

Lanarkshire Botany

Spring 2021



New Beginnings

As nature emerges from winter, and as we each emerge from the marathon challenge of the pandemic and its attack on our lives, it's an opportunity for a new beginning, a fresh start.

Let's allow the resilience of the natural world to restore our own, and find renewed wonder and delight in the beauty, exuberance and sheer diversity of plant life in particular.



Prunus spinosa (Blackthorn)



Primula vulgaris (Primrose)



Ficaria verna (Lesser Celandine)

As you read on, you'll note that there have been some changes of roles and responsibilities.

Indeed there are several things which have changed since the pre-pandemic era. There will be a change of approach to fieldwork: the driving imperative of gathering data for Atlas 2020*, for instance, with its need to find or re-find certain numbers of species in certain map squares - all that has gone. 'Square-bashing' is no longer the main priority, though it will still be important to record more of our 'unrecorded monads' (those map squares where no plant recording has ever been done).

So, what will be the alternative agenda? We are very open to ideas from all our readers, but two things are already on the table: (a) encouraging new people into field botany and offering Training Walks and personal mentorship to take people's plant identification skills to the next level, and (b) seeking out some of our rarest plants to check on their condition and to gather more detailed information on abundance and habitat. We are also keen to contribute to the Botanical Society of Scotland's 'Urban Flora Project' by making a particular effort to record plants in our towns and cities.

Owing to Lanarkshire's relative success in gathering data for Atlas 2020, we will now have new opportunities to lend some of our fieldwork time to neighbouring vice-counties. In recent years, members of 'Team 77' have taken part in fieldwork in Ayrshire (including a memorable visit to Ailsa Craig), Stirlingshire, Renfrewshire and Dunbartonshire. This element of our outings programme will expand this year, giving us the chance to experience some new landscapes and habitats and get to grips with plant species - particularly coastal species - which do not feature in the Lanarkshire record.

In the context of all these developments, and with several new people recently joining our network, there will be all sorts of opportunities for each of us to learn new skills and gain new experience. Full encouragement will be given to anyone who wants to take on a task; lead a field outing; learn to complete a Record Card; nurture a group of learners; assist with organisation and planning; or initiate something new.

Read on . . . !

* The BSBI will publish 'Atlas 2020' in the spring of 2022, both as an interactive online resource and as a two-volume hardback.

Breaking News!

Our very own Peter Wiggins has agreed to take on the formal role of Joint Vice-county Recorder for Lanarkshire. In practical terms, this is more a continuation of the invaluable support Peter has been giving Michael for a number of years than a brand new set of tasks.

It also gives Peter a bit of additional ‘muscle’ when it comes to communications, such as any correspondence with BSBI species referees, or research on behalf of other vice-counties.

Thank you, Peter, for stepping up to this role: the whole Team will do what we can to be more a help than a burden to you as plant recording activity continues to grow and develop.



Peter Wiggins

Outings Programme

We will soon be able to publish a programme of outings for the season ahead, starting in late May. This will be sent out by email as usual, as well as appearing on the Lanarkshire page of the BSBI website.

In the meantime please get out on your own, or with a socially-distanced friend, and see what you can find. If you would like to do some ‘proper’ recording, we can send you a PDF of the Lanarkshire Record Card. And if you find something you can’t identify you’re welcome to send in pictures to see if anyone can help.

If you find anything unusual, remember to take note of the date and the exact location (an 8-figure grid reference or an exact location description).

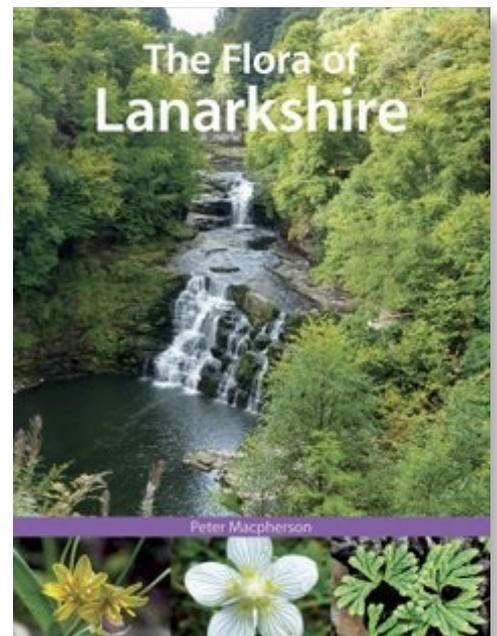
Data-mining

In the course of our activities over recent years, and frequent reference to ‘The Flora of Lanarkshire’ by Peter Macpherson, it became evident that a significant number of records quoted in the book had never made it into the BSBI database.

The recent “very last and final call” for any material to be submitted for inclusion in the new Atlas 2020 meant that there was a sudden incentive to trawl through the book and extract a big list of these missing records.

With time at a premium, Michael started from the front of the book and Peter from the back. The resulting spreadsheet of over 1,400 ‘new’ records has just been successfully received by BSBI, checked and uploaded to the database before the deadline, adding further depth to the Lanarkshire account for the new Atlas.

Phew . . . !



vc77 Website (Peter Wiggins)

We are launching the new **Flowers of Lanarkshire** website, which features plants found in Lanarkshire. All the photos were taken in the vice-county.

