

Leicestershire Botanical Recording Group



Newsletter, May 2022

How are you?

It's been a long time since there has been any news of botanical activity in VC55, but we hope that you have all been able to maintain your interest during the last couple of difficult years. Work for the last year of the BSBI's Atlas took up a lot of our time in 2019 and, although we completed our recording objective, it left us a bit worn out, so we had a short break.

The pandemic arrived in the spring of 2020 and kept us firmly fixed on our local patches, especially those of us in Leicester who were locked down more than anyone else in the UK at that time. But it was a good time to get to know your local area in detail, perhaps at times of the year when you wouldn't normally record there, and some interesting new records were made.

Restrictions on social mixing meant that the annual Recorders' Meeting in 2021 was delivered as an online event organised by the LRWT, which was well-attended (see link below). A Recorders' Meeting has not been organised for 2022, but local LBRG meetings have restarted following changes to restrictions on social mixing (details follow).

The Leicestershire & Rutland Recorder is our usual way to publish botanical news and finds. The latest edition (no. 15) was published in 2019 and there is now a backlog of interesting records report. So, this Newsletter is intended to provide some continuity with progress in botanical recording in the meantime until the next edition. It's also a good chance to update everyone with botanical news, recent publications on local botany, and generally catch up with what has been going on since the pandemic began. We hope that you find it useful.

Geoffrey Hall, Russell Parry & Stephen Woodward

Records and Recording

BSBI Atlas 2020 Progress and News

Between 2015 and 2020, a total of 367,589 records were added to the BSBI Distribution Database (the DDb) from field surveys, existing paper records and other datasets obtained from the Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Resource Centre (LRERC) and the LRWT. Our aim was to get five tetrads (2 x 2 km grid square) well-recorded per hectad (10 x 10 km grid square) and was achieved in December 2019 - a close shave, if ever there was one. A fuller account of the work can be found in the recording of the 2021 Recorders' Conference on the LRWT YouTube channel, starting 28 minutes into the recording: see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9S165cXN2CA>.

The BSBI will launch the results of Atlas 2020 in March 2023. There will be an online version, a print version, and a summary report. The print version will be published by Princeton University Press and there is a **pre-publication discount of 50% for BSBI members**. Some screen shots of the online version can be seen in a talk entitled 'BSBI Recording Projects in 2022' given by Jim McIntosh, the BSBI Scottish Officer, at the BSBI Spring Conference, which is available on the BSBI's YouTube channel: see <http://youtu.be/k-HltlViulw>. BSBI members can read an update about Atlas progress on page 75 of the April issue of BSBI News.

Recording in 2020 and 2021

Field recording continued during the pandemic, despite the restrictions on travel. Records were, of necessity, mainly from recorders' local patches, with better coverage when travel restrictions were lifted.

In 2021, we were helped in our recording activities by an invitation from the Belvoir Ark project (see <http://www.belvoircastle.com/conservation>) to record in the Belvoir Estate, a very large area (*ca* 100 square miles) which was under-recorded. A condition of this work was that the records were not placed in the public domain, and we were not allowed to have a group there recording, but we are grateful to the landowner for the opportunity to record this important area of NE Leicestershire, which has yielded some good botanical finds. There was also a short project at the request of the LRWT to record the marginal and aquatic flora in six of the lagoons at Rutland Water, which was done with the help of some local naturalists from the Rutland Natural History Society.

In 2020, a total of 29,520 records were added to the DDb, including 7,036 from NatureSpot: in 2021, a total of 18,444 records were added, with 8,714 records for 2021 from NatureSpot that have yet to be added.

