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Cover image: *Illecebrum verticillatum* (Coral-necklace), the first modern Scottish record at Loch Treig, Westerness (v.c. 97). *Sarah H. Watts* (see Scotland roundup, p. 65).

Contributions for the next issue of *BSBI News* (no. 150) should be sent to the Editor, John Norton (john.norton@bsbi.org) by 25 February 2022.

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January 2022 Sample Issue
See inside for a selection of articles from *BSBI News* no. 149 and details of how to join the BSBI. Members receive three print copies of *BSBI News* each year as part of the package of membership benefits.



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BEGINNER'S CORNER: Yellow-flowered trefoils and medicks

BEGINNER'S CORNER

Yellow-flowered trefoils and medicks – a guide to our commoner native species

JOHN NORTON

These five yellow-flowered native legumes all resemble clovers in their trifoliate leaves and creeping habit. All usually grow as annuals, especially in short turf and disturbed habitats.

Although familiar to all botanists, they are a common source of confusion to beginners and even the more experienced. Here is a short guide to the main ID features and typical habitats. *Photographs by the author.*



Lesser Trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*). The commonest of the three trefoils and found throughout the whole of Britain and Ireland. Flowerheads are round (globose), less than 1 cm across, on a long stalk, usually with about 15–20 individual bright yellow flowers (each 3–4 mm long), but beware poorly developed heads with only a few flowers, which make it confusable with Least Trefoil. Leaves are glabrous (hairless) above or may have a few hairs around the margins or underneath. The middle leaflet does not have a green tooth at the apex like Black Medick, but there may be a tiny bristle. Occurs in various types of neutral to mildly acidic short grassland, which can be dry, or winter-wet; and in disturbed habitats and sometimes urban environments.



Least Trefoil (*Trifolium micranthum*). Similar to Lesser Trefoil but has only a few (2–6) deeper yellow flowers, which are distinctly smaller (1.5–3 mm long), in clustered (not globose) heads. As the name implies a truly diminutive species which rarely grows more than a couple of centimetres tall. Favours well grazed pony fields and dry acid grassland. Common in lowland areas but mainly a coastal plant in Scotland and Ireland.



The difficult plant problem

TIM RICH

We have a problem: There are lots of 'difficult' vascular plants in Britain but there are very few botanists able to identify them. The scale of the problem is shown in Table 1; taking our total flora as about 2700 species, about 46% are difficult to identify in one way or another. There are very few national experts and those we do have are amateurs, retired or both and there are currently no taxonomists specialising in the British flora employed in any of our museums or universities. So if you want to identify difficult plants, contribute to biodiversity conservation or find new species, you will probably have to do it yourself. In this article I will set out some approaches for dealing with difficult plant groups, with particular reference to dandelions *Taraxacum*.

There are many reasons why particular plant groups may be difficult to identify. Hybridisation is widespread in some groups (e.g. willows *Salix*) and there may be little agreement on when variation is part of the normal spectrum in a species or due to introgression from one or more relative, let alone where to draw the lines between the resulting taxa.

Dandelion heaven, Wolves Newton 2019. Tim Rich

Some groups are morphologically highly reduced, resulting in few identification characters being available (e.g. glassworts *Salicornia* or duckweeds *Lemma*), whilst in others features only available at specific times of year are needed, such as spring leaves in dandelions. Some species are very variable, either genetically (e.g. smooth sow-thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*) or environmentally plastic (e.g. leaves of brambles *Rubus* in shaded woodlands can look very different to the more typical ones in open habitats) or both. There may be unresolved problems where evolution is ongoing, and the taxonomic treatments have not yet caught up with what is actually happening (e.g. scurvygrasses *Cochlearia*; Gill, 2007). The groups with a large number of species which look superficially similar (such as umbellifers or crucifers) can result in keys having to use both flowers and fruit characters, and specimens are often found without one or the other. Finally, some taxa reproduce apomictically (i.e. as direct clones of the mother) resulting in a

In *BSBI News*, members report on botanical topics such as plant conservation, new discoveries and much more...



Some interesting plant records from a Winchester allotment

TRISTAN NORTON

In mid-September 2021 I paid a visit to Highcliffe Community Allotments in Winchester, a long-established allotment site in the east of the city, just a few tens of metres inside the v.c. 11 South Hampshire boundary. I had kindly been granted access by the Allotment Committee, having asked if I might have a look for interesting plant species. Allotments are often home to some interesting arable species sadly lost from the wider farmed landscape and I thought that it was well worth a look, especially on the base-rich soils of the mid-Hampshire chalk. My hunch was right, and I was not to be disappointed.

Like many older allotments (about 120 years old in this case), the site is a varied mix of plots growing vegetables, fruits and flowers from all corners of the globe. It's fair to say that in common with all the allotment sites I've visited, there is a high degree of variability in the 'weediness' of plots, ranging from exceptionally neat and tidy to wholly overgrown. As ever in life, there is a middle way sweet-spot, and it is often the tended but not-too-tidy plots that yield the best botanical interest.