Here's the link: <https://www.vc77botany.org/>

It started from my own collection of photographs, originally taken to learn how to recognise plants better. It grew with the encouragement and involvement of Michael and of Janey Floyd who has been a skilful editor.

We now have over 3,500 photographs of 850 species and we are always looking for more photographs, species and photographers.



Malva moschata (Musk Mallow)

(The opening image of this new photographic website)

There are brief notes on the plants, aiming to explain how to recognise the plants in the field, and highlighting some distinctive features rather than just giving a description. And unlike many other websites out there, we welcome your contributions and comments: this is a work in progress. So if you think you could contribute something or improve what is there, please get in touch.

So far 17 photographers have contributed, and we are looking for any pictures of flowers and plants, especially those which show any distinctive features. The only requirement is that the photos are all taken in Lanarkshire (vc77). Please get in touch and I can let you know more.

My email is: pswiggins@gmail.com

New Workshop format

Due to uncertainty as to when lockdown restrictions will be lifted, BSBI Scotland has not organised any of the usual Plant Workshops for 2021. However, instead of the normal 'in person' workshop format, a new initiative is being piloted: an online Zoom workshop on Identifying Grasses will take place on Saturday, 12th June. Participants will each receive a package with specimens of 12-15 Grass species, and the programme will include small-group tutorials on identifying these.

Details are available on the Scotland page of the BSBI website. Spaces are limited!

If you can't get booked, don't worry - our own programme is going to include an outing specifically focussed on learning Grasses in the summer, at Chatelherault Country Park near Hamilton.

Stats update (final summary for 2020):

15,084	records made and uploaded
940	different species recorded
41	new vice-county records (i.e. species not recorded previously in Lanarkshire)
233	new hectad records
602	monads visited and at least one record made
15,507	total records added to database (including some from previous years and other sources)

Team 77 - and our neighbours (Michael Philip)

The growth and development of our Lanarkshire Botany network (now widely known by our nick-name, "Team 77") has drawn interest from the BSBI community at large. As a result, I was invited to contribute to the Scottish Recorders Conference on 20th March on the subject of 'Local Groups'.

Small groups

There is a fresh drive right across Scotland to encourage new small groups to form, whether introducing folk to botany for the first time or working with learners or improvers. Wherever two or three people want to get together to learn more about wild plants (perhaps a group of friends or members of an extended family), the BSBI is keen to provide people with field experience to offer encouragement by spending time in the field with them. This is the best and most enjoyable way to learn plants and, as we all know, progress can be rapid. Some of these new groups may go on to expand or, with suitable training and mentorship, produce people with the skills and leadership potential to make a wider impact in turn.

So if you have friends or contacts anywhere in Scotland who want to learn more about plants and how they are recorded, please invite them to make themselves known. And if you would like to make yourself available to meet very informally with such a group around three times in the year to share your expertise and help people get into botany, please offer your services. In time, there may be Wildflower Walks in local Country Parks or Nature Reserves at which many of our readers would be amply qualified to meet beginners and introduce them to a variety of wild plants.

Networks

There is also a move to establish some new 'loose networks' like our own to widen the scope of botanical recording in other places.

In particular, there are new networks currently developing in two of our neighbouring vice-counties:

Renfrewshire (vc76) under the Recorder, Keith Watson.

Dunbartonshire (vc99) where there is no Recorder at present but I am co-ordinating meantime.

Our busy Lanarkshire fieldwork programme will now include one or two outings to these neighbouring areas, but if you yourself would like to be on the direct emailing list for either of these, please let me know. Also, please spread the word to any interested family, friends and colleagues in these vice-counties and invite them to be in touch. There is set to be quite a surge in botanical recording in west central Scotland over the coming few years, with lots of fieldwork across all kinds of landscape and habitat.

While my own primary responsibility is still the development of recording in Lanarkshire, I will be investing a lot of time in Dunbartonshire over the next year or two. The stated aim is to achieve "a record for every map square in Dunbartonshire by 2030". (There are 700 monads in total - so less than a quarter the area of Lanarkshire). That's a whole vice-county in ten years, starting from NOW!

There are some real attractions which even beautiful Lanarkshire cannot boast . . . high mountains . . . lots of coastline . . . and the shore and islands of a major loch.

Just sayin' . . .



Map of Dunbartonshire (vc99)

Keep in touch

This Newsletter has invited you to respond on numerous different topics! Please feel free to become more active and involved in any way that suits your circumstances. And your emails on any botanical matters are always welcome at any time - including, for example, help with identifying plants from your photos.

If you know anyone who would be interested in receiving these occasional newsletters, or any future programmes of outings and activities, please ask them to get in touch.

I look forward to seeing you in the field before long - and new readers will be made especially welcome.

Finally, please add my name and my 'botany' email address to your Contacts, mark me as a 'trusted' source, or create a 'rule' directing emails from my address to go to your inbox: for some reason my emails seem to go to people's 'spam' from time to time. I can also be contacted at any time via the BSBI website.

Michael Philip (BSBI recorder, vc77)

email: botany@opus44.co.uk

Picture credits:

All the plant photos in this edition of the Newsletter are featured in the new website (see above).

<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Michael Pink, Lanark, 18th April 2012
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Michael Pink, near Strathaven, 20th April 2009
<i>Ficaria verna</i>	Michael Pink, Sandford, 30th April 2016
<i>Malva moschata</i>	Michael Philip, near East Kilbride, 20th July 2017

