

## Introduction

This is the sixth mid-winter Newsletter, which will provide details of the activities and events of 2017. It has been another year of intensive field work for the Atlas and recording effort has once again surpassed that of the previous year. Other non-recording activities have continued at a less frenetic pace, but will probably become more intensive after the Atlas work has been completed.

## Recording During 2016

At the time of writing the 2016 newsletter I was not able to provide a final figure for the number of records. I can now confirm that 55, 856 records were added to the BSBI Big Database. There were a few duplicates, which have been recently removed and I expect that the final figure is closer to 55,000 records.

## Recording During 2017

I have just completed an upload to the BSBI database of 53,000+ records, which is most satisfactory, but there are still a significant block of records awaiting upload. Hopefully the records will be received in early January so they can be verified and sent on to the database in advance of the start of the 2018 recording season.

Some of you may be aware, but for the benefit of all, the BSBI have a service agreement with the Nottinghamshire Biological & Geological Records Centre (NBGRC) to share biological records. Rob Johnson and Jane Carruthers, with contributions from Dave Wood and other recorders (via Irecord etc) have contributed more than 21,000 records this year alone. The remaining 32,000 records have been compiled by a relatively small group including myself, Sian Matthews, Graeme Coles, Ken Balkow and David Shaw. Other recorders, still to submit records, have been very active to the south and east of the River Trent and I look forward to receiving their datasets in due course.

Through interrogation of the records tetrad by tetrad it has become apparent that the coverage of species has been heavily skewed towards species that are of 'botanical interest' rather than the more common species. As such, there is very good coverage of species recorded at monad and six figure levels. There are, however, lots of tetrads with incomplete cover of common species. This is not a problem for the Atlas update, because the overall cover at hectad level is satisfactory, but for a county flora there is still much work to do. In response to the deficit, I spent the year ticking off common species in SK54 (nearly complete), SK55, SK56, SK65 and SK66 (nearly complete) with a few random trips elsewhere. Although I concentrated on common species, many species of botanical interest were also recorded.

I intend to repeat the process in 2018 by completing coverage of SK54 and SK66 and by filling in the gaps in SK68, SK69 and SK75. In 2019 I will revisit SK76, SK77, SK78 and SK79 to fill in the gaps. A new arrival to Nottinghamshire, who is an experienced botanist will be surveying SK67).

There are a number of active recorders who will be working in hectads to the south (SK42, SK43, SK52, SK53, SK62, SK63, SK64, SK72, SK73, SK74) and east (SK84, SK85, SK86, SK87 and SK88) of the Trent and given recent progress, I am confident that they will achieve full coverage. Similarly, a constant stream of records has been received in recent years from the northwest of the county and I am confident that full coverage of SK57, SK58 and SK59 will be achieved. The only area that may need some additional help is SK43, SK44, SK45 and SK46. Mary and Claire Smith have done a lot of recording in that area and many tetrads have good to excellent coverage, but there are gaps, so if anybody can help, please let me know.

Anybody who is willing to take on tetrads will be supplied with records of what species have already been recorded so they know where to look to find the interesting species, but more importantly a list of unrecorded common species will also be supplied. It is important to note that not all common species will be present in each tetrad. The list of common species was developed by Dave Wood based on his considerable experience of the county and is obviously generic. I would, however, expect that at least 60% of the species will be present in all tetrads.

### **NBRG Field Trips and Training**

I am not aware of any organised field trips last year, but people were obviously visiting sites on an ad hoc basis and discussing their finds on facebook. Based on the facebook discussions, it seems that only a small percentage of what people find is actually being recorded and passed on to the VC recorders or the NBGRC (thank you to those that did). By way of the NBGRC, I am receiving records from people who are using the Irecord application and these records of mostly common species are proving to be useful. If you do not want to use a phone app, an even simpler method is to write down a species list for a site and include the monad, date and recorder at the bottom of the page – take a photograph of the page(s), post on facebook and I will do the rest! If necessary, I can contact a recorder to verify any records or ask for further information – get into the habit!

In response to various requests I provided a grasses and sedges training course in July 2017, which was very poorly attended. Sufficient people had indicated in advance that they would be attending the event so I was happy to give up my time to provide free training. Only two people attended, but we had a very useful day practising the use of keys in Stace and Hubbard. Suffice to say that it will take some persuasion for me to organise and run any future events!

