

Field Botany in Renfrewshire

Newsletter - Summer 2021

A Flying Start

Since our initial Spring Newsletter, a lot has been going on!

The Renfrewshire Botany network now has 31 people on the contacts list, many of whom have already been active in plant recording this year.

Our new 2021 outings programme started with the Launch Day in Pollok Park on 23rd May, and is now in full swing. Due to the restrictions then in force, the Launch could only be attended by Glasgow-based folk, but thankfully cross-boundary travel soon became possible once more.



Members of 'Team 76' (suitably socially-distanced) at the network Launch in Pollok Park

Whether through the programme of organised fieldwork or through informal or individual recording work, a steady inflow of data has been established. At the time of this Newsletter's publication, over 6,000 records have been received, from a total of 103 different map squares (monads).

Particular effort is being directed to monads which have never been recorded before, or whose records are several decades old.

And in addition to gathering data for Renfrewshire, we are participating in the Botanical Society of Scotland's 'Urban Flora Project', to whom we are submitting plant records for single-monad locations in some of our towns and cities.

You are very welcome to participate in any of our outings at any time: we get to many interesting places and find all sorts of different plant species, always learning and improving our skills as we go.

Photobombed by Adoxa!

Photobombed by Toon Hall Clock! Sounds daft, I know, but it happened to me last year at the start of the first lockdown. And in a round about way it led to my recording for the Renfrewshire Botany Network.

I had enjoyed an early April walk in some species rich fields (NS3559) by Lochwinnoch. Later in the season there would be swathes of Spignel, followed by Greater Butterfly Orchids and then Devil's Bit Scabious, each giving the site unique character in different seasons. Being spring that sward was not yet abloom, but beside the nearby burn there was plenty to see: Dog Violets, Wood Anemones, Primroses, Bluebells and Lesser Celandines. I snapped away with my phone, hoping to get some half decent flowery pics to post on the village Facebook group.

That evening I was flicking through the photos, and there it was, *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel) lurking demurely behind Lesser Celandine. I was thrilled. Only we botany folk understand just how thrilling it is to find an unexpected botanical gem. How could I not have spotted it in situ? I'd last seen Moschatel locally in the 1980s before moving south. It had been on my list of things to refind, but not here! I returned next day and was dumbfounded by how much Moschatel there was, yet even with my botany eye I hadn't seen it the day before. Admittedly it can be tricky to spot, true to its name *Adoxa*, from the Greek for "without glory". It must thus be an under-recorded species, but although not rare, nor is it common. It's always a treat to see. I reported my find to Keith Watson.

Adoxa moschatellina (Moschatel - also known as 'Town Hall Clock')



In 2021 I made a point of refinding the *Adoxa*. Enthused by the likelihood that it must also be elsewhere, Dave Mellor, Michael Jarvis and I traced it upstream and downstream, getting new records in other monads, and discovering other new sites around Lochwinnoch. It turns out that, contrary to our previous assumption, Moschatel isn't uncommon locally.



Trollius europaeus (Globeflower)

I had another bee in my bonnet, *Chrysoplegium alternifolium* (Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage). Like the *Adoxa*, I hadn't seen that since the 1980s. Bingo! Whilst tracking *Adoxa* upstream I unexpectedly came across a healthy population of Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage, and have found it at several other local sites this 2021 season too. It's another species that you need to get your eye in for. The books don't do justice to the difference between it and *C. oppositifolium*. They have quite a different jizz.

Of course, I reported the Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage finds too. But that's how my recording used to be. I used only to report what I deemed to be special finds. Since the launch of the Renfrewshire Botany Network, I've changed my recording habits. I've surprised myself at how satisfying it is to bash a monad! I confess to getting a geeky satisfaction when Peter Wiggins sends out his updated map and I see my recording cartographically depicted. Thanks, Peter! The Network is there to help you when you're flummoxed by a plant. Thanks, Keith, Michael et al. Angus Hannah has been magnanimous with his help and advice to me by email. Thanks, Angus! I'm learning lots. Monad recording really improves your field botany skills by encouraging you to record as much as you confidently can.



Sedum villosum (Hairy Stonecrop)



Saxifraga hypnoides (Mossy Saxifrage)

I've taken particular pleasure in recording in monads which have no (or few) previous records. They often yield lovely botanical surprises. In practice this has taken me to Renfrewshire neuks on the Ayrshire border not far from Lochwinnoch. Often these monads are shared by both historical vice-counties, with perhaps just an awkward patch of Renfrewshire defined by a burn. I've thus explored places I wouldn't previously have considered visiting. It has been richly rewarding both botanically and for other natural history. Grasshopper warblers, skylarks, ponds teeming with sticklebacks, regular encounters with hares and the odd stoat are just as thrilling as the plants. Botanical highlights include a wonderful big population of *Trollius europaeus* (Globeflower), *Saxifraga hypnoides* (Mossy Saxifrage), *Aphanes agg.* (Parsley-piert) *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird's-foot), *Carex paniculata* (Greater Tussock-sedge), *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St. John's-wort), *Geranium lucidum* (Shining Crane's-bill), *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks Buttercup), *Ranunculus lingua* (Greater Spearwort), *Lepidium draba* (Hoary Cress), *Rosa spinosissima* (Burnet Rose). New to me were *Carex distans* (Distant Sedge), *Carex extensa* (Long-bracted Sedge), *Sedum villosum* (Hairy Stonecrop) and *Neottia cordata* (Lesser Twayblade) found on Renfrewshire Botany Network outings. Every foray has a highlight. Go forth and record!

