

Field Botany in Dunbartonshire

Newsletter - November 2021

Congratulations!

Phew! What a season that was!

In our project to gain a fresh and thorough record for every **monad** (map square) in the vice-county of Dunbartonshire by 2030, the required pace is 70 monads per year.

Thanks to a high level of engagement and commitment from many people, we have surpassed all expectations and achieved 83 monads in this first year. 24 of these were places where no botanical recording had ever been carried out before.*



As in all our programmed outings this year, a good team turned up at Bowling on 9th October. Despite dull weather and the lateness of the season, 194 species were recorded in this final outing of the year.

We have visited all sorts of landscapes across the season, and found a wide range of species - 870 in all. One of the most encouraging components of the wider effort is that several of our Team have the expertise and confidence to submit records on their own: people with lifelong experience, or with particular skills in urban recording or in hill and moorland plants, for example. And others have shown rapid growth in their botanical knowledge, strengthening our combined skill levels for the tasks ahead.

There is a dynamic sense of 'team' now, and each person brings their own enthusiasm and experience. Everyone's input has been important. Often one person's question, "So . . . what's this?" proves just as valuable as another who can rattle off lots of plant names! The size of the resulting list always increases in proportion to the number of different pairs of eyes in the day's group.

Enormous thanks to everyone who has taken part in fieldwork this year. And if you've not been able to join us so far, we look forward very much to your company next season.

Read on for reflections, photos and statistics - and some ideas for keeping your 'botany brain' active during the winter.

* Other previously unrecorded squares were also visited, and lists begun, but further work is needed.

The Team at work



Toiling upward through Bracken on Carman Muir, looking south-east over Carman Reservoir towards Dumbarton and the Clyde



Above:

Stan and the Team enjoying a lunch break on the shore of Loch Lomond at Stuckendroin.



Right:

Michael having a go at using Cathy's home-made grapple, pulling specimens from the Forth & Clyde Canal.

Establishing a Wildflower Garden (by Grahame Jarvis)

For about 5 years before coming along on Michael's botanical forays I had been looking after a small orchard at my Mum's - full of Dockan, Brambles, Ragwort, Knapweed, Hogweed, and rank, creeping grasses. Beyond the paths winding through it, it was really only ever cut to keep on top of the Brambles.

I bought a scythe and fell into a pattern of cutting and clearing it once a year. After reading up a little on how to manage meadows, I gathered and cast about some Yellow Rattle seed which flowered the following June. With that small success, I thought I would try to add some of the local flowers that were absent from the orchard.

I lack the application to sit down and learn the terminology or to properly key things out - as much as I would like to learn that way I tend to learn things more obliquely; slowly filling in a patchwork of details. For that reason these botanical outings have been enormously valuable to me.

To be with like-minds, going to places over the course of the season that I would never have got to otherwise is a real joy. To have this or that botanical detail shown to me and explained with patience; to be able ask questions and know that I can trust the answer - these are things that I appreciate very deeply.

I'm still working on my seed gathering and propagation, and there have been more misses than hits, but Ragged Robin, Oxeye Daisy, and Oxford Ragwort are all new and establishing themselves in the orchard. There have been some surprises too, like Greater Butterfly Orchid and Marsh Woundwort, which arrived this year all by themselves.

Whether I'm walking in the town, through fields, or along country roads, I now have the binomials ticking over in my mind and I owe so much of this growing understanding of the world around me to these outings. Thank you Michael and all the v99 group.

* * * * *

Two less common plants



Solidago virgaurea (Goldenrod)
Sometimes seen along our streams and roadsides



Datura stramonium (Thorn-apple)
A poisonous intruder found occasionally in towns

Photo Album

Here are some more of the year's images:



Fiona has perfected the art of the close-up! Here are two studies of petals and stamens.

Left: *Claytonia sibirica* (Pink Purslane)

Right: *Verbascum nigrum* (Dark Mullein)



Peter and the Team at the southern section of the spectacular Lang Craigs, above Milton - a great place to look for plants!



