



2020 Annual Reports from Irish Vice-Counties

This is a collation of the Annual Reports submitted by Irish Vice-counties for 2020 by April 2021. It is fascinating to read how different VCs tackled the Covid-19 restrictions and about the highlights of their year. However, it is the great variety of other botanical activities carried out by Recorders and members that is most impressive. A huge thanks to all involved!

South Kerry (H1)

Rory Hodd

There were not many opportunities to carry out recording in **H1** in 2020, with the few records I collected being noted incidentally while working. It was pleasing to find *Salix herbacea* (Dwarf Willow) on steep ground just below the summit of Ireland's highest peak, Carrauntuohil, having not been seen there since 1964 (although seen more recently elsewhere in the hectad). Other montane plants encountered in the Macgillycuddy's Reeks included *Carex bigelowii* (Stiff Sedge), *Polystichum lonchitis* (Holly-fern) and *Saxifraga rosacea* (Irish Saxifrage), as well as a new hectad record for *Polystichum aculeatum* (Hard Shield-fern) in a montane crevice. Fieldwork on the Dingle Peninsula turned up a new location for *Pinguicula x scullyi* on the Slieve Mish and updated records of a number of coastal species which are uncommon in Kerry, including *Phleum arenarium* (Sand Cat's-tail), *Cuscuta epithymum* (Dodder) and *Asperula cynanchica* (Squinancywort) on the Maharees. John Diggin found a further population of *Hammarbya paludosa* (Bog Orchid) close to where he first found it last year near Glenbeigh, doubling its number of known extant populations in Kerry. Edwina Cole and Simon Elliott recorded *Humulus lupulus* (Hop) at Derrynane, the first record from **H1** since before 1969, Marc Cruise provided a new hectad record of *Erophila verna* (Common Whitlowgrass) from Kenmare and Jessica Hamilton unearthed a new site for the overlooked gametophyte of *Trichomanes speciosum* (Killarney Fern) from Lough Adoon on the Dingle Peninsula.

North Kerry (H2)

Rory Hodd

No targeted recording was undertaken in **H2** over the course of 2020, with a small number of records coming in from various people. Despite the lack of records, two new non-native species were recorded for the vice-county. A resident of Tralee got in touch to report that a large pond on their land was choked with the invasive fern *Azolla filiculoides* (Water Fern), which will hopefully remain the only locality for this problematic species in Kerry. Darren Reidy sent a photo of what could only be *Trachystemon orientalis* (Abraham-Isaac-Jacob), well established alongside the River Feale near Listowel, and a first record for Kerry. Darren also sent a record for long naturalised *Hylotelephium telephium* (Orpine), not recorded in **H2** since prior to 1969. Daniel Buckley's record of *Phegopteris connectilis* (Beech Fern) above Shrone Loughs on the Paps in East Kerry was the first record for that species there since 1998. A find of a new location for *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid), by Gosia Horajska, along the verge of the recently constructed Tralee Bypass was picked up by the local media and raised awareness of the flora of Kerry amongst the general public. The only outings of the Kerry Local Group, organised by Jessica Hamilton, were for the New Year Plant Hunt, along the usual routes around Muckross in the Killarney National Park and at Ballyseedy Woods near Tralee, the latter of which was well attended.

West Cork (H3)

Clare Heardman

2020 got off to a good start with our annual Co. Cork local group New Year Plant Hunt in Glengarriff Nature Reserve on New Year's Day. It was our 5th year doing it and, between us, our group of nineteen found 50 species in flower.

Unfortunately, no other group fieldtrips could take place in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions, but many of those who would have attended were enthusiastic participants in the online courses offered by BSBI Ireland: the workshops included grasses, sedges and aquatic plants.

I was also involved in co-presenting an Introduction to Botanical Recording webinar with Sarah Pierce (BSBI Ireland Officer), and with support from Jim McIntosh (BSBI Senior Country Officer). The webinar was part of the [Ellen Hutchins](#) Festival, which celebrates the life and work of Ireland's first female botanist who lived and recorded in West Cork (H3) in the early 1800s.

