

# Field Botany in Dunbartonshire

Newsletter - Summer 2022

## **Progress**

Our network continues to expand, both in breadth and in depth. New faces are joining us and taking part in fieldwork. If you are reading our Newsletter for the first time, you are especially welcome! And people are not only extending their plant knowledge, but also showing the confidence to offer to lead outings or to do some plant recording on their own.

All this is strengthening our capability and adding momentum to the quest to cover all 704 sq. km. of our vice-county by 2030.



The Luss Hills from the southern shore of Loch Lomond

This season's programme is well under way, with over 4,500 records already sent to the national database. Many great adventures lie ahead in our mountains, shores, towns and rivers. Do join us whenever you can!

The Outings Programme for the second half of 2022 is being circulated with this Newsletter. Remember you can always refer to past issues of our newsletter and the current programme by visiting the Dunbartonshire page on the BSBI website:

<https://bsbi.org/dunbartonshire>

(If we should ever lose touch, this would also be an easy way for you to find us again.)



## **High-level fieldwork**

Our fieldwork covers a lot of territory, so we are fortunate to have in our ranks specialists in urban plants, mountain plants and the wide range of garden plants which can find their way out into the wild.

As a result, we have recorded 950 different species in the last 16 months.

One notable find recently was *Smyrniium olusatrum* (Alexanders). This is a well-known plant down by Dumbarton Rock, but when Fiona Merrilees found it in the Bellsmyre area in March it became only the sixth map square for the species in the western half of Scotland! [see photo on next page]

Because the pre-existing record for Dunbartonshire included many microspecies of Dandelions and Brambles, we are tackling this challenge too: last summer we had 18 confirmed Bramble species and this spring we have had 6 Dandelion species determined by the referee from photo-sets taken for the purpose.



Four of our Dandelions  
(clockwise from top left):

*Taraxacum faeroense*

*Taraxacum tumentilobum*

*Taraxacum exacutum*

*Taraxacum sublaeticolor*



## **Training (you can help)**

Requests are increasingly coming in from Parks, Schools, Community Woodlands, Urban Conservation Projects and Visitor Centres for someone to come and provide beginner-level botany experiences.

Many readers of this Newsletter have more than enough capability to be involved in this, whether alone or with others. The training and mentorship chain extends in both directions, and we should all remember that, as well as seeking input for our own development, we should take opportunities to offer it in turn to others. At a time when public concern for the natural world is growing rapidly, there is a real need for some basic input for beginner botanists.

Please get in touch if you'd like to help in this - the more of us who pass on our enthusiasm for botany to others, the more people will start to get interested.

## Recent finds

The joy of a botany walk is not knowing what you might come across!



*Smyrnium olusatrum* (Alexanders)



*Phegopteris connectilis* (Beech Fern)



*Carex vesicaria* (Bladder Sedge) and  
*Carex rostrata* (Bottle Sedge) side-by-side for comparison



*Pinguicula vulgaris* (Butterwort)  
- not on a moor, but on the shore of Loch Lomond

**Botany by Bike** [This article has previously appeared in the Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire newsletters.]

A bicycle is a great piece of equipment for botany in more remote areas.

**Liza Downie** is a devotee, so we asked her about it:

**Q. Are botany and cycling compatible activities? (or does one spoil the other?)**

**A.** Botany and cycling are complementary activities. Botany and cycling come in two flavours, firstly 'bicycling with botany'. This is a very much slower version of 'botany at 30 mph'. When cycling along quiet roads it is interesting to peruse the hedgerows and ditches. Secondly there is 'bicycling for botany', when we use our bikes to access some of the more remote areas, avoiding a long trudge on foot. Of course, one form often morphs into the other.

Our bicycling for botany trips are quite short cycle rides – just a few miles usually. Anyone could do it - it's nothing technical or heroic.

**Q. Has a cycling trip ever been hijacked by the need to stop for a plant?**

**A.** Yes, often and very enjoyably so. For example, seeing lots of Spignel growing along the A74 cycle path in Lanarkshire, or clumps of parsley fern intertwined with oak fern in the Mennoch Pass. Perhaps also the sheer delight of the acres of Lemon-scented Fern in the ditches of the road to Otter Ferry as I struggled uphill at almost falling off speed.

**Q. Why do you enjoy 'botany by bike'?**

**A.** Well you suddenly discover that you have a whole new set of cycling chums, you get to places that might otherwise be hard to access and you see plants you might not see elsewhere, so what's not to like?

