

2020 Welsh Vice-County Reports

Monmouthshire (vc35)

Stephanie J Tyler and Elsa Wood

We entered far fewer records onto Mapmate in 2020 because of limited fieldwork and the end of the incentive given by Atlas 2020. Nonetheless, we entered almost 2,500 records and many other records were generated by other botanists, notably by Sam Bosanquet, and by Barry Stewart and Matt Picken who carried out a detailed survey along the seawall and visited Llanwern Steelworks. Individuals and groups of up to four botanists continued doing survey work through the year and there were many exciting new hectad records which will be described in the Welsh Bulletin and in BSBI News and so only two are included here. The Rare Plant Register published online in early 2020 is being revised again because of recent finds. Monmouthshire Botany Group held no meetings in 2021 because of Covid but members were able to take part in the New Year Plant Hunt, held in January in Caerleon.

Interesting finds:

- *Trichomanes speciosum* (Killarney Fern) - gametophytes found by Sam Bosanquet among and in crevices in wet rocks on several tiny streams near Penallt and in the Whitebrook valley in SO50
- *Epipactis palustris* (Marsh Helleborine) - new colony of about 200 Marsh Helleborines found by Lee Gregory at Garn Lakes in the extreme north-west of the vice-county (SO21)

Breconshire (vc42)

John Crellin

There were just three botany group outings before the lockdown including a successful New Year Plant Hunt at Hirwaun. Lockdown led to members of the group recording regularly in their local patch, assisted by an active online discussion to help with ID problems. Lists were submitted later in the year. Tentative outings of a few people started at the end of June and brought in some good lists. Eventually the group had 14 recording days later in the year including one jointly with the local record centre.



The most exciting find was *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen) – which might possibly have been recorded our side of the border in 1911 but just as likely not. The group member who found it was completely unfamiliar with the species when first seen and again considerable online exchange was required to confirm the ID.

Tim Rich has updated records of our endemic and rare Hieraciums with some in decline and others doing well. While doing this he refound *Rosa spinosissima* (Burnet Rose) at Tarren yr Esgob - a first record for several decades. Again, working online, the local botany group drafted the first Axiophyte list for the county. I have worked during the year on a major update to the country Rare Plant Register, which is now complete and covers the years 2000 to 2020. In all 8639 records were made in the year.

Interesting finds:

- *Allium trifoliatum* (Hirsute Garlic) - Found by a botany group member in a churchyard near Brecon and determined online, including referee input from Paul Green.
- *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Wood Club-rush) – Found by the Wye at Hay and not seen in the area since 1979 and a relative rarity for the county (right).



Carmarthenshire (vc44)

Richard & Kath Pryce

Recording was much reduced in 2020 due to the Covid situation. The VCRs only collected 7 *Taraxacum* specimens compared with around 170 in the previous few years as lockdown prevented getting out into the field for most of the dandelion season. The Glynhir recording week scheduled in July was cancelled. The VCR took the opportunity to progress the revision of the RPR and production of the county flora. The exception was Ian Morgan's 'daily exercise' walks during which he recorded weeds and aliens in the streets and back-lanes of Llanelli and other urban areas in the SE of the VC. He made several first VC records (see below). He also found many self-sown plants of *Cordyline australis* at numerous new sites in pavements and on old walls, a species for which Llanelli seems to have become notable. Regarding native species, he discovered a small but robust colony of *Orobanche minor* growing close to the level-crossing at the east end of Llanelli railway station SS5099, a species has declined as the brownfield sites on which it had found a stronghold in the town, have been redeveloped. Theresa Greenaway also did some valuable recording in her home district near Felingwm SN52, an area visited by few other botanists. Included among her numerous records was *Hypericum x desetangii*, the first record for the hectad since 1993, and a species list from a hitherto unrecorded species-rich rhôs-pasture which included the first recent localized tetrad records of *Trocdaris (Carum) verticillata*, *Lythrum tenella* and *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*.

Interesting finds:

- *Jasminum beesianum* (Red Jasmine) - Escaped into a back-lane in Llanelli SS5199 First VC Record of a self-established plant. Recorded by Ian Morgan.
- *Passiflora caerulea* (Passionflower) - At two sites in Llanelli SN4900 and SN5100 and one in Burry Port SN4400, some of which were mature enough to be in flower. First VC Records of self-established plants. Recorded by Ian Morgan.
- *Carex comans* (New Zealand Hair Sedge) - Two plants growing from cracks in the surface of a car-parking area in Llangennech SN5601. Recorded by Ian Morgan.
- *Siegsbeckia serrata* (Western St. Paul's Wort) - Several plants (up to 1m tall) in garden in Llanelli SN4901, growing amongst runner beans, the bristly seeds presumably having 'hitch-hiked' from plants grown in the garden of his former house. Recorded by Ian Morgan.