My field botany highlight was tracking down some old records of one of southwest Ireland's specialities, *Arbutus unedo* (Strawberry-tree), and finding some new sites in the process. Due to the difficult, cliffy nature of some of the terrain, this partly involved 'telescope botany' i.e. scanning the cliff faces from below and spotting the distinctive evergreen leaves and white, drooping panicles of flowers. Another tree, rare in West Cork outside of Glengarriff Nature Reserve, that I found surviving in similar crevices on the cliffs was *Taxus baccata* (Yew).



Co. Cork local group New Year Plant Hunt in Glengarriff Nature Reserve on New Year's Day

Mid Cork (H4)

John Wallace

I was unable to do much due to Covid-19 restrictions and work commitments.

East Cork (H5)

Finbarr Wallace & Edwina Cole

In 2020 over 14,900 records, excluding duplicates, in over 180 monads in 22 hectads were entered into the database for **H5**. All records validated. No organised field outings or other group outings this year.

- *Empetrum nigrum* (Crowberry) was added to the **H5** flora in 2020.
- *Chara virgata* (Delicate Stonewort) in only its second **H5** hectad -in a puddle at the edge of a track in a conifer plantation.



- A new hectad for *Sagina nodosa* (Knotted Pearlwort)- including in the same overall site as *C. virgata*. It is possible (probable?) both were introduced with limestone chippings used on forestry tracks; the plantation is on Old Red Sandstone.
- 3 hectad firsts for *Pinguicula lusitanica* (Pale Butterwort), only recorded in 5 hectads previously.
- Annoyingly satisfying, *Galeopsis bifida* (Bifid Hemp-nettle), not re-found in our four seasons recording for Atlas 2020, showed up in 4 hectads not previously recorded in. Only recorded in 4 other hectads before 2000.
- *Hordeum murinum* (Wall Barley) recorded along the dual carriageway east out of Cork city in its second ever **H5** hectad.
- *Polypogon viridis* (Water Bent) in a second **H5** hectad - admittedly in a monad adjacent to its 2019 VC first record.
- *Helleborus argutifolius* (Corsican Hellebore) on a footpath at the base of a city wall – a non-native VC first record.



Limerick (H8)

Sylvia Reynolds

Taking advantage of the first lockdown in the spring at home in Dublin, I compiled and submitted over 2500 historical Limerick records for the DDb, and validated them in July. When travel restrictions were lifted in the summer, my husband Julian and I met up with Limerick colleagues to check four raised bogs, and they independently did more botanising and recording than we were able to do. During the second lockdown, another outstanding project, 'pro bono publico', was to prepare an annotated 'Inventory of Limerick sites of botanical and habitat interest', with background and explanatory notes, and including over 160 sites. This document is intended for use by Limerick County Council, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and other interested parties.

Details of Limerick botanical work in 2020 will be published in *Irish Botanical News* (2021).

Alisma lanceolatum (Narrow-leaved Water-plantain) - Several new sites for *Alisma lanceolatum* were found by Mike Quirke, Paul Murphy and Tom Harrington along the River Shannon, first noted by Sylvia Reynolds in the county in 2019.

Lithospermum officinale (Common Gromwell) - *Lithospermum officinale* with flowers and characteristic fruits was growing sparingly near the limestone lakes, Kilbreedy Loughs, found by Mike Quirke, Paul Murphy and Tom Harrington. This uncommon species was last reported in Limerick in 1902.

Logfia minima (Small Cudweed) - Many tiny plants of the protected species *Logfia minima*, new to Limerick, were found in one place in a gravel/sand pit in east Limerick by Sylvia Reynolds and Julian Reynolds.

Clare (H9)

Hannah Mulcahy, Phoebe O'Brien & Donncha O'Cathain

County Clare VC changed hands this year to Phoebe O'Brien and Donncha O'Cathain appointed in May and later joined by Hannah Mulcahy, appointed in October. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Stephen Ward, who encouraged all three of us over the years, and continues to be generous with his time and knowledge.

Due to the pandemic and being new to this role, we have spent much of our first few months as VCRs coordinating ourselves, figuring out responsibilities and getting access to the DDb and Mapmate.