Stan and Fiona examining the vegetation on a large boulder on Stob Gobhlach, above Glen Douglas



Auchencarroch farmland, with Ben Lomond in the distance



Steep slopes above Rubha Mór, Loch Lomond

Statistics

Here is our updated 'Totaliser', popular with the data-addicts among us!

In each edition, a variety of statistics is shown - so we can all feel good about progress.

A 'record', at least for the purposes of the figures below, is any unique species/monad combination: in other words, a species is only counted once per monad.

A couple of figures stand out:

The 2021 total of over 18,000 records is substantially more than the previous best (10,802 in 1991).

This means that, of the all-time Dunbartonshire total of 83,932 records, an astonishing 21% have been seen in their respective monads this year!

Totaliser

	<u>2021</u>	<u>Project total</u>
Total records made	18,208	(same in first year)
New Monad Records	10,142	
Total species recorded	870	
All-time total monad/species records <small>(the previous total for the vice-county was 73,790)</small>	83,932	
Monads visited with at least one record made	363 (51.6%)	
Monads visited with at least 10 records made	298	
Monads visited with no previous record	30	
Monad with highest species count	NS5169 (282) <small>(Yoker)</small>	
Monads regarded as 'well-recorded'	83 (11.8%)	
Monads where the entire record is current <small>(i.e. 100% of species <u>ever</u> recorded in that monad have been seen within the Project)</small>	41	
New Vice-County Records <small>(i.e. species never recorded in Dunbartonshire before)</small>	58	
Number of group outings held	19	
Number of different people active in fieldwork	31	

(correct as at 31st October, 2021)

Keep in touch

Although the field season is now over (at least in terms of organised outings), there's lots you can do to feed your botany habit over the winter.

One exciting new development is the introduction of Winter Study Groups, spearheaded and co-ordinated by Peter Wiggins. These are monthly conversation and discussion meetings on Zoom, designed to develop your plant ID skills in various species. Please email Peter if you'd like to join a group, or ask for information. Peter's email address is: pswiggins@gmail.com

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)

This is the place where you can download or read all past Newsletters as well as reminding yourself of the Outings Programme or indeed my contact details! (If we should ever lose contact for any reason, you can get back in touch by this route.)

Planning for the 2022 season has already begun. The full programme will be circulated in the spring, but possibilities under consideration include a new partnership project with Luss Estates; a visit to at least one of the Loch Lomond islands; outings to some really wild hill country (perhaps involving camping!); some point-to-point walks requiring cars at both start and finish; the 'home monad' project; more urban recording for the Botanical Society of Scotland 'Urban Flora Project'; hosting a BSBI Field Meeting; and more . . .

You are free to contact me at any time with your comments, suggestions, ideas, photos of plants to identify, records of plants you've found on your own, or questions on any botany-related matter.

Very best wishes - and thanks again for a wonderful 2021!

Michael Philip (recently officially appointed as BSBI Recorder, vc99 Dunbartonshire)
email: botany@opus44.co.uk

Photo credits *:

Our 'Bowling Team'	taken by a bystander, Bowling, 9th October, 2021
Carman Muir	Fiona Merrilees, 14th August, 2021
Stan and the Team	Michael Philip, near Ardlui, 29th August 2021
Michael 'fishing'	Paola Perez, Old Kilpatrick, 15th October, 2021
<i>Solidago virgaurea</i>	Michael Philip, near Culag, 30th August, 2021
<i>Datura stramonium</i>	Michael Philip, Knightswood, 23rd August, 2021
<i>Claytonia sibirica</i>	Fiona Merrilees, Duntocher, 12th September, 2021
<i>Verbascum nigrum</i>	Fiona Merrilees, Bowling, 9th October, 2021
Peter and the Team	Grahame Jarvis, Lang Craigs, 18th September, 2021
Stan and Fiona at the boulder	Grahame Jarvis, Stob Gobhlach, 26th June, 2021
Auchencarroch view	Grahame Jarvis, Auchencarroch, 11th July, 2021
Steep slopes	Grahame Jarvis, above Rubha Mór, 26th June, 2021

* you may send your photos of Dunbartonshire plants and landscape at any time