Clinopodium nepeta (Lesser Calamint), Winchester, South Hampshire (v.c. 11), September 2021. Photographs by the author

I was soon noting some interesting species such as Weasel's Snout (*Misopates ornithium*) (locally quite frequent) and both Round-leaved Fluellen (*Köckxia spuria*) and Sharp-leaved Fluellen (*K. elatine*) so things were looking good for something even more interesting turning up.

I'd spent about a half-hour looking around before walking past a green plastic *Brassica* cage. The front was slightly unzipped and I happened to glance inside and spot a large ramping-fumitory. The inflorescences were large, pinkish-white and with recurved pedicels – I immediately thought it might be White Ramping-fumitory (*Fumaria capreolata*), a species I was reasonably familiar with, having studied a recently-discovered population from Kings Worthy just outside Winchester. On closer inspection this plant didn't look quite right: the sepals were not obviously large and toothed as in *F. capreolata* but



An exploration of orchid records in the BSBI database in four regions of the British Isles

DAVE TRUDGILL

This article uses the BSBI Distribution Database (DDb) to explore the changing status of eighteen species of orchids, all of which occur in England,

Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. Lesser Butterfly and Pyramidal orchids, Perthshire. Dave Trudgill

Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. Whether these species, some, such as the Lesser Butterfly Orchid, have been recorded in the BSBI database in the periods from 1970–1986, 1987–1999, 2000–2010, 2011–2020, or 2021–2022, the data records per year are based on the number of Hectad records in which a species was recorded. The total number of Hectad records there were no records is not regarded as data and is not included.

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An historic herbarium: what can it tell us about the changing flora of Britain in the 20th and 21st centuries?

RICHARD G. JEFFERSON



Herbarium sheet of *Phleum arenarium* (Sand Cat's-tail) collected by Peter Jefferson from 'sand dunes, Llandudno, N. Wales', 2 June 1948.

Over the last eight decades, the native flora of Great Britain has undergone substantial change with some species extinctions but

in the herbarium was collated and documented by the author prior to donation to the Natural History Museum, London (BM). This provided

The 'Adventives and Aliens' section features vice-county roundups of recent discoveries of escaped and naturalised plants, plus other articles on non-native species.

ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS

Adventives and Aliens News 25

Compiled by Matthew Berry

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Left: *Stachys annua*, Radstock; right: *Tanacetum macrophyllum*, Frome, North Somerset (v.c.6). Helena Crouch

planted and might have escaped from a large, neighbouring garden. A rhizomatous, perennial garden plant (Asteraceae) to 120 cm, native to south-east Europe and south-west Asia, with 1–2 pinnately lobed leaves and white, rayed capitula; 'known since 1912 at Jervaulx Abbey (v.c.65)', Clement & Foster (1994), it was last formally recorded there in 2010. Confused with other species in the past, it seems at least one well-known nursery might be supplying it as *Achillea chrysocoma* 'Grandiflora'. My limited researches suggest that *A. chrysocoma* is a more compact, yellow-flowered rockery plant with a similar native distribution. Clement et al. (2005):

V.c.9 (Dorset)

Cyrtomium fortunei (Fortune's Holly-fern). Canford Cliffs (SZ05898952), 7/10/2021, D. Leadbetter (det. F. Ramsey); one shuttlecock on bare ground near Martello Towers. An east Asian native (Dryopteridaceae) cultivated as an ornamental and less tender than *C. falcatum* (House Holly-fern). It has more pairs of smaller, more toothed pinnae per frond than the latter species. Stace (2019): 35.

Aronia arbutifolia (Red Chokeberry). Near Broadstone (SY98889559), 10/9/2021, D. Leadbetter: several in Stonecrop Wood, where

ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS: Adventives & Aliens News 25



than superior ovary. For a drawing of the rarer subspecies, see Clement et al. (2005): 426. Stace (2019): 948.

V.c.82 (E. Lothian)

Cynoglossum amabile (Chinese Hound's-tongue). Mungoswells (NT49378050), 25/8/2021, R.I. Milne: on soil heap at side of field near ditch, with *Chenopodium album* (Fat-hen), *Solanum tuberosum* (Potato) and *S. lycopersicum* (Tomato), near Coldhame Wood. A rather tall (at least when well-grown), erect biennial garden plant (Boraginaceae) native to western China, with grey-green foliage and flowers resembling a very large *Mysotis* (Forget-me-not), c.8mm across. There are other recent records in the DDb for v.c. 1 (2019), 2 (2019), 34 (2018), 63 (2019) and 94 (2018). See *BSBI News* 134, pp. 47–48.

V.c.83 (Midlothian)

Urtica membranacea (Mediterranean Nettle). Edinburgh (NT32347131), 15/6/2021, R.I. Milne: one plant on side of soil mound with other weedy species, e.g. *Urtica dioica* (Common Nettle) and *Conium maculatum* (Hemlock), Whitehill Road. New to v.c.83. Stace (2019): 305.