We held our inaugural field meeting in July; this was a small, informal, socially-distanced field day with a few other BSBI members including recorders John Conaghan and Ciaran Bruton. At our meeting point we stumbled across *Chaenorhinum minus* (Small Toadflax) which is very uncommon in county Clare. We drove to an area of limestone pavement/scrub/grassland next to a fen NW of Crusheen, where we found *Arabis hirsuta* (Hairy Rock-cress). Later in the day we went to the disused Garrus Quarry just east of Ennis with limestone spoil heaps, fen and scrub where we found a large population of *Epipactis palustris* (Marsh Helleborine).

The most exciting finds came via Tweets and emails, including the mostly westerly site for *Trifolium occidentale* (Western Clover) found on Inismore by Phil Grant, and a new county record for *Eriophorum gracile* (Slender Cottongrass) by Micheline Sheehy Skeffington.

As we were busy botanising and social-distancing at the field meeting, later in the summer we managed to meet up in East Clare to have a cup of tea, and a walk where we found a new site for *Sambucus ebulus* (Dwarf Elder). If the lockdown has shown us anything, it's that there's still plenty to

find in our own tetrads. Please bear with us as we find our feet, and hopefully we will have a lot more to talk about in 2021!

Kilkenny (H11)

Roger Goodwillie

The few crumbs of fieldwork that we could do this year included a visit to Crowhill Wood in the summer. This is a partly wooded fen in which *Carex appropinquata* (Fibrous Tussock-sedge) grows abundantly. I was hoping for *Ophrys insectifera* (Fly Orchid) as there is no extant record of it in the county but instead, amidst a riot of *Trifolium medium* (Zigzag Clover), added both *Rhamnus cathartica* (Buckthorn) and *Carex lasiocarpa* (Slender Sedge) to the flora, making it a rather special site for Kilkenny. The county is on the fringes of the limestone Central Plain and the site very much on the edge of both distributions.

My plant of the year was *Fumaria densiflora* (Dense-flowered Fumitory) growing in an onion field (and perhaps introduced with the seed). It is seldom recorded in Ireland, recently only in Down and Dublin. Many fumitories are much the same but this one with tiny peduncles and huge sepals, had an immediately mysterious look about it. It emphasised the sense of relief that new species do indeed look different from old ones and one has not been passing over them for years.

We persisted on the Atlas front in winter by visiting blank tetrads and trying to reach 150 species, usually in agricultural surroundings. This was occasionally achieved and a find of *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's wort) happily growing in stubbles like *Veronica persica* (Common Field-speedwell), made that day a success.

Wexford (H12)

Paul Green & Paula O'Meara

Despite the lockdowns and travel restrictions there was a good amount of recording done in Wexford, with 20,325 records collected. Several new recorders contributed records. The two joint VCRs Paul & Paula checked on a few doubtful records, and because of travel restrictions helped out much more than usual with ID. One project was to try and visit monads where less than 20 species had to be added to take the monad over the 200 mark, all that were visited achieved this. Writing of the Flora of Wexford is well underway. Three plants that were thought to possibly be extinct in the county were refound, date given is when last seen: *Eleocharis acicularis* (Needle Spike-rush) 1987, *Groenlandia densa* (Opposite-leaved Pondweed) 1987; *Micranthes stellaris* (Starry Saxifrage) 1990. All sites for *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort) were rechecked and all found to be *C. submersum* (Soft Hornwort), and it is now thought that all records for Rigid Hornwort may have been errors. Validation continued on the DDb, and is still ongoing. The number of corrections has been rather alarming, and it is calculated that some 300 hectad dots have been removed that would have otherwise appeared on the distribution maps in the forthcoming Atlas 2020.

Laois (H14)

Fiona MacGowan & Mark McCorry

- Fiona gave a zoom lecture to representatives of all the TidyTown groups in Co. Laois organised by Suzanne Dempsey, Environmental Awareness Officer of Laois Co. Council.