### **Rare Plants Recorded in 2016**

Typically, most of the new species found during 2017 are neophytes and there may be several more to add to the list depending on what has been found to south and east of the River Trent. However, several new populations of rare, scarce and interesting native plants have been found during 2017.

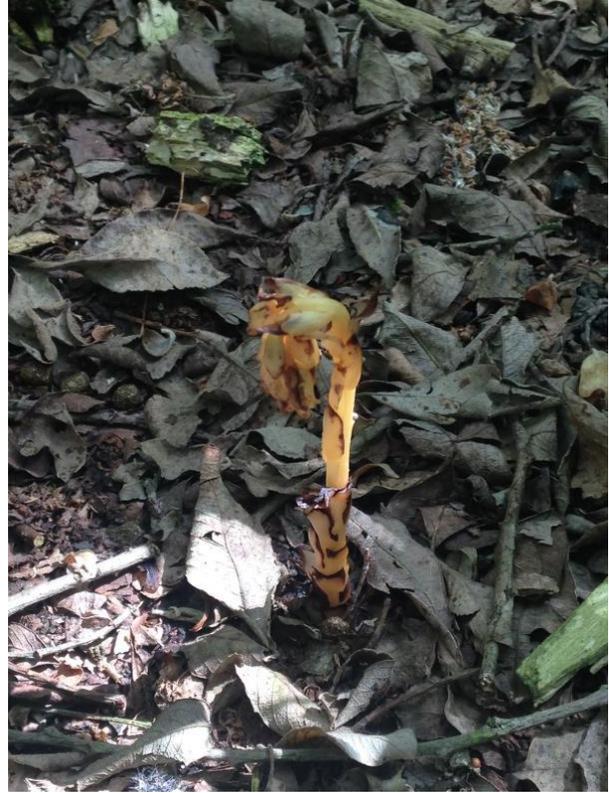
Two local naturalists (Bernard Featherstone and John Brown) were kind enough to provide Dave Wood and I with a guided tour of the area at Lound Gravel Pits where they had found populations of round-leaved wintergreen *Pyrola rotundifolia* subsp. *rotundifolia* and yellow bird's-nest *Hypopitys monotropa*. The population of round-leaved wintergreen proved to be much more extensive than previously recognised and is scattered across two monads in relic fen and willow scrub; it is still the only site in the county where this species occurs. Two substantial populations of yellow bird's-nest were also found in sparsely vegetated willow scrub. Yellow bird's-nest has only been recorded at two

other Nottinghamshire sites in modern times. A recent search of Great Whin Covert near Worksop was unsuccessful and the population at Jubilee Ponds, Bleasby has dwindled to single figures and may no longer be extant. As such the population at Lound is of very high conservation interest.

*Pyrola rotundifolia* at Lound (9 July 2017, John Brown)



*Hypopitys monotropa* at Lound (9 July 2017, John Brown)



Other highlights include the presence of a large population of mossy stonecrop *Crassula tillaea* at Girton. Richard Penson found the species on the verge of Green Lane and the Girton Sailing Club car park. The species has been declining at Stapleford Wood (the only other Nottinghamshire site), so the new site is most welcome and given the size of the population is likely to be self-sustaining.

Rob Johnson found a large population of the hybrid horsetail *Equisetum x litorale* on the Tinkers Leen in Nottingham. This is the third record for the county and Rob states that there are many plants along a section of Tinker's Leen over several hundreds of metres going east to the retail park.

A large population of pale flax *Linum bienne* has been found on private land near Strawberry Hill Heath. The population is the third record for the county. The newly found population is of a similar size to the long established population at Sutton Gravel Pits and is growing in species-rich grassland on a mixed substrate of sands and colliery shales.

Following the publication of the BSBI Violas handbook<sup>1</sup> I started to pay more attention to the populations of field pansy *Viola arvensis* and the less common wild pansy *Viola tricolor*. By the end of the survey season I had recorded the hybrid *Viola x contempta* (*Viola tricolor* x *V. arvensis*) at seven locations. The hybrid is generally intermediate, but the bracts, and flower shape and size are useful

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<sup>1</sup> Porter, M & Foley, M (2017). *Violas of Britain and Ireland: BSBI Handbook No 17*. BSBI, Bristol.

characters and immediately comparable in the field. The hybrid often appears in the absence of *Viola tricolor*. Other hybrid violets include a second county record for *Viola x bavarica* the hybrid between common dog violet *Viola riviniana* and early dog violet *Viola reichenbachiana*; easily spotted because it was flowering in July. An NBGRC field visit found a new record (eight sites) for *Viola x scabra* at Warsop Hills and Holes. The hybrid was found with both parents; sweet violet *Viola odorata* and hairy violet *Viola hirta*. It is readily distinguished by its larger size, general vigour and floriferous habit.