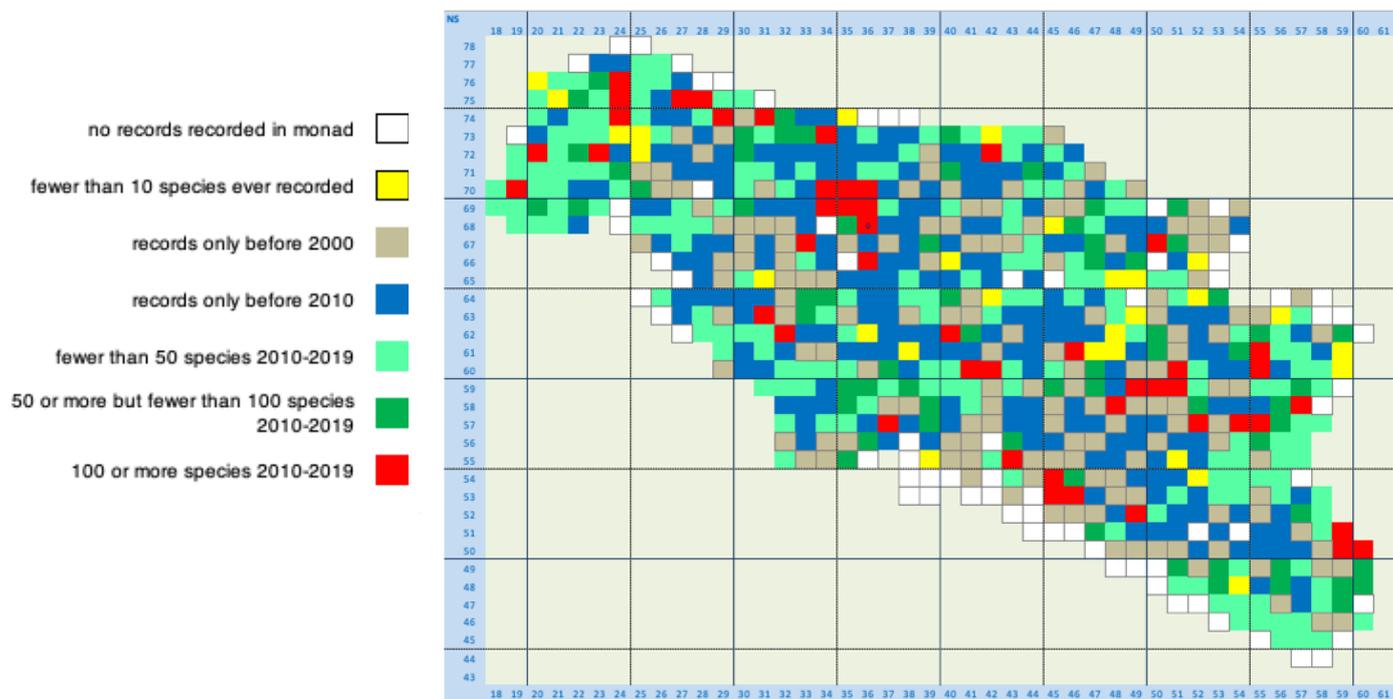
Jim Blackwood

Progress

For those who like to their information visually, here's the Renfrewshire 'dot-map' as at 1st January 2021.