During the Pandemic year of 2020 with normal recording travels impeded here's a list of sites we did manage to visit:

- Killermogh Church of Ireland graveyard, Ballacolla, Co. Laois – lots of *Primula veris* (Cowslip)
- Timahoe Esker woodlands – profuse *Hyacinthoides* sp. (Bluebell) & *Orchis mascula* (Early-purple Orchid)

- Boston Bridge fen – *Ophrys insectifera* (Fly Orchid) & Marsh fritillary butterflies
- Lisbigney fen – Mark's first sighting of *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (Adder's-tongue) in Co. Laois
- The Mash, Shanahoe Marsh, a large area of flood meadows along the river Nore which is significant for its extensive semi-natural grassland communities, still managed as traditional hay meadows. Profuse *Anacamptis morio* (Green-winged Orchid) & *Primula veris* (Cowslip) noted here growing on a dry ridge above the wet grasslands
- The Ridge of Maryborough esker – area featuring hundreds of *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) and *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid) on the rough edges of an industrial estate in Portlaoise town
- Fen near Ballybrittas featuring three different varieties of *Dactylorhiza incarnata* (Marsh Orchid): the purple form; the fleshy-light pink form and a completely white form

Brian Gaynor of Laois-Offaly Irish Wildlife Trust called on the Laois BSBI VCRs to verify the identity of what turned out to be the light pink variant of *Anacamptis morio* (Green-winged Orchid). It occurred on the grass verge of a housing estate in Portlaoise town in late April. Never seen there before in the estate's 15-year history but the pandemic had resulted in a delayed mowing regime! This beautiful find became a 'poster flower' for 'don't mow, let it grow' and resulted in three published accounts, one with the NBDC (<https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/does-the-lockdown-bring-any-silver-linings/>), a local newspaper (<https://laois-nationalist.ie/2020/05/18/rare-find-in-portlaoise-described-as-miraculous/>) and also an article in the IWT members magazine: Irish Wildlife, Summer 2020 edition. Mark and Fiona believe that the occurrences of this species in urban Portlaoise is as a result of recycled esker soils and subsoils from the former esker systems which encircled much of Portlaoise being reused in the housing estate. R.L. Praeger was the last to record this species in Portlaoise in 1896.



Light pink variant of *Anacamptis morio* (Green-winged Orchid) found in Portlaoise.

Offaly (H18)

Fiona Devery

One benefit of living in your VC is to still be able to record even during a lockdown. While 2020 produced only one tenth of the records made in 2019, some nice records emerged.

Following Nick Stewart's Chara course, I collected some specimens from sand quarries to send to Nick for determination. These produced the following records with several new hectad records: *Chara*

hispida (Bristly Stonewort), *C. aculeolata* (Hedgehog Stonewort), *C. virgata* (Delicate Stonewort), *C. vulgaris* (Common Stonewort) and *C. vulgaris* var. *papillata*.

Interesting finds in 2020

- *Koeleria macrantha* (Crested- Hair-grass)
- *Arabis hirsuta* (Hairy Rock-cress) - Re-found at its second site in Offaly
- *Azolla filiculoides* (Water Fern)
- *Plantago coronopus* (Buck's-horn Plantain) - Found in a disused quarry. A new County record for Offaly
- *Zannichellia palustris* (Horned-pondweed) - Not recorded in Offaly for Atlas 2020
- *Eleocharis quinqueflora* (Few-flowered Spike-rush)
- *Eriophorum latifolium* (Broad-leaved Cottongrass)

Meath (H22)

Margaret Norton

Validation of **H22** records in BSBI DDb was undertaken during January 2020. Assessing records from external data sets and 'citizen science' records entered from National Biodiversity Data Centre presented genuine problems. July, August and September saw a welcome return to fieldwork following the easing of Covid-19 travel restrictions. Other months of the year were occupied with alternative botanical activities.

Longford (H24)

Ciaran Bruton

Although minor in the grand scheme of things, 2020 was a very frustrating year botanically. Restrictions unfortunately precluded any recording in **H24**. On the positive side, records, particularly from critical taxa were added to the DDb, following a trawl of various journal back issues, The Irish Naturalists Journal in particular. A list of previously recorded, but not-recently-found taxa, as well as "desiderata" - taxa likely to be found if targeted was compiled. These will form the basis of recording when season 2021 kicks off.

