

# Field Botany in Dunbartonshire

Newsletter - June 2021

## Our New Team

The Lanarkshire Botany network, whose development inspired our similar approach, acquired the nickname 'Team 77' (because Lanarkshire is vice-county No.77). So it was more or less inevitable that the new Dunbartonshire field botany team should become known as 'Team 99'.

The 'Team 99' network already numbers nearly 40 people of all sorts of levels of experience. If you are one of the recent arrivals, welcome aboard - and please invite any interested friends or contacts to get in touch.



Nine members of the new network at the official Launch Day at Balloch County Park on Saturday 22nd May

## What do we do?

Botanical recording just means correctly identifying a plant and noting where it is growing. Our outings normally focus on making the biggest list we can of plant species growing in a single map square, but some fieldwork will focus instead on searching a location for a particular plant species until we find it.

All our data is collated and checked before being uploaded to the BSBI Database.

### Jargon-buster

<b>Monad</b>	a single 1km square on the map
<b>Taxon</b> (plural <b>taxa</b> )	species
<b>Record</b>	the report of a named taxon in a specified place
<b>BSBI Database</b> (known as ' <b>the DDb</b> ')	the national plant distribution database to which all records are uploaded
<b>BSBI</b>	The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland

## Background

In the previous edition of our Newsletter, we paid tribute to the work (mainly in the 1970s, 80s and 90s) of Allan Stirling and Alison Rutherford in establishing our core knowledge of the Dunbartonshire flora. It was a great pleasure to have Alison with us at the Launch outing and to pick up some identification tips from her in person.

Another key person mentioned less fully was Pam Murdoch, who served as the BSBI vice-county Recorder for ten years until the end of 2019. Pam has been personally responsible for gathering around 30,000 botanical records from all over Dunbartonshire in that time, as well as handling the 'big push' of data-gathering for Atlas 2020 - and we are sorry for not reflecting the true scope of that before.

The best way to assess Pam's contribution is to notice all the white squares on the map below! These are the areas where work has been done since 2010: Pam has covered a lot of ground in the past ten years - and many of these squares have extensive species lists.

Although she was not at our Launch Day, Pam was with us on the next outing - as keen as ever to be enjoying looking for wild plants in new places.

## Our Goal

Our stated goal is to achieve a fresh botanical record for each of the 700 map-squares that form the vice-county of Dunbartonshire in the next ten years.

So the desired pace is to concentrate on around 70 squares (**monads**) per year.

As we set out on this task, the priority squares (shown on the map on the right) were as follows:

Monads **never recorded at all**  
(108 squares, shown in red)

Monads **not recorded since 1987**  
(103 squares, shown in orange)

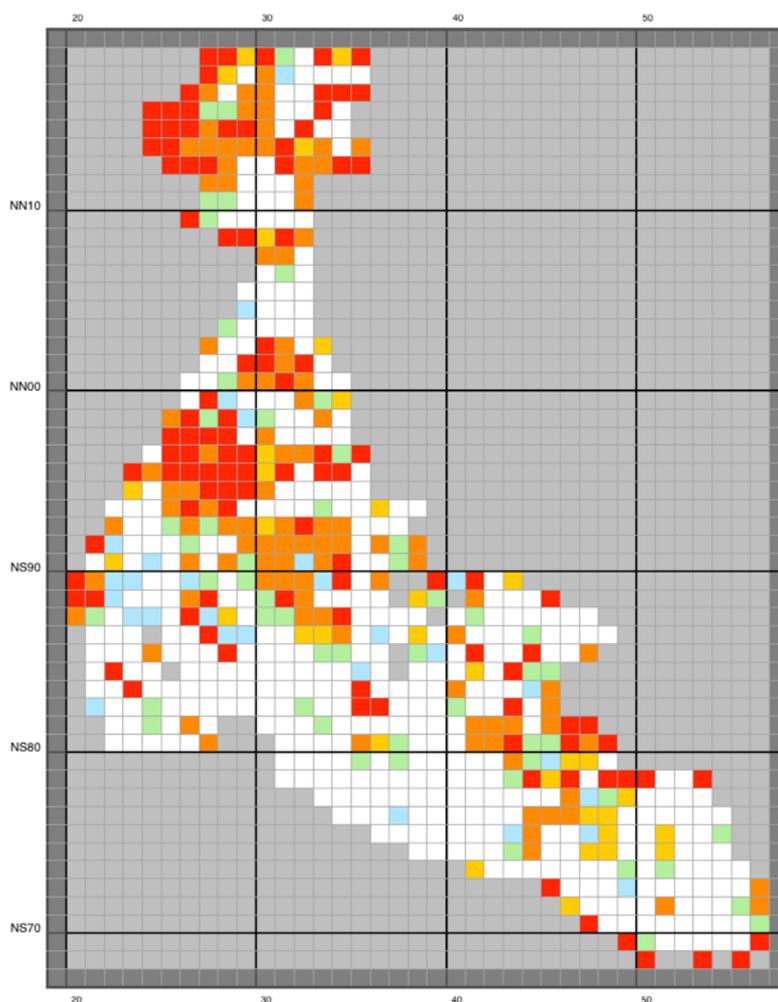
Monads with **fewer than 10 species**  
(34 squares, shown in yellow)

Monads **not visited this century**  
(55 squares, shown in green)

Monads **not visited in the last 10 years**  
(29 squares, shown in blue)

These 329 priority squares will be the focus of our recording in the first three or four years of our Project.

Thereafter we will make a determined effort to re-find some of our less common and less easily-identified species.



On this schematic map, colours show 1km squares where the record needs refreshing, as explained on the left.

## Progress

Although we only formed our new network in March 2021, we have already made some significant progress.

