Vice-County Report for 2013
H35 (West Donegal)
Ralph Sheppard

In H35 (West Donegal) we launched the Atlas 2020 campaign with a field week-end in the north-west, where we made a start on recording by covering a few tetrads around the machair of B72, and the bogs of B82. For the rest of the season I continued with a wider spread of tetrad recording. During the winter I entered these records along with most of the backlog to 2000. The outcome has been a total of 18,500 records of 783 taxa. For this I'm indebted firstly to NBDC for help with the digitising of many of the older records, and also to the small band of casual visitors who have each contributed a significant number of records. These include John Faulkner, John Harron, David Holyoak, Colin & Wendy Hutchinson, Michael Lowe, David & Ian McNeill, Tim Rich & David McCosh, Robert Northridge and John Wann. And last but not least, I'd like to thank Maria Long and John Faulkner for general encouragement and organisational help.

To illustrate the state of play, and also the value of recording at tetrad level (or below), I have a few slides.

1) Firstly, the tetrad map of *Selaginella selaginoides* reveals its double life as a component of damp machair micro-habitats around the coast, and wet rocks in the two main mountain ranges – the North-west Highlands and the Bluestack Mountains.
2) *Orepopteris limbosperma* appears to be mainly found in the southern uplands. It should also be present throughout the central and northern uplands. So more work is needed to make sure that this map reveals only the limited state of our recording so far.
3) The first map of *Impatiens glandulifera* showing the hectad distribution for both H35 and H34 (East Donegal) suggests two loci – the eastern lowlands and the north-west.
4) The five km. map suggests that the eastern lowlands are really more important than the north-west.
5) The tetrad map reveals the truth. It clearly picks out a line of unbroken presence along the River Deele – the results of an intensive survey of riverine invasive by John Wann (with yours truly cheering on the sidelines). The monad map (not shown) has at least twice as many dots along the Deele (only the same number elsewhere), but reveals nothing extra of importance – and is not nearly as clear as the tetrad map.
6) *Dactylorizha maculata* appears to be ubiquitous. No surprise there, but the proof came as a result of the survey of both vice-counties which I did for the lately deceased OrchidIreland project.
7) The *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* map is similar, but with absences in some of the main highland regions.
8) The tetrad map of *D. maculata* confirms its widespread distribution, but also reveals that in most hectads its presence is scattered.
9) The equivalent map of *D. fuchsii* is very different. The absences in the uplands are even more extensive than as shown by the hectad map. And unlike *D. maculata*, there are concentrations. The main one is on the heavy calcareous gley soils of south Donegal. Lesser concentrations on the coast pick out areas of sandy habitats (in Donegal these are mostly calcareous). One in particular, in the north-west, is occupied only by the Hebridean form of the species, which I do hope will be mapped separately. All of us on the outing were agreed that however it is classified, it certainly appears in the field to be quite distinct from the widespread form.

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