prior to the introduction of tobacco the leaves were dried for smoking.



Name of Plant **Common Bistort**
Location **Spectacle E'e falls, Kype**
Properties

From Latin 'bistorta" meaning twisted twice in reference to root stock. Used as far back as the 16th century to treat snake bites using the root of plant. Also used to medicate for diarrhoea internally and externally for infections of the mouth as well as treating infected wounds with a poultice. The young shoots and leaves can also be eaten as a salad as can the roots when roasted.



Name of Plant **Lady's Bedshaw**
Location **Spectacle E'e falls, Kype**
Properties

This plant is administered externally to prevent bleeding as it acts as an anti coagulant. Traditionally this plant was used as rennet (milk) substitute to curdle cheese. Formerly used for double Gloucester and Cheshire cheese. Flowers can also be used to make a drink. Name derives from plant being used for stuffing mattresses. Also used to treat urinary problems, epilepsy and hysteria.



Name of Plant **Dog-rose**
Location **Common throughout village**
Properties

Used to treat tuberculosis, kidney and bladder stones. Rose water is drunk to aid tired eyes. The fruit (hips) can be used to make jam, juice, soup and tea. The petals can be crystallised for cake decoration or dried in potpourris, while the oil is used in many perfumes. A black dye can be obtained from the roots.



Name of Plant **Herb Robert**
Location **Manse Road**
Properties

(common throughout village)
Plant used in homeopathy to treat internal bleeding. Previously used for tooth aches and mouth antiseptic. Also used as a tea to treat cancer.



Name of Plant **Heather**

Location **Common throughout village**

Properties Flowers are used for antiseptics and sedatives and in the treatment of urinary infections. Heather extract is also used in treating rheumatism and eczema. The flowers are used to produce honey or dried to make tea. The shoots of the plant are used to produce Heather Ale (Fraoch) which has been brewed in Scotland for over 4000 years making it the oldest styled beer in the world. Until recently this beer was brewed at Craigmill on the Avon near Sandford before the business moved to Alloa. Also used to make rope.



Name of Plant **Wild Garlic**

Location **Cander Gorge**

Properties Used to treat digestive problems, rheumatism, high blood pressure and asthma. The leaves can be eaten chopped up in salads and used in soup or with soft cheese. The leaves are also used as poultices for drawing out puss.



Name of Plant **Honeysuckle**

Location **Plotcock Road**

Properties Magical plant said to act as a charm against evil on May Day when placed above door lintel to protect those within. An infusion of flowers was also said to treat bronchitis, asthma, freckles and coughs.



Name of Plant **Rowan**

Location **Common throughout village**

Properties Associated locally with protecting the bearer as a lucky charm against witchcraft. The bark and leaves are used as a gargle against thrush, whilst the berries are used as a gargle for sore throats. The berries are also used in tarts, jellies and making wine. A poultice of bark was applied to adder bites whilst the berries mixed with apples and sugar were taken for whooping cough.



Name of Plant **Horse Chestnut**

Location **Hospital Grounds (woodland)**

Properties Used conventionally and in homeopathy to treat circulatory disorders, varicose veins, haemorrhoids and blocked veins. Bark is said to provide treatment for fevers. Used formerly for making tea.



Name of Plant **Sweet Sicily**

Location **Cander Gorge**

Properties Fruits (seeds) used as herb and spice in food and in drink as an Ouzo. The whole plant is edible with a strong aroma of aniseed. The young leaves can be added to salads, while the stems and roots can be added to soup. Also used to treat loss of appetite, eating disorders and flatulence.



Name of Plant **Elder**

Location **Graveyard (Common)**

Properties Used in cordials to treat colds, coughs and bronchitis. The flowers are said to treat hay fever and arthritis and are a mild laxative. The leaves are used to treat bruises and sprains while the bark is used by homeopaths to treat epilepsy. The roots are used to treat kidney problems whilst the berries have been used to treat colic, constipation, piles and syphilis.

Elder flower water is said to improve the complexion. The plant also produces black, green and violet dyes for cloth. The Elder is second only to Rowan tree in protection against witchcraft. The wood was formerly used to make simple chanters for the pipes and pop guns.



Name of Plant **Eyebright**

Location **Roman Road**

Properties Used in homeopathy to treat eye strain and eye infections since the times of the ancient Greeks. Also administered to treat colds, rheumatism, gout, hay fever and sinusitis.



Name of Plant Yarrow

Location

Properties

Common throughout village

Used to treat liver and gall bladder complaints. Fresh leaves help prevent bleeding of which the plant is administered to treat internal bleeding. The flower oil of the plant is used to treat colds and flu. Leaves can be eaten in salads (pepper taste) or brewed to make beer. On Skye it was boiled with milk as a cure for Tuberculosis.



Name of Plant Scots Pine

Location

Properties

Strathaven Road

(common throughout village)

The oils of the Scots pine are used in inhalers to aid respiratory problems. The whole tree was utilised for a variety of ailments; bark for fever, buds for scurvy, resinous roots for tapers and the resin for waterproofing.



Name of Plant Silver Birch

Location

Properties

Woodland

(common throughout village)

The leaves are anti bacterial and drunk as a tea to treat fluid retention, kidney and bladder complaints, rheumatism and gout. Also assists in reducing cholesterol. Oils are used to make soaps while syrup and wine can be made from the sap. The leaves produce green and yellow dyes. The birch is also used to grow mushrooms for gourmet restaurants.



