

Dumfriesshire some highlights 2022

This is a version of the exhibition given at the Scottish Botanists Conference November 2022



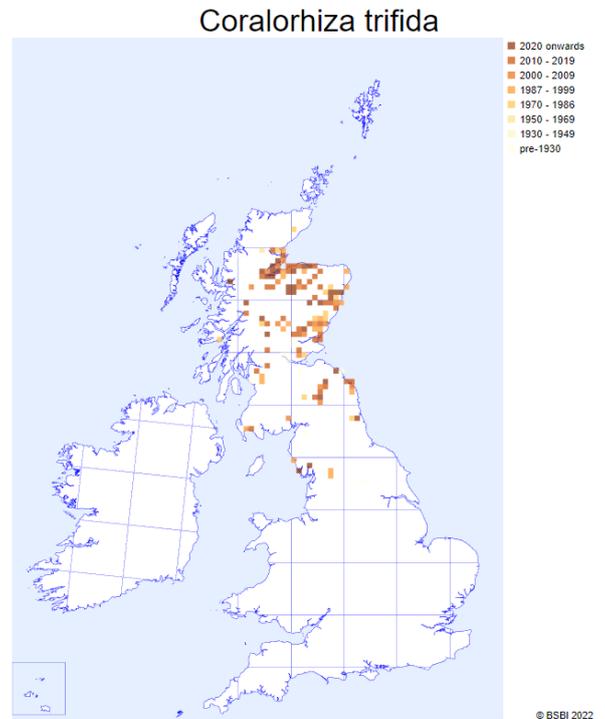
It has been a good year for finding **Adder's Tongue Fern** *Ophioglossum vulgatum*. In the 1896 Flora of Dumfriesshire 11 locations are noted but none of these have been recorded since despite searching. Only 4 extant populations were known before this year. So to find 7 new sites for this species in 2022 is something exceptional. Two of these populations correspond with a Victorian record from the Langholm Hills hectad. In one location the *Ophioglossum* was found growing with **Moonwort** *Botrychium lunularia*, both new records on a site I have been monitoring a population of Marsh Fritillary Butterfly.



Shady Horsetail *Equisetum pratense* is a scarce plant in the south of Scotland. It has been known since the nineteenth century in upper Nithsdale. But until recently it was not known in Annandale. In 2016 one small patch was found in the Etrick Hills and in June this year another new sizable population was found in a scree run near to the Southern Upland Way in the same hills.



Great Sundew *Drosera anglica* (photo by R Lamb) was previously only known from two extant locations in Dumfriesshire the most significant on the Longbridgemuir Moss, an estuarine raised mire south of Dumfries. There are older records from the hills but it appears to have declined or been lost in most of these places. It was therefore with some surprise and delight to find a long stony flush on a hillside with thousands of plants. Great Sundew is a western plant in the Southern Uplands so this population is on eastern edge of these. This hill block has several old unimproved grassland and hill flush species like **Broad-leaved Cottongrass** *Eriophorum latifolium*, **Mountain Everlasting** *Antennaria dioica*, **Heath Fragrant-orchid** *Gymnadaenia borealis* and **Moonwort** *Botrychium lunaria* and merits further exploration.



There is only one site known for **Coralroot Orchid** *Coralorhiza trifida* in Dumfriesshire, found by Jeff Waddell in 2009. It was looked for and found to be in good health in 2022 with 51 spikes counted in an area 100 x 120m. The site on the edge of Dumfries was open water on a map of 1804. It is now carr woodland with birch and willow.

The **Coralroot Orchid** was growing in sphagnum at the base of birch trees. This appears to be a very isolated population.



Mudwort *Limosella aquatica* has never been recorded in Dumfriesshire previously and is probably the star find this year. It is a small annual plant of the muddy edges of permanent or temporary water bodies. This plant has a very scattered and intermittent occurrence across Britain. It occurs in adjacent Kirkcudbrightshire and Cumbria but is otherwise rare in south Scotland. Just a few plants were found on a Dumfriesshire group meeting. It was in a dried up scrape on the banks of the Lochar Water on WWT Caerlaverock Reserve.



Frog Rush *Juncus ranarius* is close to the very common **Toad Rush** *Juncus bufonius* but differs in the shorter compact growth, bunched flowers and rounded inner sepals. It occurs in brackish habitats. One previous record in 1979 by Olga Stewart was from the same hectad in the Caerlaverock area. The specimen found this year was sent to Mike Wilcox for confirmation. This was found on the same Dumfriesshire group meeting at the WWT Caerlaverock Reserve as the Mudwort.

Last year I reported the finding of the hybrid *Cirsium x wankelii* between *Cirsium palustre* **Marsh Thistle** and *Cirsium heterophyllum* **Melancholy Thistle**. I was interested to see whether the plant had survived the winter, whether there were other hybrids in the same vicinity and whether viable seed had been set. The answer appears to be yes to all three questions. The same plant had flowered again this year. Just over a kilometre further up the same valley another hybrid (plant in photo) was found. This had set some seed and at least one seedling has been grown from these seeds. The aim is to try grow this on next year to see if it resembles the adult hybrid.





Lesser Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera bifolia* is known currently from just one location in Dumfriesshire, on and around the old nuclear power station at Chapelcross where grassland has survived the post war agricultural “improvement”. So it was very good news when Randal Lamb sent me the attached photo and new site for this species. There were three spikes on Barr Hill in mid Nithsdale. This a new Hectad record for NX89.