**Q. What are the advantages of using a bike to do botany?**

**A.** The bicycle can go where cars aren't allowed or can't reach. For example, along gated forest roads (so long as you can lift the bike over the gate of course). It allows you do more and go further than on foot. You can also sometimes outrun the midgies!

**Q. Is it something you do very often?**

**A.** Well it would be great to do more, certainly, though we have managed at least one bicycling for botany excursion each year for the last few years. Bicycling with botany is of course something that can be done anywhere at any time.

**Q. Where have you done 'botany by bike'?**

**A.** In Argyll, Lanarkshire, Dunbartonshire and Dumfries & Galloway.

We've had some wonderful experiences over the years – stumbling across a carpet of cranberries at Auchrobert in Lanarkshire, finding bladderworts in flower next to a wind turbine in Argyll, standing on a beach full of Eelgrass on the Dumbarton shore. We also spent a day up at the Whitelee windfarm looking for a tiny area of heathland to complete a square for Atlas 2020!

Cyclists who botanise?  
... or botanists who cycle?



Liza Downie (in the pink cap) with Peter Wiggins and Dorothy Moodie all set for a bicycle botany day at Glen Douglas.

## **QUIZ ANSWERS**

Here are the translations of the Three-Letter Acronyms in our recent quiz.

### **Partner organisations and initiatives:**

- BRC** Biological Records Centre(s)
- BSS** Botanical Society of Scotland
- GPS** Global Positioning System
- LNR** Local Nature Reserve
- NBN** National Biodiversity Network
- NTS** National Trust for Scotland
- NVC** National Vegetation Classification
- SNH** Scottish Natural Heritage - now operating as NatureScot
- SWT** Scottish Wildlife Trust

### **BSBI jargon:**

- AEM** Annual Exhibition Meeting (the BSBI's big annual get-together)
- DDb** Distribution Database
- RPR** Rare Plant Register
- SBC** Scottish Botanists' Conference (held annually in November - highly recommended!)
- UFP** Urban Flora Project (an initiative of the BSS)
- VCR** Vice-County Recorder

### **Plant abbreviations** (sometimes used informally when making notes):

- BFT** Bird's-foot Trefoil
- RLS** Rue-leaved Saxifrage
- SVG** Sweet Vernal-grass

### **Our own jargon:**

- WOB** 'Walk On By' - often uttered, e.g. when someone asks what Willow that is . . . !
- WSG** Winter Study Groups
- PSW** Initials of our very own Peter Wiggins - as seen in his email address, and on his car registration plate

## Totaliser

	<u>2022</u>	<u>Project total</u>
Total monad records made	4,645	24,028
Monads visited, with at least one record made	119	393 (56%)
Monads visited, with no previous record at all	1	31
Monad with highest species count	NS4970 (247) (Clydebank)	NS5169 (282) (Yoker)
Monads regarded as 'well-recorded'	14	97 (13.8%)
Total species recorded	627	963
Number of people joining 'Team 99' network	8	58

(correct as at 13th June, 2022)

### Keep in touch

Please keep the emails (or letters, phone calls or texts) coming - especially if you're reporting plants you have found. I'm also glad to receive photos for identification, or suggestions of contacts or future outings.

Best of all, please take part in one of our outings - especially if you have never done so before!

Michael Philip (BSBI Recorder, vc99)      email: [botany@opus44.co.uk](mailto:botany@opus44.co.uk)

### **Photo credits\*:**

Luss Hills	Michael Philip, Portnellan, 7th April 2022
<i>Taraxacum faeroense</i>	Michael Philip, near Jaw Reservoir, 15th May 2022
<i>Taraxacum exacutum</i>	Michael Philip, Garelochhead, 13th May 2022
<i>Taraxacum tumentilobum</i>	Michael Philip, Auchencarroch, 27th April 2022
<i>Taraxacum sublaeticolor</i>	Lucy Hollingworth, Cove, 10th May 2022
<i>Smyrniium olusatrum</i>	Fiona Merrilees, Bellsmyre, 13th March 2022
<i>Phegopteris connectilis</i>	Grahame Jarvis, hillside above Firkin Point, 21st May 2022
<i>Carex vesicaria</i> & <i>Carex rostrata</i>	Michael Philip, Balloch Castle Country Park, 20th May 2022
<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>	Michael Philip, Rubha Mór, Loch Lomond, 21st May 2022
Bicycle botanists	Pam Murdoch, Glen Douglas, 28th July 2021

\* Remember you're always welcome to send in photos, either for potential inclusion in the Newsletter or the webpage, or to request help in identifying a plant.