Name of Plant Lady's Mantle

Location

Properties

Railway line, Westmains estate

Tea made from this plant is said to regulate female periods and improve the complexion while the leaves are said to produce properties to treat sore eyes, sore skin, diarrhoea, vomiting and prevent bleeding. The young leaves can be added to salads and produce a green dye. This plant was said to have been given to sick animals struck by the arrows of 'malevolent elves'.



Name of Plant Ivy (poisonous)
Location Hospital grounds, Strathaven Road
Properties Another magical plant used to medicate for coughs, whooping cough and bronchitis. In homeopathy ivy is used to treat over active thyroid, gall bladder and bronchial asthma. Also applied to treat fevers and expel worms. When the leaves and twigs are boiled in butter they produce an ointment for burns. In the 19th century the leaves were sown together and applied to the head of child with eczema.



Name of Plant Greater Plantain
Location Common throughout village
Properties Also known as 'white man's footsteps' after Europeans colonised America. The plant is used to treat toothache, ear infections and bed wetting. In 1623 Bessie Smith of Lesmahagow was accused by Presbytery of witchcraft for using this plant for its healing properties in conjunction with a spoken charm. As a tea the leaves or roots were taken for dysentery, bowel problems and intestinal worms.



Name of Plant Dock
Location Common throughout village
Properties Leaves are still widely used to rub on nettle stings. A poultice of crushed roots was applied to treat bee stings. The roots also provide a black dye.



Name of Plant Meadow Buttercup
Location Common throughout village
Properties The crushed leaves of this plant were tied in rags over boils and infected skin to raise a blister and extract septic fluids.



Name of Plant **Primrose**

Location **Common throughout village**

Properties Whole plant including roots was medicinally used as a sedative to treat worms, rheumatism, gout, paralysis and headaches. Flowers are still used to produce tea and wine.



Name of Plant **Tormentil**

Location **Common throughout village**

Properties Name derives from medicinal use of plant for stomach ache. Also used to treat cholera, ulcers and sores. Roots were used for producing red dyes for tanning leather and fishing nets.



Name of Plant **Sneezewort**

Location **Millheugh Road**

Properties Named so for plants ability to make people sneeze to clear nasal passages, whilst the root is taken as a remedy for toothache (hot flavour).



Name of Plant **Sphagnum Moss**

Location **Cander moss**

Properties Plant used in the Bronze age to treat the healing of wounds. The antibiotic (penicillin) and absorbent properties were used until the second world war to prepare effective wound dressings. Also used as alternative to toilet paper and nappies.



Name of Plant Daisy

Location

Properties

Common throughout village

Were used medicinally to make ointment for wounds and to treat liver infections, fever and scurvy. The petals can be eaten in salads.



Name of Plant Cornflower

Location

Properties

Gardens

A once common wild flower and now fairly rare in the wild this flower was used to treat the plague, poison, wounds, fevers, inflammation, weak eyes and mouth ulcers.



Name of Plant Chantrelle (fungi)

Location

Properties

Roman road

Delicious mushroom much sought after in gourmet restaurants. Tastes of apricots.



Name of Plant Yellow Iris

Location

Properties

Avon near Linthaugh

Plant used to treat period pain, convulsions, snake bites and other poisons. Applied mixing seeds and water in a poultice.



Name of Plant Harebell
Location Blackwood Loch
Properties Said to tinkle a warning to hares when danger was approaching.



Name of Plant Bracket (Fungi)
Location Blackwood Loch
Properties Used to make paper and padding for targes (shields) during the Jacobite rebellions.



Name of Plant Crotal (Lichen)
Location Old Kirkyard, Manse Road
Properties Those found on stone make better dyes than those on trees. Dyes from some lichen do not require mordants (fixers) such as urine. Powdered crotal was worn in stockings to protect feet from inflammation during long journeys.



Name of Plant Xanthoria Parentina (Lichen)
Location Old Kirkyard, Manse Road
Properties Was used to treat jaundice as well as producing pink, blue and purple dyes for cloth. Arctic explorer John Franklin survived for eleven days by eating boiled lichen. Dog lichen was used to treat liver complaints and rabies.





Other interesting plants found locally

Ground-ivy (Common throughout area)

Found on Manse Road this plant is used to treat gastritis and kidney stones while the leaves are said to reduce inflammation. Also used to flavour beer and eaten as a herb in salads.

Holly (Common throughout area)

Magical plant used as charm against witchcraft and fairies.

Groundsel (Common throughout area)

Used as a poultice for skin problems such as chapped hands.

Wild Pansy (Gardens and some areas locally)

Plant used for respiratory problems, skin complaints including acne and coughs.

Lavender (Gardens)

Used to treat migraines, exhaustion, insect bites (oil) and nervous disorders.

Common Speedwell (Common throughout area)

Wild flower used for Digestive disorders.

Small-leaved Lime (Public Park)

In homeopathy this plant is used for treating rheumatism. It also has healing properties for treating hay fever and allergies.

Fennel (Common throughout area)

The fruits are used to flavour bread, apple pie, curries and toothpaste. It is also administered to treat flatulence.

Peppermint (Marlage)

Oil is applied as mild anaesthetic and is used for treating flatulence and nausea.

Blackthorn/Sloe (Common throughout area)

As well as a flavouring for gin the plant is used as a mild laxative and mouth wash (leaves).

Acknowledgements

Countryside Rangers, South Lanarkshire Council

References

The Scots Herbal by Tess Darwin

Herbs and Healing Plants by Dieter Podlech