Other Notable 2017 records include:

1. *Alchemilla conjuncta* Silver lady's-mantle – 2<sup>nd</sup> VC record: Bentinck grassland SK 49213 55257, 17/08/2017 (David Shaw)
2. *Allium cristophii* Star of Persia – 3<sup>rd</sup> VC record: Lindhurst track, SK 572 589, garden throwout on track verge, 13/05/2017 (Mark Woods)
3. *Berberis gagnepainii* Gagnepain's barberry – 2<sup>nd</sup> VC record: New Lodge Plantation, planted and regenerating, SK 605 661, 02/09/2017 (Mark Woods)
4. *Corydalis solida* Bird-in-a-bush – 2<sup>nd</sup> VC record: Newstead Park, planted and regenerating across a wide area of woodland, SK 540 539, 15/04/2017 (Mark Woods)
5. *Cotoneaster boisianus* Bois's cotoneaster – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: Rainworth Dismantled Railway, SK 605 581, 27/09/2017 (Rob Johnson)
6. *Crambe cordifolia* Greater sea-kale – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: School Lane, Bagthorpe, SK 470 515, growing on the banks of a stream, 15/06/2017 (Jane Carruthers)
7. *Eucalyptus viminalis* Ribbon gum – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: Rainworth Dismantled Railway, SK 602 577, unknown origin, but not planted, 15/08/2017 (Rob Johnson)
8. *Festuca glauca* Blue fescue – 2<sup>nd</sup> VC record: Field Lane, Chilwell, SK 512 359, Several plants (garden escape) along the edge of the lane, 02/06/2017 (Rob Johnson)
9. *Hieracium asperatum* Rough hawkweed – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: A617 Trunk Road, Mansfield Woodhouse, plants on rocky limestone outcrops of a new road section, SK 514 621, 28/05/2017 (Mark Woods)
10. *Lilium pyrenaicum* Pyrenean lily – 2<sup>nd</sup> VC record: Rainworth Dismantled Railway, SK584587, single plant – garden throwout, 20/05/2017 (Mark Woods)
11. *Miscanthus sinensis* var. Zebrinus Chinese silver grass – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: Welbeck Garden Centre - small clump on unmanaged area at edge of car park, SK 547 740, 06/10/2017 (Mark Woods)
12. *Oenothera perangusta* An evening primrose – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: Minster School Grounds, Southwell - several plants growing at former school site on disturbed area, SK 703 536, 24/09/2017 (Rob Johnson, det. Dave Wood)
13. *Oenothera biennis* x *cambrica* a hybrid evening primrose – 2<sup>nd</sup> VC record: Bowbridge Lane Scrap Yard West Field, Balderton, SK802509 - plants on dumped rubble/soil and in an abandoned field, 28/07/2017 (Rob Johnson)
14. *Petrorhagia saxifraga* Tunicflower – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: Jubilee Campus University of Nottingham – presumed escape from green roof seed mix, SK 547 398, 11/07/2017 (Jerry Clough)
15. *Phormium cookianum* Lesser New Zealand flax - 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: Mill Lane, Huthwaite - flowering plant growing on verge by filter beds, presumably a relict of garden dumping, SK 469 584, 07/07/2017 (Rob Johnson)
16. *Phyllostachys bambusoides* a bamboo – 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> VC records: Appleton Dale, SK 584 535 - small patch on woodland edge, origin not obvious, 06/05/2017 (Mark Woods). Bilsthorpe Colliery, SK 655 616 - regenerating from planted material by the fishing pond, 10/09/2017 (Mark Woods)
17. *Phygelius capensis* Cape figwort – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: Rainworth Dismantled Railway, SK 604 579, 28/09/2017 (Rob Johnson)
18. *Polystichum munitum* Western sword-fern – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: Wellow, streamside in village,