Leitrim (H29)

Eamon Gaughan

Despite the Covid-19 travel restrictions, over 7000 records were gathered for Leitrim in 2020. Also, from July to September the "Leitrim Group" got to meet up on several occasions. We concentrated on the more interesting sites, some of which had many past records but yet found some new sites for rare or uncommon species. Uncommon grasses and sedges were well represented in the year's recordings. Also, four of us got to see what may be Leitrim's rarest species *Juncus filiformis* (Thread Rush) at its known site in August. The wet weather in late June and July hampered recording of wetland habitats to some extent but we did get some useful records and Paul Green added some later in the season when he visited South Leitrim. For those who travelled to the Vice County this year the emphasis was on introducing people to the many and varied habitats that the county has to offer. For three of us that included a strenuous day on Slieve Anieren to see interesting upland species including *Phegopteris connectilis* (Beech Fern) and *Rhodiola rosea* (Roseroot). Other habitats included woodland, lake shore and bog. Personally, my two most interesting finds of the year were not in Leitrim but in Sligo; *Neotinea maculata* (Dense-flowered Orchid) on Knocknarea. And *Polycarpon tetraphyllum* (Four-leaved Allseed) in my home place of Strandhill.

Hypopitys monotropa (Yellow Bird's-nest) - Sriff Bay Lough Gill Co Leitrim. August 2020



Juncus filiformis (Thread Rush) - Kilgarriff, Lough Allen, Co Leitrim, August 2020



Neotinea maculata (Dense-flowered Orchid) Knocknarea, Co Sligo, May 2020.



Polycarpon tetraphyllum (Four-leaved Allseed) - Caravan Park, Stradhill, Co Sligo. May 2020. First ever sighting for Co. Sligo.



Louth (H31)

Kate Harrington & Cliona Byrne

Recording activity was extremely limited in Louth this year due to Covid-19 as neither VCR lives in the county. We managed a trip in August to revisit a reservoir near Monasterboice where Nick Stewart had done some recording in 1993, and also to look at a small quarry in Almondstown that looked interesting from aerial photos. The reservoir site warrants a revisit earlier in the season this year if restrictions allow to look at the aquatics, and to confirm, as appeared to be the case examining specimens we took home, that we recorded both *Potamogeton berchtoldii* (Small Pondweed) and *P. pusillus* (Lesser Pondweed). Kate also had a chance to visit the Cooley Peninsula and went to some of the areas impacted by the fires in the summer to find abundant *Pteridium aquilinum* (Bracken) regrowing on the scorched ground (photo - Annaloughan). Sadly, our planned outing to Baltray dunes never happened, but it is rescheduled again for 2021.



Annaloughan, Cooley Peninsula - areas impacted by the fires in the summer with abundant *Pteridium aquilinum* (Bracken) regrowing on the scorched ground.

Fermanagh (H33)

Robert Northridge

Hannah and I spent quite a bit of time getting post-2020 records for the rarer Fermanagh plants such as *Polystichum lonchitis* (Holly-fern), *Orthilia secunda* (Serrated Wintergreen), *Asplenium viride* (Green Spleenwort), *Saxifraga aizoides* (Yellow Saxifrage), *Gentianella amarella* (Autumn Gentian) and

Equisetum pratense (Shady Horsetail). We also visited some sites for *Utricularia intermedia* agg. (Intermediate Bladderwort) and determined those that we found as *U. stygia* (Nordic Bladderwort). It was a good year for flowering *Utricularia* spp. (Bladderworts): very many *U. minor* (Lesser Bladderwort) were seen in flower and several *U. australis* (Bladderwort) were also seen in flower.

Some *Euphrasia* ssp. (Eyebrights) were sent to Chris Metherell and two were determined as *E. arctica* x *scottica* and *E. confusa* x *micrantha*, both new county records. David McCosh identified *Hieracium* (Hawkweeds) specimens from two sites as *H. cyclicum*, another new county record.

A new site for *Dryas octopetala* (Mountain Avens) was found at Monawilkin, one of the best surveyed sites in the county. Several aquatics and stoneworts await identification by an expert.

East Donegal (H34)

Oisín Duffy & Mairéad Duffy

Unfortunately very little recording occurred in East Donegal during 2020 due to the Covid-19 restrictions and also due to the fact that we are no longer located in the county.