Montgomeryshire (vc47)

Kate Thorne and Gill Foulkes

Almost 10,000 records have been submitted to the national database from 2020. Our main focus this year has been to encourage members of the Flora Group to continue recording (as it is a new recording period) but close to home. Several new (post 2000) hectad and monad species have been recorded in this way, as well as recorders getting to grips with less familiar species – we have been sending out identification cribs and tips. As well as recording, we continued to ‘clean up’ and verify species (for the Atlas) in the BSBI database including the set of iRecords. Later in the year (and spilling over into 2021) we have been verifying the 2019 and 2020 records held by our local Record Centre (BIS in Breconshire). This, in itself, has raised quite a few issues regarding ‘making good records’ – this, largely, does not refer to better identification skills but to better presentation and/or input of records, with more habitat detail often required and much less GR detail for common species.

Going back to the year’s recording, the Flora group had three informal outings in early September (max. of 6 people on each) recording on the floodplain around Melverley, Arddleen, and Meifod flanking SJ21 and SJ31. On one of these outings *Hordeum secalinum* (Meadow Barley), a rare species in the county, was found along with several Chenopodiaceae. We had intended going to check up on the two rarities in the nearby Wern Fields - *Stellaria palustris* (Marsh Stitchwort) and *Oenanthe fistulosa* (Tubular Water-dropwort) - but this had to be done later by a member of the group. Both species were re-found in several locations at this site – in boggy ground near the canal. This is the only site for Marsh Stitchwort in the county. Work is now in hand to try and make this site at least a Local Wildlife Site.

Individual recording provided first confirmed records for, rarely, some native species - *Gentianella amarella* subsp. *amarella* (Autumn Gentian) in SJ22, confirmed by Tim Rich, and *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine) without chlorophyll in SJ1818, confirmed by I. Denholm - and a number of non-native species including *Anisantha diandra* (Great Brome) and *Polypogon viridis* (Water bent) both in the west (SH8001 and SH70K respectively) and confirmed by Arthur Chater. Tim Rich also determined some Hieracia including *H. diadalolepioides* (scarce in the county) and *H. carneddorum* (the latter in a new monad, and rare in the county). Ian Denholm also confirmed *Dactylorhiza x formosa* (*D. maculata x purpurella*) after receiving more photos of the colony in SJ 0008 in 2020. Lastly: the RPR, which was updated this year, was compiled by Kate Thorne, Gill Foulkes and Barbara Brown. This was one of Barbara’s last and very important tasks as the BSBI Welsh Officer and helps to demonstrate how essential this kind of support is for the Welsh county recorders.

Merionethshire (vc48)

Jo Clark

Most of the regular monthly meetings were cancelled except for one or two of us meeting up when restrictions allowed, but eventually at the end of August we met as a group of six at Morta Dyffryn. We came upon 50 or so field gentians *Gentianella campestris*, one plant of Portland spurge, heath pearlwort *Sagina nodosa*, yellow bartsia *Parentucellia viscosa* and Field woundwort *Stachys arvensis*. Andrew and Janet Graham visited Morfa Dyffryn later in September and re-found the gentians and a decent sized patch of Adder’s tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* of over 100 plants. The two mystery Alliums were found to be Wild Onion *Allium vineale* var. *compactum* which Heather Garrett found in June at Tywyn and Roger Cope’s from Fairbourne was confirmed as Babington’s leek *Allium ampeloprasum* var. *babingtonii*. The September meeting was held at Rhobell Fawr, where we hoped to re-find the mountain everlasting from 2018, but despite much searching, we concluded that a visit in June or July would be preferable. Rhys Gwynne helpfully pointed us towards the juniper (which is all female so cannot reproduce), At the peak of Rhobell Fawr we found abundant alpine

clubmoss *Diphasiastrum alpinum*, fir clubmoss *Huperzia selago* and Stag's horn clubmoss *Lycopodium clavatum* and despite having fingers too cold to stand still, Heather Lewis produced a single plant of Lesser clubmoss *Selaginella selaginoides*, located at the base of a rock in a base rich flush! We look forward to some new adventures in 2021.

