

# Lanarkshire Botany

Spring update, April 2018



It's all about to get under way again! The great task of finding, identifying and recording Lanarkshire's wild plants resumes in earnest later this month. Please plan to lend a hand in any way you can.

## **2018 priorities**

There are two main priorities this year:

- a) to give maximum effort to re-finding as many species as possible in Glasgow
- b) to ensure that recording across our whole vice-county is meeting Atlas 2020 targets



*Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash) in flower

The historic lists of plants growing in the wild across Glasgow are enormous: hectad NS56 (west Glasgow) has an all-time list of 1,245 different species and hectad NS66 (east Glasgow) has 1,124 species. The aim is to bring this up-to-date by finding 75% of the listed species again in the current century (i.e. after 1999). So far, we have reached 56% in NS56 (695 species re-found) and 63% in NS66 (707 species re-found).

Several outings are being targeted this year in areas all over Glasgow to improve these statistics. Urban areas are full of botanical surprises, so please don't assume the city is less interesting than the countryside!

Elsewhere in the vice-county we already meet Atlas criteria in roughly half of our geographical area, and we are very close to the required levels in several further hectads. We will first be targeting hectads where there is a high likelihood of quick success. These early successes will spur us on!

You should already have received our programme of outings for April, May and June. (If not, please ask for one.) The achievements of last year were due to lots of 'boots on the ground' - we'd be delighted if your boots can join us at various points this year!

## Dandelions

Did you know that there are over 230 different species of Dandelion in the British Isles?

The differences between these species are so subtle and difficult to be sure of that very few people are able to tell them apart precisely. Accordingly, most people are in the habit of lumping all Dandelions together and recording only “*Taraxacum agg.*”



*Taraxacum agg.* - and there's the problem!

In order to reach the kinds of percentages we're after, a proper, focussed attempt must be made to re-find as many as possible of, for instance, the 41 Dandelion species previously recorded in Glasgow.

The strategy will be to revisit sites which have precise location data, and try to find plants which seem to match descriptions of the particular Dandelion species previously recorded there. These will then be photographed in detail, and the photos sent to the BSBI Referee for *Taraxacum*, John Richards (co-author of the BSBI Handbook on Dandelions). If he can verify the record from photos, that will be great: if he can't be sure, he'll ask us to send him the actual plants for examination! He is just as keen not to be sent hundreds of plants as we are not to have them festooning our houses while they're drying . . .

The season during which Dandelions can be identified is short: just a few weeks during April and May. After that they grow weedy and become impossible to work with.

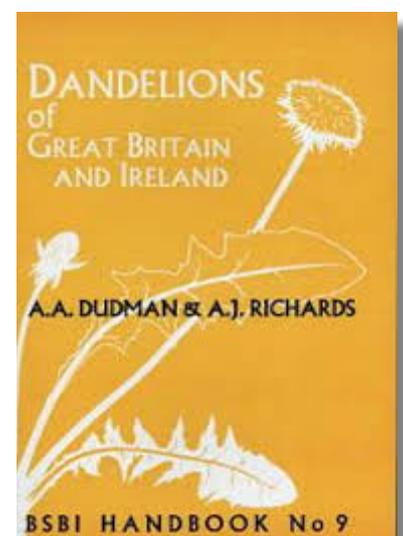
So, if you're interested in this painstaking and (mercifully) time-limited task, please get in touch. We need patient and meticulous people, both note-takers and photographers.

Full briefing on methodology will be provided.

Dandelion work will be carried out on some informal evening outings, outwith the published programme, arranged to suit those taking part.

This is 'real science' and will bring its own satisfaction . . .

. . . honest!



## **Saxifraga tridactylites**

A year ago, this newsletter included the photo on the right. It shows the small, typically reddish rosettes of three-pronged leaves belonging to a plant that is easily missed: *Saxifraga tridactylites* (Rue-leaved Saxifrage).

Up to the end of 2016, this species had been recorded just three times in Lanarkshire. Last year, we added a further seven records, bringing the total to ten.

Now, thanks in large measure to some very recent, dedicated recent urban fieldwork by Malcolm Macneill, we have it recorded in 48 monads (20 tetrads), sometimes in very dense, highly localised populations of hundreds and hundreds of plants.



This species appears very early in the year, and is largely gone before the end of May. Initially the rosettes are tiny, from the diameter of a 5p piece, but soon announce themselves more clearly by developing the signature three-pronged leaves which usually turn red. Its preferred micro-habitat is amongst moss, over a flat surface such as old tarmac, gravel, concrete, cobbles or bricks. If you come across it in the next few weeks, please report it in with an exact location.

The full story of this unfolding early-season project will be told in a future edition of the newsletter, but it has been a surprising and exciting way to start the year!

## **Training**

Any outing we take part in has a training dimension: there is so much to learn, and participants will always know different things. However, there are also specific training events which you may wish to consider.

For instance, we have mentioned in the programme some week-long recording events organised by the BSBI. These are a 'total immersion' experience in wild areas: physically demanding and full of learning - and highly recommended by those who have taken part in such things before.

Less demanding are weekend or one-day courses on identifying grasses, or ferns, or sedges, or learning how to tell apart the different families of plants. Whatever your level of experience, there's a course to challenge you and add to your plant knowledge.

Rather than enumerate all such opportunities here, I'll be happy to suggest courses and send you details if you let me know what, or when, you might like to study.

## **Glasgow Botanic Gardens**

2018 is the 20th Anniversary of the last full record of the wild plants of the Glasgow Botanic Gardens. (Incidentally, it's also the 30th Anniversary of the Glasgow Garden Festival.)

We will be undertaking the challenge of compiling a fresh, detailed record of the whole site with two separate recording days - on Saturday, 19th May and Sunday, 12th August.

This is a special project within our wider programme, and promises to be full of interest. Do join us if you can.

## **Photo Project**

As the field season starts, remember that your plant photos can be sent in, adding to a huge resource bank which will be presented online. The aim is both to enjoy, and to help identify, the wild flora of Lanarkshire.

Each photo should be good quality, of maximum size and resolution, and its filename should contain:

- species name      - date taken      - monad location      - photographer's initials

Here's an example: **Asplenium trichomanes 16Oct2017 NT0212 MP.jpg** (spaces should be included)



We're only looking for plant photos taken within the vc77 Lanarkshire area of South Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire or Glasgow. For this photo project, please contact Peter Wiggins at: [pswiggins@gmail.com](mailto:pswiggins@gmail.com)

## **Keep in touch**

I'm always glad to receive emails on any botanical matters. I may not be able to answer everything myself, but this is a network so there will be an answer!

If you know of anyone else who would be interested in receiving the programme of events and occasional newsletters, please ask them to get in touch.

I look forward to seeing you in the field whenever you can join us - you'll be made most welcome.

Michael Philip (BSBI recorder, vc77)      email: [botany@opus44.co.uk](mailto:botany@opus44.co.uk)

## **Picture credits**

All the photos this time are mine (though many other members of Team 77 are better photographers!):

<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Netherburn, 2nd May, 2016
<i>Taraxacum</i> agg.	Swinhill, near Larkhall, 10th April 2016
<i>Saxifraga tridactylites</i>	near Riverside Museum, Glasgow, 29th March, 2017
<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>	Harthope, near Beattock, 16th October 2017