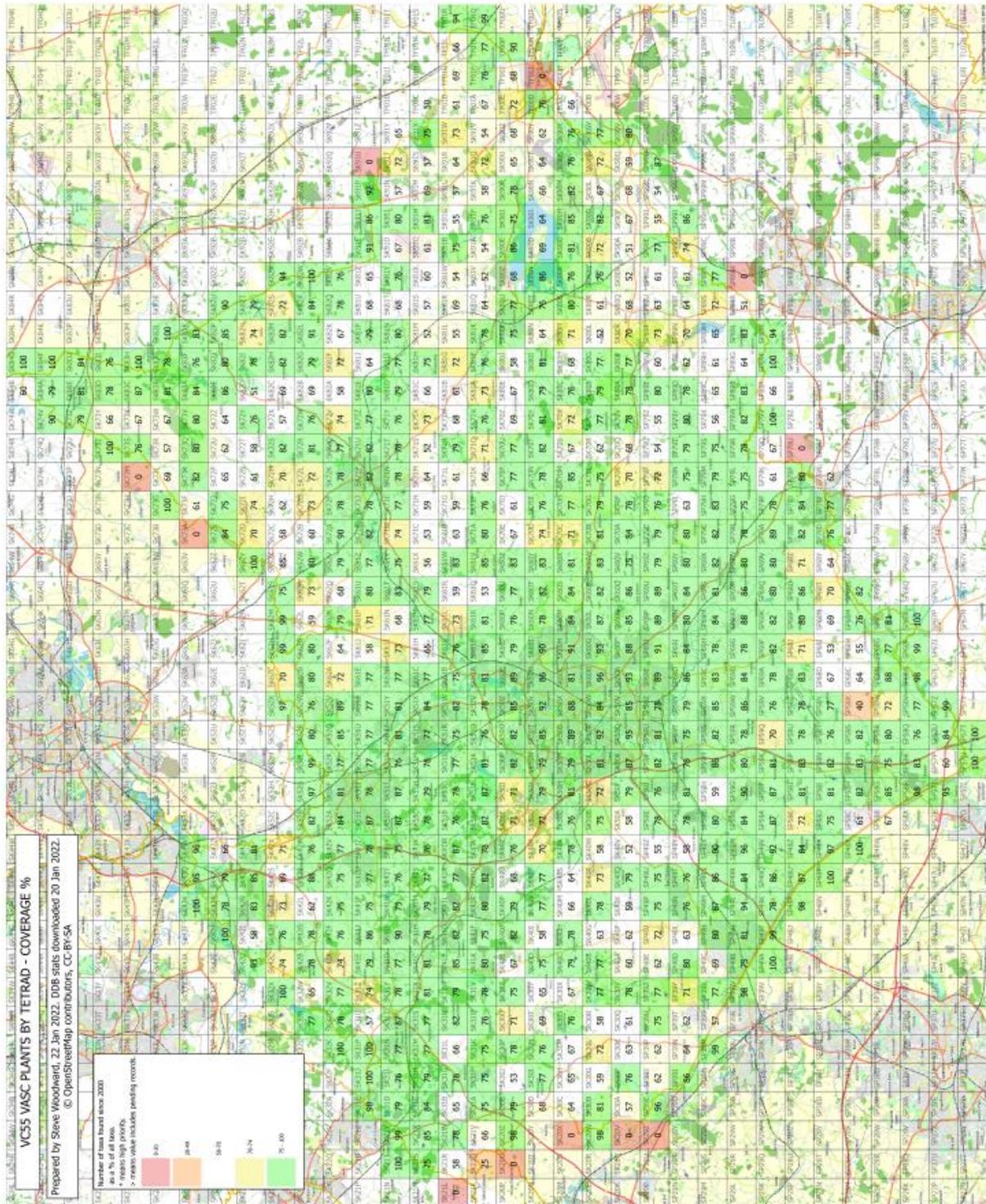
Leicester and Enderby Street Surveys 2021

During the lockdown period in 2020, the herbicide spraying of Leicester streets regime was reduced from its now regular three times per year to a single spring spray. This resulted in a magnificent display of wild plants which extended well into the 2021 growing season. With help from Rowan Roenisch and Isabel Raval, Russell and Lindsay-Anne Heald surveyed 52 streets in Leicester City and Enderby. Over 400 species thought to be self-propagating were recorded: eight of these are first records for VC55 – *Cyclamen repandum*, *Dahlia* × *hortensis*, *Dipsacus sativus*, *Eucomis bicolor*, *Helleborus niger*, *Houttyunia cordata* 'Chameleon', *Rubus phoenicolasius* and *Saxifraga hypnoides* agg. Three taxa were 2nd records for VC55 – *Laphangium luteoalbum* (mentioned in the list of significant finds later in this Newsletter), *Phlomis fruticosa* and *Alkekengi officinarum*. Additionally, 19 taxa were first records for their tetrads. This information is now being used to boost a Friends of the Earth campaign to encourage the City Council to reduce its intensive wild plant poisoning regime. A possibly counter-intuitive general finding was that the

longer the street, the more records were made, averaging about one species per 4 metres! Some of these surveys are being duplicated this year to further inform the effects of the herbicide regime.

