

STEVENS GUIDE TO CHEDDAR 1869 - update May 2012

Lithospermum purpureocaeruleum (Purple Gromwell)

I renewed my search for plants after a couple of weeks away and in Cheddar Woods, where Stevens also found it, I spied the rare wild Purple Gromwell. There was a patch of plants on a bank next to the path, not in wet conditions as I had expected, and was thrilled that “mission accomplished”.



Pyrus aria - now *Sorbus aria* (Whitebeam tree)

Three new whitebeam species were discovered in Cheddar Gorge in 2009 by scientists from Bristol University and the National Museum of Wales (NMW). According to an article in *Plant Talk*, Whitebeams hybridise readily and very often these offspring are self-fertile. This type of reproduction has led to a huge number of micro species. The diversity in Cheddar specifically seems to be a combination of landscape changes and the presence of two more common species (*S.aria* and *S.porretigentiformis*) of which *S.aria* is ‘morphologically variable’ according to Dr. Tim Rich of the NMW. The three new species are *S.cheddarensis*, *S.eminentoides* and *S.rupicoloides* so the Whitebeam Stevens mentions in 1869 can still be found but is joined by other species which I am not qualified to identify.

My search for the other plants on Stevens list continues. Brenda Anderson