

Field Botany in Renfrewshire

Newsletter - Spring 2023

Update from Keith Watson

The second year of activity for the newly formed 'Team 76' has seen a continuing high level of participation and coverage. Although the record-breaking total of 2021 has not been surpassed, the year's total is highly commendable and the quality and breadth of data remains at a high standard.

Special thanks go out once again to Michael for leading on co-ordination and communication across the networks, and to Peter for promptly producing colourful data-packed maps and statistics.

Total Records in 2022:

9186 records, including **851** taxa across **187** monads.

11 monads with more than 200 taxa recorded

31 monads with between 100 and 199 taxa recorded

14 monads with between 50 and 99 taxa recorded



Saxifraga hypnoides
(Mossy Saxifrage)

There were five Urban Flora Project outings (Erskine, Linwood, Gourrock, Johnstone and Glenburn in Paisley) and Malcolm Macneill has been busy as ever, recording over one third of all our 2022 records during his urban ramblings and continues to generate many new, exciting and often unexpected finds.

Jim Blackwood provided many records once again, a highlight being more Globeflower (*Trollius europaeus*) at Shutterflat on the edge of the vice-county (even though actually in North Ayrshire!). He has also found several populations of Common Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*), which seems to be on the increase. An early visit to the Calder Water above Lochwinnoch revealed large populations of Mossy Saxifrage (*Saxifraga hypnoides*): other highlights included Oak-fern (*Gymnocarpium dryopteris*) and Stone Bramble (*Rubus saxatilis*); sadly we did not find Early-purple Orchid, the target of our visit, but we will try again!

The high ground of the Renfrewshire Heights was visited in July 2023 where a small group wandered over many hectares of boggy moorland. Amid the often low diversity vegetation there was the

secretive Lesser Twayblade (*Neottia cordata*) located at a number of spots. A very pleasing find was a colony of Green-flowered Hawkweed (*Hieracium chloranthum*) on a rock ledge at Craig Minnan; this Hawkweed attracts attention by its green-tinged ligules (outer rays), helping to diagnose this species from an otherwise very difficult critical group.

I enjoyed a visit out to the coastline at Erskine, where (fortunately) the low tide and calm estuarine water exposed large populations of the diminutive Dwarf Eelgrass (*Zostera noltei*) and the seemingly scarcer Beaked Tasselweed (*Ruppia cirrhosa*): both are rare plants in the vice-county, known only in this area.



Hieracium chloranthum
(Green-flowered Hawkweed)

Angus Hannah made a very valuable contribution to the botanical knowledge of Renfrewshire by holding two Bramble workshops in Lochwinnoch (including an excursion to Johnstone). Attendees were able to see a range of Brambles from the local areas. In total 15 different Brambles were seen, including two first records for Renfrewshire. Let's keep this going!

I hope that we can maintain this high level and standard of local recording through 2023. We will continue to 'square bash' some low scoring monads but there are several rich habitats and landscapes that are on the field programme for the coming year, which should be enjoyable places to visit. Please get in touch about sites you want to visit or if you need some information about existing records or species of interest.



On the Bramble Workshop

I look forward to receiving your records and hopefully meeting up with some of you out in the field.

Network Zoom

On Saturday 4th March we held our first ever Zoom get-together across all three of the local botany networks in our wider area (Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Dunbartonshire). Many positive comments and ideas were put forward, giving us some new things to look forward to.



A Herbarium is a collection of preserved plant specimens

For example, in our Interview feature, we heard from Keith Watson who, as well as being the BSBI Vice-County Recorder for Renfrewshire, is Curator of Botany at Glasgow Museums. He has proposed a new project to mark the centenary of J.R. Lee's 'Flora of the Clyde Area', published in 1933. (see article below)

Keith has also underlined the value of visiting the Herbarium collections at either Glasgow Museums or the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (RBGE). It is hoped that we can arrange a group visit later in the year for those who are interested.

Another thing to come out of the Zoom event was a plea from many to do this more often! As a result, there will be something new on our programme this year: a couple of Zoom events where anyone can share photos of plants they want identified. It is not always possible to arrive at a conclusive determination from photos, but in a forum where people can contribute their own thoughts we should be able to do well.