Recording Progress

We have continued with our aim to try to get every tetrad in VC55 at least 75% well-recorded. The picture below is a colour-coded map showing our progress towards this goal. Each square represents one tetrad; the green squares are at least 75% well-recorded, the yellow squares are 70-74% well-recorded, the white squares are 50-69% well-recorded and the red ones are <50% well-recorded.



All the tetrads in Leicester City and Oadby & Wigston are now green, as are most of those in Harborough, Blaby, Charnwood and NW Leicestershire. However, there are still tetrads in some areas of Melton, and plenty in Hinckley & Bosworth and Rutland that need more recording work.

Future Recording

We will continue our goal to get every tetrad in VC55 at least 75% well-recorded and will focus our recording effort on under-recorded areas of Melton, Hinckley & Bosworth and Rutland.

The BSBI's England Project was agreed by the Committee for England this year and will assume greater priority in our recording work in the coming years. The project is called "Lost Rarities in England" and uses the acronym LORE. Jonathan Shanklin has produced a project outline, some guidance notes and a record card which are available on the BSBI website: See <http://bsbi.org/england-project> One of the crucial requirements for this project is an up to date Rare Plant Register, which we are currently working on and which will be completed this year. (See later in this Newsletter). We need to think about the best way to carry out the project and will need to obtain permission to visit most of these sites, so we will not start it until 2023.

The Field-by-Field Survey

Introduction

Russell Parry has been digitising historic records from the Field-by-Field survey that was initiated by Leicestershire Museums. It involved several field workers who recorded the flora in agricultural fields, noting significant finds. They worked under the supervision of Ian Evans who was a member of the Leicestershire Flora Committee and who contributed many records to the 1988 Flora of Leicestershire. The surveys were the basis of the historic 'County/District/Parish' system of site designation, which has now been superseded by the Local Wildlife Site designation.

The Survey

Between 1978 and 1993, Leicestershire Museums carried out habitat surveys of its entire non-built land surface. This included the county of Rutland. Each parish was broken down into its component parts, excluding most gardens and farmyards.

The following categories were noted.

- Fields
 - Arable
 - Grassland
 - Improved
 - Semi-improved
 - Unimproved
 - All these three categories mention areas of ridge and furrow
 - Verges
 - 'Rough grassland'
 - Marsh
 - Ley
- Woodland
 - Broadleaved
 - Plantations
 - Broadleaved
 - Coniferous
 - Even very small areas, e.g., roadside plantations included
 - Selected hedges, especially those with a more diverse structure
 - Scrub
- Disused areas

- Railways
- Quarries
- Water covered areas
 - Rivers
 - Streams
 - Ditches and drains
 - Ponds and lakes

Most of the species' records are of vascular plants with some records of bryophytes, galls, invertebrates, fish, birds, and mammals. These were used to indicate the likely biodiversity of each area.

Many vascular plant records are of woody species with some effort made to indicate the more recently planted areas. Grass species are often mentioned, again to show biodiversity; or not when the term 'coarse grasses' is used. Herbs are mentioned where they can help to indicate biodiversity.

Two types of habitat seemed to have been a particular cause for attention. Our thousands of ponds were each checked, and many were found to be shaded and drying out. Our many small areas of 'woodland', mostly fairly recently planted, also had lists of their woody species detailed with brief notes of their ground flora.

The detailed results of this survey provide a fairly detailed account of land use in the 1980s and can be viewed partly as a bridge between the floras of Rutland (fieldwork largely done in 1950s and 60s), of Leicestershire (fieldwork largely done in 1970s) and Michael Jeeves' checklist (fieldwork largely done in 2000s). They also make a strong baseline with which our current situation can be compared – are we moving in a more or less biodiverse trajectory?

In May 2021, Russell made a brief mention of this at Natural History Section Zoom meeting. By November 2021 all districts including Rutland were more or less completed. There are over 170,000 individual records, most of which are for common species. However, a number of records are firsts for VC55, and many more are firsts for their tetrads. They will make a useful addition to our VC55 database.

Significant and Interesting Finds 2018-2022

The records below are from 2019 to 2022, with a few from 2018 that arrived too late for the last edition of the Leicestershire & Rutland Recorder (no. 15). The names of recorders have been omitted to comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UKGDPR) 2018. FCR = First County Record, SCR = Second County Record.

Alopecurus aequalis Orange Foxtail

Thornton Reservoir (2018). Saddington Reservoir (2020). Rutland Water, Lagoon 2 (2021).

Anthriscus caucalis Bur Chervil

Stretton, The Shires (2019). Great Casterton, Water Lane (2019).