Caernarvonshire (vc49)

Wendy McCarthy

A programme of recording meetings had been prepared for 2020 but, in common with meetings everywhere, had to be abandoned. We were, however, just able to fit in the first one in early March and three of us met at Abersoch in order to survey Hutchinsea (*Hornungia petraea*) at its known site on the sand dunes. It was found in good quantity and was a useful update for this RPR species. Several members of the recording group spent time around their home areas during the lockdown. Ian & Linda Fraser made excellent updates for some RPR species including Hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), Ivy broomrape (*Orobanche hederarum*) and Alpine Pennycress (*Nocca caerulea*). Near Pwllheli, Iwan Edgar checked two known sites for Flax-leaved St. John's-wort (*Hypericum linariifolium*) and reported success, finding 600+ plants over both sites. Julian Driver found Alpine Mouse-ear (*Cerastium alpinum*) on cliffs on Carnedd Llewelyn, last recorded there in 1996, and discovered Northern Bedstraw (*Galium boreale*) new to SH76. Mari Roberts sent in some useful records from near her home in Nantlle, including a good update for Six-stamened Waterwort (*Elatine hexandra*) at Llyn Nantlle, which is almost at the bottom of her garden. Chris Dixon sent a list from his survey at Dulyn cliffs, the best of these being a record of Awlwort (*Subularia aquatica*) new to the site.

New county records were all non-natives and included Niger (*Guizotia abyssinica*) at Llangwnadl, where several plants appeared spontaneously on waste ground apparently far from birdseed feeders. An attractive blue-flowered plant in a Llandudno gutter turned out to be China Aster (*Callistephus chinensis*), identified from photos by Mike Crewe. A puzzling shrub with yellow pea-type flowers, found by Suzanne Coleman in Pydew, was eventually named as Montpellier Broom (*Genista monspessulana*). Emily Meilleur spotted White Wood-rush (*Luzula luzuloides*) on a woodland road verge near Caernarvon, suspecting it had escaped from a nearby caravan site. All records for the year have been entered into MapMate and will be submitted to the Ddb.

Denbighshire (vc50)

Delyth Williams

There was no meetings programme and no group meetings, although regular email communication. Recording was limited, mostly solo or with up to 4 well-spaced companions. 4,700 records were taken, including new records for about 40 of the VC's scarce taxa, new or confirmed records for VC rarities *Andromeda polifolia* (Bog-rosemary), *Berberis vulgaris* (Barberry), *Lactuca virosa* (Great Lettuce), *Lepidium rudemale* (Narrow-leaved Pepperwort) and *Potamogeton trichoides* (Hairlike Pondweed). New to the VC are *Amsinckia micrantha* (Common Fiddleneck), *Angelica archangelica* (Garden Angelica) and *Elatine hydropiper* (Eight-stamened Waterwort). The Rare Plant Register has been updated and is ready for putting on the website. The modest herbarium has at last been labelled properly.

From March onwards there have been no Flora Group meetings, but over 20 newsletters have been emailed to keep Members in touch. Virtually all of the 2020 plant records have come from Anglesey residents usually botanising close to their homes. This has still resulted in nine 1st County Records and 59 new hectad records.

A full Report on 2020 has been prepared for the Welsh Bulletin and Anglesey web page.

We have worked with NRW in their review of SSSI's notified for their botanical interest.

We have also been involved in conservation work over *Allium ampeloprasum* (Wild Leek) threatened by development and *Juncus capitatus* (Dwarf Rush) threatened by succession and lack of disturbance.

An interesting feature of this year has been the number of plants still in flower late in the season – 125 species were recorded in flower during November and December.

Interesting finds:

- *Blackstonia perfoliata* (Yellow-wort) - locally plentiful on a former industrial site near Amlwch, the first sighting from the N of Anglesey.
- *Bupleurum rotundifolium* (Thorow-wax) - a first county record, in three areas of grassland near Llyn Dinam – will it reappear in 2021?
- *Filago germanica* (Common Cudweed)- a distinctly uncommon plant with only five post 2000 sightings.
- *Anthriscus caucalis* (Bur Chervil) - with only six recent monad records, all from sandy sites on the west coast.
- *Viscum album* (Mistletoe) - in Beaumaris, spotted independently by two recorders. the first sighting since 1982.
- *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh-orchid) - 7 flower spikes in grassland near Brynsiencyn, the third record for the county.