Those who had taken part a year ago in the Study Groups held on Zoom by Peter Wiggins requested more of this. So planning is now underway for two new opportunities:

Firstly, a repeat of last year's Study Group topics will be run during the coming summer for those who have not taken part before. This is an excellent opportunity to build deeper plant knowledge in a collaborative group setting, with loads of photographs and tips (see the feedback article in the [Spring 2022 Newsletter](#)).

Secondly, a brand new programme of Study Groups is being devised for next winter - aimed at those who have taken part before.



Peter in action with a Study Group



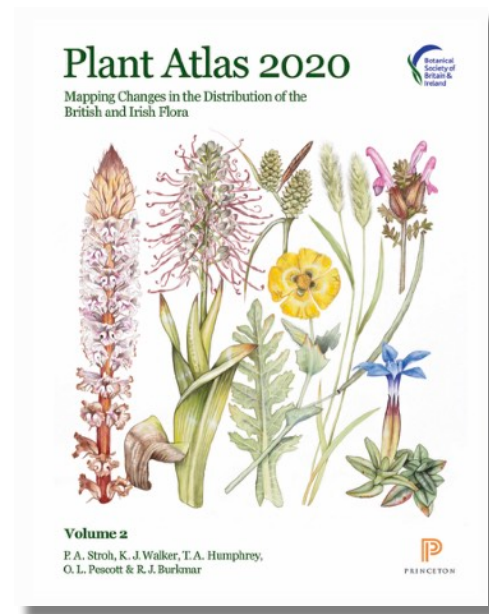
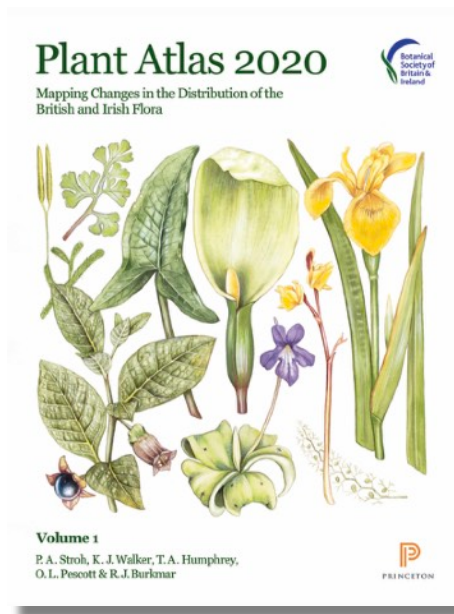
A field outing in progress

Our networks continue to grow (150 people are connected now) and Michael Philip listed a whole variety of things for which practical help is needed. The full list can be found at the end of this Newsletter: please challenge yourself to pick an item! One key to building our capability and running our wide-ranging programme is spreading the burden of leading outings. Several people have kindly offered to do this from time to time and it is very much appreciated. It must be stressed that advanced botanical experience is not a requirement: it's more a question of welcoming people as they arrive, following an outlined route or task, and making sure someone is writing stuff down. The group will record according to their combined skill level - which is all we ever do anyway.

Please contact Michael anytime - especially to indicate your interest in taking part in Study Groups, or with offers of practical help or involvement in other ways.

Plant Atlas 2020

Just a few days ago, in early March 2023, the BSBI published the eagerly-awaited Plant Atlas 2020.



Based on a dataset of some 26 million plant records gathered by 8,500 recorders over 178,000 recording days across the British Isles, this monumental work provides the most detailed picture ever achieved of the distribution of our wild plants.

The resulting printed version, in two large and heavy volumes, is of the very highest quality. In full colour throughout, and printed on heavy, glossy paper, this major work includes species text, trend analysis, dot maps and graphs of phenology and altitude occurrence for each of 2,863 species. Although the price tag is significant at £132, the value is unquestionable.