Brassica nigra Black Mustard

Stretton, side of A1 (2019). Burton Lazars, off Sandy Lane (2019).

Buglossoides arvensis Field Gromwell

Saltby, fields north-west of Egypt Plantation (2020). First record since 1977.

Carex rostrata Bottle Sedge

Knipton Reservoir (2021). A new site for this RPR species.

Carex vesicaria Bladder-sedge

Saddington Reservoir (2020).

***Carex x senayana* (syn. *C. x haussknechtii*)**

The hybrid between *Carex otrubae* and *Carex spicata* (False Fox-sedge × Spiked Sedge). Burton & Dalby parish, bank of farmland ditch (2019). Only the **second UK record**.

Catapodium marinum Sea Fern-grass

2019 (Croxtton Kerrial, A607). 2019 (Leesthorpe, A606). 2019 (Bottesford A52). 2021 (Coleorton, A512). Increasing on the sides of salted roads.

Cerastium arvense Field Mouse-ear

Harston, old quarry (2020). Knipton Reservoir (2021). Both sites are old, unfertilised calcareous grassland.

Cerastium diffusum Sea Mouse-ear

Leicester, London Road (2020). On side of a salted road. Last record 1997.

Chaenorrhinum organifolium Malling Toadflax

Frisby on the Wreake (2020). For details, see *BSBI News* **146**: 45 (2021).

Cuscuta campestris Yellow Dodder

East Langton (2020). SCR in a garden. Last record 1984.

Cymbalaria pallida Italian Toadflax

Croxtton Kerrial (2019). Shepshed (2021). Third and fourth county records, respectively.

Dittrichia graveolens Stinking Fleabane

Swinford, M1 (2019) FCR. Enderby, M1 (2019) SCR.

Drabella muralis Wall Whitlowgrass

Brooke, Main Street (2021). Last Rutland record 1984.

Egeria densa Large-flowered Waterweed

Market Harborough, Union Wharf (2018). Ashwell, Oakham Canal (2022). Third and fourth county records, respectively.

Erodium maritimum Sea Stork's-bill

Moira, Conkers Camping & Caravanning Club Site (2019) SCR.

Erodium moschatum Musk Stork's-bill

Leicester, St Matthew's Roundabout (2019). Leicester, London Road (2020). Melton Mowbray, corner of Nottingham Road and A607 (2021). Increasing along roadside verges.

Hydrocotyle vulgaris Marsh Pennywort

Marsh SW of Knipton Reservoir (2021). Last recorded at this site in 1969.

Hypopitys monotropa Yellow Bird's-nest

Asfordby (2020) FCR. In light woodland.

Laphangium luteoalbum Jersey Cudweed

Enderby, Alexander Avenue (2021) SCR.

Lycopodium clavatum Stag's-horn Clubmoss

Beacon Hill Country Park (2021). First record at this site since 1902; last recorded in VC55 in 1973 and believed extinct.

Malva verticillata Chinese Mallow

Sapcote, behind Plougher Close (2020) FCR.

Myosurus minimus Mousetail

Stoney Stanton, Highgate Lodge Farm (2019).

Parentucellia viscosa Yellow Bartsia

Burbage, Sketchley Brook (2018) SCR. Last recorded (FCR) in 1997.

Petrorhagia saxifraga Tunicflower

Croft, Winston Avenue (2019).

Petroselinum segetum Corn Parsley

North Luffenham, former airbase (2019). Belmesthorpe (2019). Last recorded in 1967.

Phalaris paradoxa Awned Canary-grass

Buckminster Parish, on edge of arable field (2019) SCR.

Poa infirma Early Meadow-grass

Moira, YHA site (2019) FCR. Moira, Conkers Camping & Caravanning Club Site (2019) SCR. Great Dalby, old airfield (2021).

Polycarpon tetraphyllum Four-leaved Allseed

Leicester, Kilworth Drive (2020) FCR. Syston, Melton Road (2021) SCR.

Potentilla argentea Hoary Cinquefoil

Stockerston Parish, Priory Farm (2018) Leicester, Western Park (2019).

Pyrola rotundifolia subsp. rotundifolia Round-leaved Wintergreen

Asfordby (2019) FCR. In light woodland.

Selaginella kraussiana Krauss's Clubmoss

Little Dalby, St. James's Church (2022) FCR.

Silene noctiflora Night-flowering Catchfly

Essendine, near The Drift (2019). Saltby, fields south of Egypt Plantation (2020). Ketton, new road to Edith Weston (2020). Kirby Muxloe parish (2020). Croxton Kerrial parish (2021).