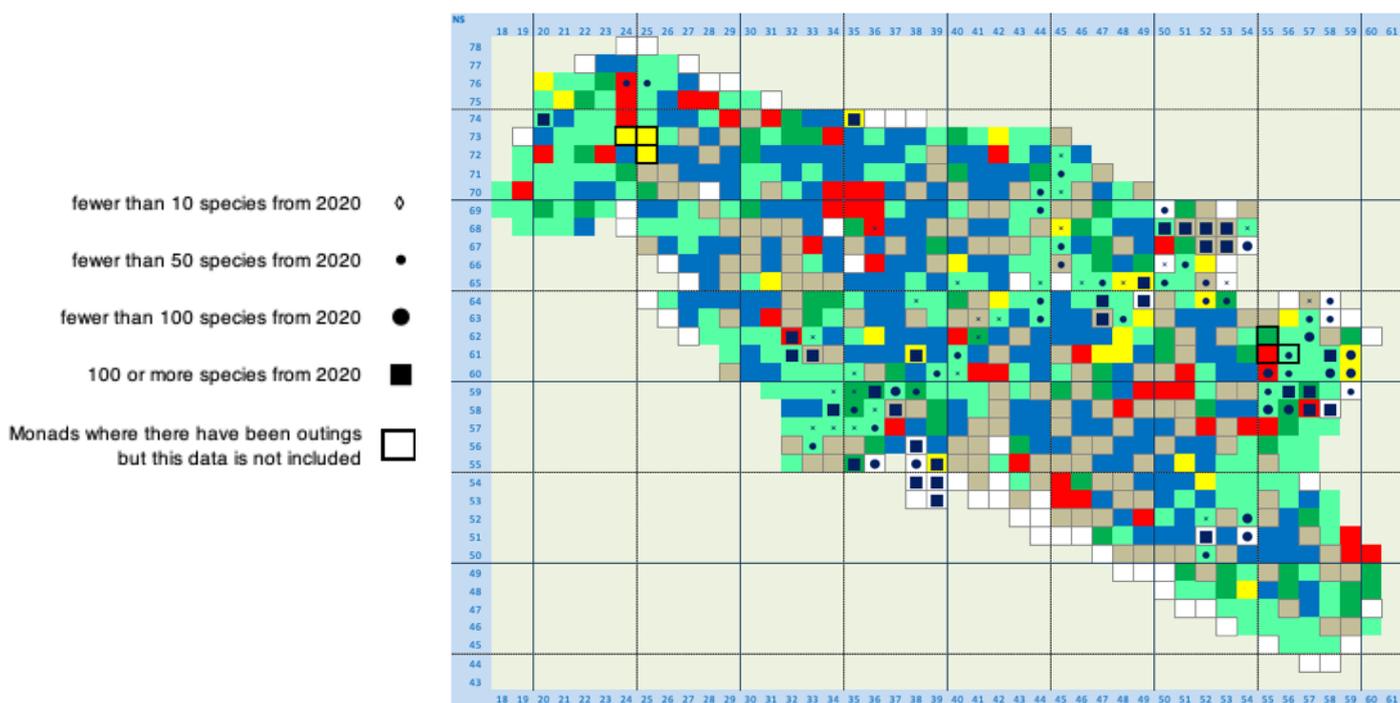
The white squares were monads with no botanical record at all.

Yellow were under-recorded; brown/blue not visited in more than 10 years; green/red with recent records.



And here is the situation as at 1st July 2021.

The overlay of black marks indicates recording activity, and the bold black squares show the 31 monads with over 100 species recorded this year.



[automated maps generated by Peter Wiggins, updating in real time as data is received]

Highlights

Here are some of the best botanical finds of the season so far:



Rosa spinosissima (Burnet Rose)



Ranunculus lingua (Greater Spearwort)



Ornithogalum umbellatum (Star-of-Bethlehem)



Neottia cordata (Lesser Twayblade)



Lepidium draba (Hoary Cress)

Information

The outings programme for the remainder of the season is now being sent out. Outings include visits to all kinds of terrain, near and far, from tramping urban streets to clambering up steep hillsides, and challenging moorland environments where specialist knowledge of sedges and grasses will be an advantage. And there is always a focus learning to identify plants - in other words, something for everyone!

Lists of plants are welcome from anyone, anytime. If you'd like some guidance on the best way to do recording, please get in touch. At present, all records are being received and collated by **Peter Wiggins**. You are welcome to send him scanned lists or Recording Cards, spreadsheets or Word documents - or even paper lists by post! Please email him if you're unsure what method to use.

Photographs, especially views of the Renfrewshire landscape or stunning pictures of plants, are always welcome. Any (but not all!) photos you submit may appear in Newsletters, the webpage or other literature.

Please request and complete our team Questionnaire if you have not already done so. And remember to spread the word that we also need people in various supporting roles, who can offer to help facilitate plant recording even if they do not feel able to take part personally in field activity.

You are welcome to email Keith, Peter or Michael at any time. They are also willing to have a go at identifying plants from photographs if you get stuck!

And please check out the Renfrewshire page on the BSBI website: <https://bsbi.org/renfrewshire>

Contact details

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Photo credits:

'Team 76' Launch Day	Liza Downie, 23rd May 2021, Pollok Park
<i>Adoxa moschatellina</i>	Jim Blackwood, April 2020, near Lochwinnoch
<i>Trollius europaeus</i>	Jim Blackwood, 3rd June 2021, by Shutterflat Moor
<i>Sedum villosum</i>	Jim Blackwood, 27th June 2021, near Loch Thom
<i>Saxifraga hypnoides</i>	Jim Blackwood, 5th June 2021, near Lochwinnoch
<i>Rosa spinosissima</i>	Jim Blackwood, 21st June 2021, by Clyde near Port Glasgow
<i>Ranunculus lingua</i>	Jim Blackwood, 2nd July 2021, Aird Meadow, Castle Semple Loch
<i>Ornithogalum umbellatum</i>	Alison Moss, 30th May 2021, near River Gryfe, Crosslee
<i>Neottia cordata</i>	Jim Blackwood, 27th June 2021, near Loch Thom
<i>Lepidium draba</i>	Jim Blackwood, 21st June 2021, by Clyde near Port Glasgow