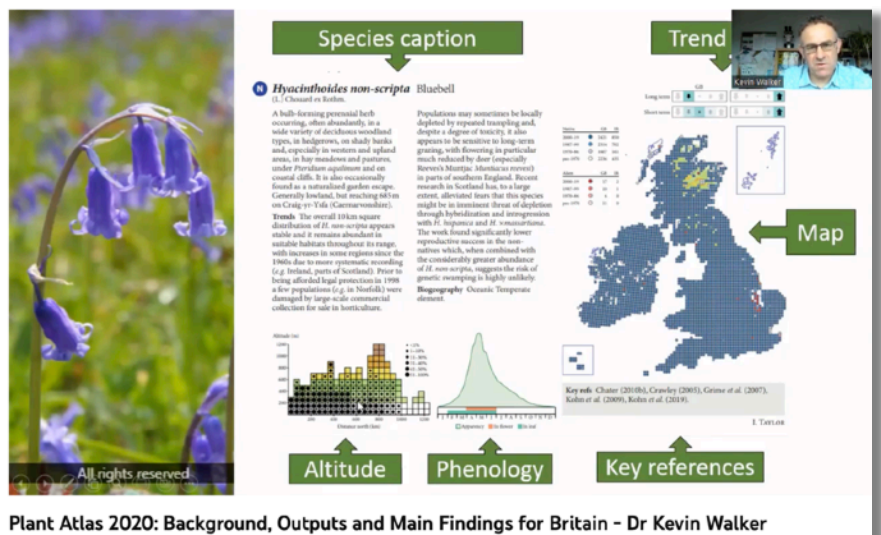
However, BSBI has also made the entire output available as a free-of-charge, public-facing website:

<https://plantatlas2020.org>

This online version has exactly the same data, plus many species photos, and coverage of a further 600+ species not included in the print version. Please visit the website and enjoy exploring! As a starting-point, go to the link above, click on 'Atlas' in the top bar and type in a species name.

Please tell your friends and contacts about this unparalleled resource, and please also do anything you can to bring it to the attention of politicians, NGOs and local officials. In pursuing the increasingly urgent environmental agenda, policy-makers and local decision-makers now have at their disposal a brand new tool to provide the latest evidence base for plant conservation and management.

BSBI Head of Science, Dr. Kevin Walker, introducing the content and findings at the launch of Plant Atlas 2020.



Plant Atlas 2020: Background, Outputs and Main Findings for Britain - Dr Kevin Walker

Some brief items

Sedge course

Jay Mackinnon, Lecturer in Applied Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University and BSBI Vice-County Recorder for West Lothian, has asked us to mention an online short course in the identification of Sedges:

I wonder if you would please circulate details of this online course to your local botany networks in case anyone is interested? It's about 20 hours of study at one's own pace over the spring to gain skill and confidence with keying out a variety of sedges.

More detail and sign-up at:

<https://www.napier.ac.uk/study-with-us/short-courses/introduction-to-sedges>

Dandelion alert

Following the success of our drive last year for photo-sets of Dandelions to send off to the referee, we invite you to participate again. The very brief window for Dandelion identification runs from mid April until around 10th May.

Please ask Michael to send you our PDF guide on what's required!

Centenary of Lee's Flora

Keith Watson has proposed a project to celebrate the centenary of J.R. Lee's 'Flora of the Clyde Area'.



Published in 1933, this Flora includes many hundreds of species found within the drainage area of the Clyde river system and estuary, from upper Lanarkshire all the way to eastern Kintyre and even Ailsa Craig.

The aim of the new project will be to account for the presence or absence of each of these species in the period since 2000, county by county.

Initially this will require digitising Lee's data, before making the comparison with current data from the BSBI database. Finally, in due course, there may be a need for some fieldwork to hunt for any species that can't otherwise be accounted for.

As in the case of the RPR Project, please offer help if you can. Much of it can be done without even leaving the house!