- regenerating from nearby planted material, SK 6696 6599, 11/11/2017 (Mark Woods)
19. *Verbascum phoeniceum* purple mullein – 2<sup>nd</sup> VC record: Girton Gravel Pits, in a disturbed, sandy strip alongside a new boundary fence with other garden escapes, SK 824 671, 09/07/2017 (Dave Wood)
  20. *Silene viscaria* Sticky catchfly – 1<sup>st</sup> VC record: Jubilee Campus University of Nottingham – three plants, presumed escape from green roof seed mix, SK 547 398, 25/04/2017 (Jerry Clough)

## Photographs

Once again, thank you to the contributors to the Flickr site (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/2181996@N22/>) which continues to expand in terms of the species. If you have good quality photographs of any species that are present in Nottinghamshire, please submit them to the editor, Ken Balkow, for inclusion on the site.

## Historical Information

Rob Johnson forwarded archival data from Lincolnshire Museum that included correspondence and species records for the Welbeck Estate in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The records were compiled by the Welbeck Librarian, Mr R. Goulding. Analysis by Brenda Howitt and correspondence with Lancaster University was interesting, because of comments between the correspondents, which can be best described as 'strained'. The species list was, however, of much greater interest with a wide variety of new VC records, particularly neophytes that originated from the importation of horse fodder. Horse fodder was required to feed the large number of horses that were stabled on the West Park after World War 1 had finished. There are several records of native species which are still present at sites such as Creswell Crags and other records for sites elsewhere on the Welbeck Estate that need to be checked. At least two records are unique and the species have never been recorded anywhere else in the VC. Further investigation and site visits need to be arranged.

## Conservation Work

Last year, I mentioned the NWT Species Re-introduction Forum, which has continued into 2017 and there has been several associated activities. I summarised the botanical project to the Annual Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group meeting in November 2017. Some of the activities I mentioned are discussed below.

In late June, a meeting was held at Idle Valley sites including Misson Line Bank and Misson Carr to investigate the feasibility of re-introducing fen violet *Viola persicifolia*. The species was last recorded on the margins of a drain close to Misson Line Bank in 1981. Owen Mountfield (formerly of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and project manager for fen violet reintroduction in the British Isles) kindly attended the meeting along with representatives from Notts Wildlife Trust (NWT), RSPB, Polly Bell Farms, myself and Norman Lewis (NWT Cons Officer Ret'd). Misson Line Bank is badly in need of management to maintain its botanical interest, but if appropriate management was realised (scrub removal, grassland management and creation of scrapes to expose bare peat), there is potential for fen violet to be introduced to the site on damp peat deposits. At present we are waiting for contact from Camilla Lambrick, who has taken over management of the project, before deciding on the next steps.

Norman Lewis, Sheila Wright and John Osborne in collaboration with the Forestry Commission, RSPB and Natural England have been working to bring back creeping willow *Salix repens* from the brink of extinction in the county. Before the intervention creeping willow was reduced to a single plant in Stapleford Wood. Cuttings of both sexes have been taken from Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, propagated by Norman and recently planted at Stapleford Wood, Budby South Forest and Farndon Willow Holt (in the *Salix* collection). Further re-introductions are planned in an effort re-establish the former range of the species.

The need to create vehicular access in Gamston Wood SSSI for timber extraction (conifers) has required clearance of a small area of woodland at an intersection of rides. The area contained several plants of conservation interest including herb paris *Paris quadrifolia*, hairy wood-rush *Luzula pilosa* and greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* amongst a variety of the typical woodland species such as wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon* subsp. *montanum*. Volunteers under the supervision of Norman Lewis and supported by Rob Atkinson of NWT excavated plants using trowels and spades and immediately transferred the plants to prepared ground at Treswell Wood. Herb Paris and greater butterfly orchid were historically present at Treswell Wood and now that the traditional forms of management have been re-instated sufficient justification for re-introduction has been realised. There will be a need for gardening to get the introduced populations established, but in the long-term there is strong optimism regarding the survival of introductions.

Several other species that are rare in the VC are being considered for re-introduction. Greater wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* and bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* are high priorities. If anybody wants to get involved in the project there are plenty of opportunities. Apart from fieldwork and ecological research opportunities, there is a need to look after the propagules, by people who have horticultural experience and facilities. Please let me know if you are interested.

Happy New Year to you all and I hope that you can contribute to the activities of the recording group / BSBI in Nottinghamshire during 20187.

Mark Woods (Joint BSBI recorder for Nottinghamshire)

30/12/2017