V.c.94 (Banff)

Douglasia elegans (Californian Lobelia). Dufftown

ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS: *Rubus nepalensis*: a previously unrecorded Bramble in the UK

Rubus nepalensis (Hook. f.) Kuntze: a previously unrecorded Bramble in the UK

GRAHAM LAVENDER & ROB RANDALL

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the first record in the UK for *Rubus nepalensis* in the wild; a prostrate Bramble without prickles or acicles and attributable to subgenus *Dalibardastrum*, which currently has only one entry, *Rubus tricolor* (Stace, 2019).

Rubus nepalensis is distinguished from *Rubus tricolor* by its lighter trifoliate leaves, abundant purplish stem bristles and entire stipules. *Rubus tricolor* is a more robust plant with simple leaves, which are usually darker green, reddish brown bristles and lacinate stipules.

Rubus nepalensis was found on the east bank of Hawknest Combe stream under oak canopy, covering some 6 × 4 square metres with a maximum

possible, given that rhododendrons are known to have been introduced to the area from Nepal in the 1940s, that it may have been accidentally introduced with them.

Currently *Rubus nepalensis* is not in the DDb although a request has been made and the purpose of this article is to seek out further records of this potentially invasive Bramble.

References

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Kuntze, O., 1879. *Methodik Der Speciesbeschreibung Und Rubus Monographie Der Einfachblättrigen Und Kräftigen Brombeeren Verbunden Mit Betrachtungen Über Die Fehler Des A. Felix, Leipzig.*

Cynoglos
(v.c.82). R

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Other regular sections include news and announcements from BSBI, short notes and articles, a round-up of plant records from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland and book reviews.

NOTICES

NOTICES

BSBI SUPPORTER SURVEY

The staff and committees would like to extend their thanks to everyone who took part in the first Member and Supporter Survey across August and September. We had a fantastic response, with over 770 members and supporters completing the survey.

in an unprecedented number of new members joining (over 200 in the first eight weeks). This included almost 50 students who joined as a result of a student recruitment campaign (see below).

To comply with GDPR regulations, BSBI no longer offers a list of Members. If you have any

COUNTRY ROUNDUPS: Ireland

at one site at Lough Conn in 2021. Eoin also recorded *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* at Lough Mask and *Juniperus communis* (Common Juniper) at Garrow, Westport, both hectad firsts.

Ralph Sheppard (VCR for West Donegal) reported a first vice-county record for East Donegal, which is also a first county record for Donegal. Ralph found a fine patch of *Galium album* (Hedge Bedstraw) / syn. *Galium mollugo* subsp. *erectum* (Upright Hedge Bedstraw) at Drumbarnet Lower. He first spotted it in July, but it continued to flower for much of the season.

Paul Green has been prolific in his recording of rarities as always,

including *Huperzia selago* (Fir Clubmoss), *Salix herbacea* (Dwarf Willow), *Sisynchium bermudiana* (Blue-eyed Grass), *Sparganium angustifolium* (Floating Bur-reed), *Diphasiastrum alpinum* (Alpine Clubmoss), *Sagina subulata* (Heath Pearlwort) and *Thalictrum alpinum* (Alpine Meadow-rue). Paul described all these finds in more detail in his talk for the 2021 Irish Autumn Meeting, which can be viewed on the YouTube channel.

We were delighted to resume field meetings in 2021, with six taking place across Ireland, giving people a chance to botanise together and explore different habitats. For example, VCR John Conaghan reports that at the field



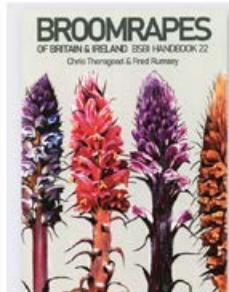
Carex punctata (Dotted Sedge), Ballyvaughan, Wick, Paul Green

REVIEWS

Compiled by Clive Stace, Book Reviews Editor

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Broomrapes of Britain & Ireland. A Field Guide to the Holoparasitic Orobanchaceae

The book starts with several introductory chapters, where the family of the broomrapes (Orobanchaceae) is explained, including their taxonomy. Worldwide the family comprises about 90 genera and about 1,600 species of annual and perennial herbs and shrubs, since the holoparasitic genera in recent years have been merged with the semi-parasitic former Scrophulariaceae such as *Euphrasia* and *Rhinanthus*. There are probably about 150 species of *Orobanche* and *Phelipanche* worldwide. Especially in the last ten years, many new *Orobanche* species have been described, in particular from the Caucasus

character. For each species a distribution map is given (5 km² in three time periods, pre-1930, 1930–1999 and 2000–2020). The whole is complemented with on average five colour pictures. Most of the pictures are very good, but some could be better. The problem is that many were taken in full sunshine. As a result, the images are sometimes not entirely sharp, and the flowers often show harsh shadows. In such cases, it is better to use a flash to get the flowers sharper and more evenly lit. In the British Isles nine native species exist, including the commonest species, *O. minor*, which is represented by two subspecies and six varieties.

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