We had one planned botanical field-outing for Murvagh in the South of the county, which was unfortunately not able to go ahead. However, a brief visit was paid to the site in early August in which *Hypopitys monotropa* (Yellow Bird's-nest) was recorded. This is the first time seeing this species in this area since our last Murvagh field-outing in 2017. A number of other nice finds were recorded during the brief visit, including *Pyrola rotundifolia* subsp. *maritima* (Round-leaved Wintergreen), *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (Adder's-tongue), a prostrate form of *Equisetum variegatum* (Variegated Horsetail) and my own personal favourite flower *Parnassia palustris* (Grass-of-Parnassus).

While we hope there will be some more recording in 2021 and potentially get to host a field-outing, it will very much depend on any restrictions to travel. The field-outing in 2021 will be at the same location planned for 2020, Murvagh. This site has a number of interesting and rare species (some listed above) and it is hoped that the field-outing will produce a full list for the site for post 2020 records.

Hypopitys monotropa (Yellow Bird's-nest) - Murvagh, Co. Donegal



West Donegal (H35)

Ralph Sheppard

Regrettably, 2020 has been something of a non-event in West Donegal. I've carried on with validation for the Atlas, and fielded queries. But the opportunities for field activities were so limited that I got diverted by other priorities. I did manage to monitor the rare species that I do each year, but that was about it. Like everyone else, I'm hoping that the summer of 2021 will be a return to some sort of normality.

Tyrone (H36)

Ian McNeill (retiring) & Sharon Spratt (incoming)

(Report contributed by Ian McNeill).

A year like no other! Yet I did manage some botanising, especially June to Sept, but stayed fairly local. Some good finds:

Camelina sativa s.l. (Gold-of-pleasures) in my own garden. If I couldn't get out and about, then the plants were keen to come to me! Determined by Tim Rich. He came down on the side of *C. sativa*, but with an element of doubt. First Co. record.

Lepidium didymium (Lesser Swine-cress). Again, in own garden. 1st record for hectad H87.

Claytonia perfoliata (Springbeauty). Strong colony at entrance to Tullylagan House, 6km S of Cookstown. Garden escape, well naturalised. 1st Co. record.

Spiranthes romanzoffiana (Irish Lady's-tresses). Reported by Claire Barnett from Killycorran Lough, 4km W of Clogher. 1st Tyrone record away from Lough Neagh.

Rubus chamaemorus (Cloudberry). Still at its historical site on Mullaghdoon, a summit in the Sperrin Mountains. Visited by myself, with Noeleen Smyth and Matthew Jebb from The Botanic Gardens in Dublin, in late July. We travelled in three separate cars!

Armagh (H37)

John Faulkner

2020 was the most productive recording year I have had in 30 years of being a VCR. Ironic, in view of the Covid restrictions? Let me explain. First, I am talking quantity, not quality. Secondly, in contrast to recent years, I have concentrated on my home county: previously, I had focussed on others that were in greater need of recording for Atlas 2020.

Early in the year, I realised that there were many, many tetrads in the vice-county that had few or no post-2000 records. A sample search on GoogleEarth showed that the great majority (as I thought) consisted almost entirely of agricultural land, and all were traversed by public roads. So, starting close to home, I proceeded to embark on botanical walks along the road - and where it exists the path-network as soon as this seemed permissible. The outcome is a much improved, less uneven coverage, but there remain many more under-recorded tetrads to go before I will be satisfied.

The year has gone by without my seeing many of the more interesting species and habitats at all. Others proved to be road verge denizens and have cropped up much more often than I expected. Thus, more than a third of all post-2000 records of *Galium verum* (Lady's Bedstraw), and almost half of all records of *Lolium multiflorum* (Italian Rye-grass), date from 2020. The DDb informs me that there were 27 taxa recorded for the first time in 2020. After dismissing the "technicalities", eg planted taxa and subdivisions previously disregarded, 8 "firsts" remain, of which three are listed below along with two other "specials".

Epipactis phyllanthes (Green-flowered Helleborine). Conf. A J Richards. In Loughgall Country Park where may have previously thought to be *E. helleborine*, but realised as "different" by Martin Smith. First record.

Polypogon viridis (Water Bent) - Single plant near White's Mills, Tandragee, seen by Nathan McIlwrath. First record.