For instance the seven southernmost 'red' squares, previously with no record at all, now have records. In reality, these are squares close to the border with Glasgow (whether Lanarkshire or Renfrewshire) which include fragments of Dunbartonshire territory. Careful map and GPS work was needed to determine whether a plant was 'in' or 'out'!

There are similar fragments to be explored at other points along our borders, offering some grim satisfaction for those of a certain cast of mind . . .

Elsewhere, 7 different monads already have more than 100 species recorded this year. One interesting fact is that almost exactly half of all 4,000+ records made so far are New Monad Records (i.e. a species not recorded in that square ever before).

See below for more facts and figures in our Totaliser.



Malcolm Macneill hunting down suburban weeds in Knightswood on 22nd March

## Highlights

Here are a few of the plants spotted recently:  
(your photos are always welcome)



*Lysichiton americanus* (American Skunk-cabbage)  
- an alien invader which is increasingly taking hold



*Phegopteris connectilis* (Beech Fern)  
- seen here on a roadside bank by Loch Long



*Cochlearia officinalis* agg. (Common Scurygrass)  
- by the shore road at Coulport

## **Success criteria**

We want to ensure that each of our 700 monads is well-recorded. But how do we measure success? When is an area 'well-recorded'?

Species diversity varies enormously according to habitat, but the general aim is to surpass the point where 75% of the all-time species list for any monad has been seen within the span of our Project. This minimum standard should be significantly exceeded in many cases.

Where the original list includes any rare or critical species, particular effort will be made to hunt for these. Wherever necessary, we will be sending plant material to referees or experts to confirm such identifications.



The Clyde shoreline near Old Kilpatrick

The 'gold standard', of course, is to account for ALL plants previously recorded in each monad. However, this is unlikely to be possible, since changes of land use and the passage of time will result in the local loss of certain species. Waste ground will have been built upon, forests will have been planted or cleared, sites will have become inaccessible, agricultural methods will have changed. Some species will have become locally extinct, and some of the plants originally recorded may just have been 'flukes' in the first place - annual weeds which only appeared in one season, never to be seen there again. But where the absence of any species in a square cannot be thus accounted for, we will make a conscious effort to hunt for it.

The first few years of the Project will be all about the 'priority squares'. Later on, the focus will be more on hunting for our rarer species, identifying hybrids and plants in critical groups (e.g. Brambles, Dandelions, Hawkweeds, Eyebrights, Willows) and, in the final few seasons, trying to increase the depth of the record wherever we can.

In terms of an overall total, we would expect to submit over 100,000 fresh records before the end of 2030.

## Training

Every outing includes an element of training. However, some specific training is available to support our Project. Online small-group training events by 'Zoom' will be provided according to demand:

**Botany Resources** is about all the equipment and material you will need in the field. This training is aimed at those new to field botany, and will provide a 'wish list' of items to add to your equipment store or library.

**Botanical Recording** goes into detail on the methodology of recording plants. This training is ideal for those working independently, and especially for those leading outings.

If you are interested in either of these, please contact Michael who will add you to the group for the next suitable date.

Specialist training is also provided by a number of organisations: the BSBI has lots of resources on its website which are available to the public at no cost, and there are online or in-person Courses on such topics as Plant Families; Identifying Grasses; Identifying Sedges; Fern Identification, and so on.

The Field Studies Council (FSC) also offers many courses of interest to botanists.

## Statistics

For those who like facts and figures, our 'Totaliser' will be a regular feature in Newsletters. Although we're not driven by numbers, they enable us to target our fieldwork, gauge our progress and celebrate success. (These numbers are constantly updating, and will no doubt be out of date by the time you read this . . .)

### Totaliser

	<u>2021</u>	<u>Project total</u>
Total records made	<b>4,456</b>	(same in first year)
Monads visited, with at least one record made	<b>275 (39%)</b>	
Monads visited with no previous record at all	<b>17</b>	
Total species recorded	<b>376</b>	
Monad with highest species count	<b>NS5369 (155)</b> (Knightswood)	
Monads regarded as 'well-recorded'	<b>24 (3.4%)</b>	
Number of people in 'Team 99' network	<b>39</b>	

(correct as at 31st May, 2021)

## **Here we go!**

Our field outings are under way, and you are warmly invited to join in at any point. Full details of venues and dates are in our Outings Programme.

Please request and complete our team Questionnaire if you have not already done so, and remember to spread the word that we need people in various other roles (photography, data-handling, organising - or even editing this Newsletter!) who can help facilitate plant recording even if they do not feel able to take part personally in field activity.

You are welcome to email Michael at any time. He will also be happy to have a go at identifying plants from photographs if you get stuck!



*Carex nigra* (Common Sedge)  
growing in a flooded area near Edinbarnet

Please check out the Dunbartonshire page on the BSBI website: <https://bsbi.org>  
(choose the 'Get involved' tab and click the county shape on the map)

We're looking forward to seeing you whenever you can join in!

Michael Philip (BSBI Acting Recorder, vc99) email: [botany@opus44.co.uk](mailto:botany@opus44.co.uk)



### **Photo credits\*:**

'Team 99' Launch Day	Claire Travis, Balloch Country Park, 22nd May, 2021
Malcolm Macneill	Michael Philip, Knightswood, 22nd March 2021
<i>Lysichiton americanus</i>	Michèle Newall, near Arrochar, 24th April, 2021
<i>Phegopteris connectilis</i>	Michael Philip, by Loch Long, 17th May, 2021
<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i> agg.	Michael Philip, near Coulport, 17th April, 2021
The Clyde shoreline	Michael Philip, near Old Kilpatrick, 7th May, 2021
<i>Carex nigra</i>	Michael Philip, near Edinbarnet, 29th May, 2021

\* You are welcome to send us your photos of Dunbartonshire's landscape or plants at any time.