Solanum rostratum Buffalo-bur

Kirby Muxloe/Ratby, near footpath (2019). Fourth county record, and the first since 1996.

Stachys arvensis Field Woundwort

Shacklewell (2019). Last record 1997.

Symphytum tuberosum Tuberous Comfrey

Bescaby Oaks, near footpath through wood (2019). Knipton (2021). Enderby, New Lubbesthorpe (2021).

Trifolium ornithopodioides Bird's-foot Clover

Appleby Magna, Atherstone Road Services (2019) FCR.

Valeriana dioica Marsh Valerian

Shacklewell, Wild's Lodge (2019). Knipton Reservoir (2021).

Viola tricolor Wild Pansy

Castle Donington, The Barroon (2018). Shacklewell (2019). Knipton (2020).

Viola x contempta Hybrid Pansy

Shacklewell (2019). East of Essendine (2019). The hybrid between *Viola arvensis* and *Viola tricolor* (Field Pansy × Wild Pansy). Last recorded 1994.

Some Photos of Interesting Finds

Photos: Geoffrey Hall, except where indicated.



Pyrola rotundifolia (Asfordby)



Hypopitys monotropa (Asfordby) Photo R. Parry



Carex vesicaria (Saddington)



Symphytum tuberosum (New Lubbesthorpe)



Laphangium luteoalbum (Enderby)



Cerastium arvense (Knipton)



Drabella muralis (Brooke)

Recent Publications on Local Botany

2020

Hall, G. (2020) The Stoughton Estate: Dam's Spinney & Surrounding Area. *Leicester Lit. and Phil. Soc. Newsletter* **110**: 10-14.

Parry, R. (2020) Alder in VC55. *Leicester Lit. and Phil. Soc. Newsletter* **110**: 8-9.

Parry, R. (2020) Oaks in VC55. *Leicester Lit. and Phil. Soc. Newsletter* **111**: 16-18.

Woodward, S. (2020) Rutland's Impenetrable Swamp *Leicester Lit. and Phil. Soc. Newsletter* **111**: 22-23.

Woodward, S. (2020) Wild flowers in Oakham - plenty more to be found. *Rutland Natural History Society Fieldfare* **327**: 12-13.

Woodward, S. (2020) Elusive plants of Oakham (east). *Rutland Natural History Society Fieldfare* **328**: 10-11.

2021

Parry, R. (2021). More and better botanical recording, or genuine population changes? Another two years of data. *Leicester Lit. and Phil. Soc. Newsletter* **112**: 12-23.

Raval, I. (2021) Two summers, Two county firsts: Adventures of a budding Botanist. *Leicester Lit. and Phil. Soc. Newsletter* **112**: 4-5.

Woodward, S. (2021) Botanising in Bottesford. *Leicester Lit. and Phil. Soc. Newsletter* **113**: 4-5.

2022

Hall, G. (2022) In the Footsteps of Jack Badcock: 'In the Countryside of South Leicestershire' Revisited. *Leicester Lit. and Phil. Soc. Newsletter* **114**: 8-17.

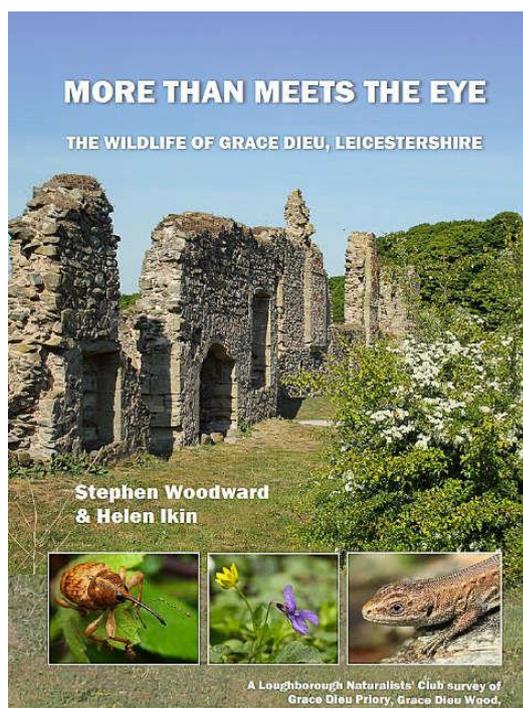
Woodward, S. and Ikin, H. (2022) 'More Than Meets the Eye. The Wildlife of Grace Dieu, Leicestershire'. Loughborough: Loughborough Naturalists Club.