Bromus racemosus (Smooth Brome) - In a small meadow on peaty soil near Birches. First record.

Viscum album (Mistletoe) - Two clusters high up on poplar at Clonmain, and many clusters on rowans at street level in Portadown. In the second case, it looks as though the mistletoe may have come with the trees from a nursery - where? Thanks to Martin Smith for drawing my attention to both of these rare occurrences in the county.

Hymenophyllum tunbrigense (Tunbridge Filmy-fern). One patch in a steep gully south of Newry. Only known site in the VC, and apparently not actually recorded there since 1892. Thanks to Robert & Hannah Northridge for accompanying me to this rather precipitous site.

Down (H38)

Graham Day

The year began normally, when 5 attended the New Year Plant Hunts in Ballywalter and Hillsborough.

In late January David McNeill made the third record of *Laphangium luteoalbum* (Jersey Cudweed) in **H38**.

In mid-March, Covid-19 was on the March. All recording for the remainder of the year was local to Portaferry and made either on my own, or with my wife, Julia Nunn.

In early June *Sisymbrium orientale* (Eastern Rocket) was found in Portaferry. In late-June, Ian Rippey sent a record of *Aethusa cynapium* (Fool's Parsley) from Kernan Lake, Gilford.

In early July, *Galium album* (Hedge Bedstraw) was noted persisting on a traffic island near Portaferry and in mid-July. *Dryopteris affinis* ssp. *cambrensis* (Golden-scaled Male-fern) was found nearby.

A first for **H38**, *Symphytum asperum* (Rough Comfrey) was recorded near Ballyhenry Island in late July.

In early August, *Poa nemoralis* (Wood Meadow-grass) was found in Portaferry park and Nugent's Wood. *Urtica urens* (Small Nettle), *Lamium hybridum* (Cut-leaved Dead-nettle) and *L. confertum* (Northern Dead-nettle) were found in a weedy crop near Tara.

David Miller sent photos of plants from Greyabbey and Montalto estate, Ballynahinch in July and August, from which comprehensive plant lists were compiled.

From September to mid-October, *Zostera* spp. (Eelgrasses), *Atriplex* spp. (Oraches) and *Salicornia* spp. (Glassworts) were recorded along the shores near Portaferry and Portavogie.

At intervals throughout the season, *Rubus* spp. (Brambles) plants were examined and *R. ulmifolius* and *R. latifolius* were recorded in several monads.

Symphytum asperum (Rough Comfrey) - First record for **H38**, found near Ballyhenry Island.



Sisymbrium orientale (Eastern Rocket) - First record in Portaferry.



Antrim (H39)

David McNeill

In early summer, I was finally allowed to leave home and wandered alone in the Belfast Hills. It seemed as if the botanists of old were summoned to keep me company. On Black Mountain, *Rubus saxatilis* (Stone Bramble) was seen where it had been recorded by Jack Moon in 1943. Nearby, a few plants of *Trisetum flavescens* (Yellow Oat-grass) updated a sighting by Richard Hanna prior to 1888. A few days later, the same grass turned up beside the Cavehill quarry, as last recorded on an outing of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club in 1871. Two patches of *Trifolium medium* (Zigzag Clover) were possibly the first seen on Cavehill since before 1864.

Further from home, but still alone, I made pilgrimage to Fair Head. A single plant of *Orobanche alba* (Thyme Broomrape) was growing at the foot of the cliffs, last seen hereabouts by Sylvanus Wear before 1923. More amazingly, two mats of *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* (Bearberry) were the first seen on Fair Head since 1837. Later that day, following in the footsteps of Charles Nodder, 4 non-flowering

rosettes of *Pyrola media* (Intermediate Wintergreen) were spotted east of Ballintoy, the first north coast record since 1972.

As the summer wore on, I saw my first *Carex pseudocyperus* (Cyperus Sedge) at Montiags Moss, the best county site for *Juniperus communis* (Common Juniper) in the Antrim Glens and my first *Milium effusum* (Wood Millet) in Woodburn Glen. Winter saw me retreat to the Belfast Hills once more, and here I stumbled on *Pyrola minor* (Common Wintergreen). Years of fruitless searching on Cavehill were forgotten as I skipped for joy amongst the hazels.