This in-depth study of the natural history and landscape of Grace Dieu has a chapter covering 619 species of vascular plant. Other chapters cover cryptogams, fungi, vertebrates, and invertebrates.

Available from Summerfield Books
(<http://www.summerfieldbooks.com>)

More details on the Loughborough Naturalists' Club web site:

(<http://www.loughboroughnats.org/more-than-meets-the-eye>)



English Botanical News

In case you haven't heard yet, the BSBI has a Committee for England that complements the Committees for Scotland, Wales and Ireland. It produces a newsletter called **English Botanical News**, and issues no.1 (May 2020) and no. 2 (May 2021) can be downloaded from the BSBI website here:

<http://bsbi.org/publications/archive/english-botanical-news>

They contain vice-county annual reports, interesting records from around England and hints and tips on identification and recording. Newsletter no. 3 (May 2022) is in preparation and is almost complete, so look for it in a couple of weeks' time.

Local Projects and Training Aids

There are some excellent training videos available free on-line for botanists both budding and more experienced.

Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme

This partnership project, funded the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has a species identification and recording component. Some training videos have been made that are aimed at beginner-level or inexperienced naturalists, and it is intended that more will be added in the future covering advanced and complex species identification topics. So far there are botanically related videos on the following topics:

- Introduction to Common Grassland Flowers
- Introduction to Spring Flowers
- Introduction to Winter Tree Identification
- Hedgerows – species, structure and function
- Introduction to Species Recording Skills

Some spotter sheets are also available for download on the website along with more information about the project: see <http://www.lrw.org.uk/charnwood-forest-landscape-partnership-scheme>

NatureSpot

Our local natural history website has launched a new project – the '**Identify 100 Species Challenge**' and has produced some training videos and related training courses to complement it. All you need to do is open an account (it's easy on-line) and start recording. For much more information, see:

<http://www.naturespot.org.uk/100-species>

BSBI

The BSBI website has a great deal of information about plant identification and is the go-to resource for botanists at all levels: see <http://bsbi.org/identification>. There is also a YouTube channel with 29 training videos covering topics as diverse as ferns, conifers, water plants, grasses and 'difficult' groups of plants. See: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1PYIj03XG4ADORNj3LwPRStOH7GvRCO8>

This Year's Field Meetings

Russell Parry and Richard Mabbutt have organised three field trips this year.

Saturday 28th May

SK51A Ulverscroft Mill and Lea Meadows.

Park in or near Markfield Lane, Newtown Linford near its junction with Main Street (LE6 0AT). We will walk to the LRWT Lea Meadows Reserve using footpaths and returning optionally along Ulverscroft Lane. We will probably spend quite a large proportion of our time in the reserve where cattle will be roaming freely.

Sunday 19th June

SP58P Slip Inn Quarry area south of Dunton Bassett.

Park on Little Lunnon near its right-angle bend at SP543899 about half a kilometre south of its junction with Loves Lane (LE17 5JR). We will use footpaths to explore this rather damp and much quarried area.

Sunday 24th July

SK40U Woods and footpaths north of Thornton Reservoir.

Park in Grassy Lane near its junction with Elliott's Lane and Broad Lane, SK473099 (LE67 9TB). We will use footpaths and road verges to explore the flora of this varied habitat. This meeting is likely to cover more distance than the two earlier ones.

If you wish to attend any or all these meetings, please email Richard, and include your phone number, and the contact details of the person you would like us to contact in an emergency. Full details of meetings will be sent with a confirmation email. Richard's email address: richard.mabbutt55@gmail.com

Coming Soon

The Leicestershire & Rutland Rare Plant Register (RPR)

We have been working on a revised RPR for VC55 and have almost finished writing it. The new RPR also contains a list of plants of conservation concern and should be useful to local ecologists. There are some changes to the species included on the list compared with the one produced in 2011 by Michael Jeeves, which result from more extensive recording, a quantitative approach, and changes in some habitats in the intervening period.

Supplement to the Flora of Rutland, 1990

During lockdown, Geoffrey Hall has been writing up this manuscript that Guy Messenger left unfinished when he died in 1993. It contains many records he made since he published *The Flora of Rutland* in 1971, and he makes some interesting and perceptive comments on the changes in habitats in Rutland in the time since he wrote it.

When finished, both publications will be available for download from the VC55 blog, which acts as the LRBG website until a new one has been developed, and from the NatureSpot website. It is possible that printed copies will also be available.