[Peter Wiggins has prepared this map showing the area covered by Lee's Flora]

A personal note (Michael Philip)

"Almost 43 years ago I began my career in schools, teaching 9-18 year-olds to play woodwind instruments. As of the school Easter holiday this year, I'm retiring from Music Education. I'll deeply miss the privilege of working with young people, seeing them develop as people and as musicians, but the time has come to leave behind the challenging environment of schools and the stress of music exams, ensemble rehearsals and concerts (and trying to remember bassoon fingerings!)

The good news is that I'm now embarking on a deeper involvement in field botany: network-building, recording and training, in our own networks and beyond, in both a voluntary and a professional capacity."

Urban Flora Project

In this, the final year of data-gathering for the Botanical Society of Scotland's 'Urban Flora Project' we will again be contributing by way of outings in Erskine, Bridge of Weir, Kilmacolm and Port Glasgow. Remember, the species diversity in towns is significantly higher than in the countryside so, if you've not had a taste of urban botany before, do join us for one of these!

The outings programme from April-July is being circulated now (July-October will be available in June).



A summer roadside



Trifolium medium (Zigzag Clover)

What you can do to help

Why not treat yourself to a Course or Workshop this year, or attend the Scottish Botanists Conference? Could you give a hand with data or research? Or act as receptionist at our Ferns Workshop in September? Or help on a Wildflower Walk for complete beginners? Or offer your expertise in websites or social media?

If you've not done so before, do come on one of our outings (or one of the BSBI's Field Meetings in other parts of the country) and enjoy new places, plants and people!

Things you can do:

Join an outing	Help with Data	Visit remote places	Be Tutor on a Workshop
Provide transport	Social media	Help train beginners	Take a Course (e.g. FISC or Identiplant)
Take photos	Workshop receptionist	Lead or host an Outing	Attend a Conference
Take notes or write lists	School event	Help with organising	Give a talk
Help build Programme	Learn some new plants	Go on a Workshop	Lee Project
Help with Newsletter	Do background research	Join a BSBI Committee	RPR Project
Join BSBI	Lead a Wildflower Walk	Write an article	Become Joint VCR
Do solo recording	Help with website	Attend a Field Meeting	Become VCR

The challenge to everyone is to find something on this list that you can do to continue the momentum of our network.

Please contact Michael for more information.

Information

Please join in our activities whenever you can. Some people may fear that recording plants will require expertise they don't possess: however the very opposite is true! It's fine just to tag along and be a 'silent' member of the party. You can watch, listen and ask lots of questions - how do you think everyone else learned what they know?

Peter is the person to send plant lists to. These are welcome from anyone, anytime. Do get out and record plants on your own - if you'd like some guidance on the best way to do recording, please get in touch. Records can be in the form of scanned lists or Recording Cards, spreadsheets or Word documents - or even paper lists by post or photos of the scribbles in your notebook!

Photographs, especially views of the Renfrewshire landscape or stunning pictures of plants, are always welcome. Any (but not all!) photos you submit may appear in Newsletters, the webpage or other literature.

You are welcome to email Keith, Peter or Michael at any time. They are also willing to have a go at identifying plants from photographs if you get stuck!

And please visit the Renfrewshire page on the BSBI website: <https://bsbi.org/renfrewshire>
Here you can refer to our Outings Programme and read past issues of the Newsletter - and if we should ever get out of touch, contact details can be found here as well.

Contact details

Keith Watson (Vice-county Recorder)

email: keithjwatson76@gmail.com

Peter Wiggins (receiver of data)

email: pswiggins@gmail.com

Michael Philip (network co-ordinator, photos, inquiries, newsletter)

email: botany@opus44.co.uk

Photo credits*:

<i>Saxifraga hypnoides</i>	Jim Blackwood, near Lochwinnoch, 1st June 2022
<i>Hieracium chloranthum</i>	Keith Watson, Craig Minnan, 10th July 2022
Bramble Workshop	Jim Blackwood, Lochwinnoch, 30th July 2022
A summer roadside	Jim Blackwood, near Whinnerston, 1st August 2022
<i>Trifolium medium</i>	Jim Blackwood, near Whinnerston, 20th July 2022

The Herbarium illustration is from the RBGE website.

The study group and field outing photos have been credited in previous Newsletters.

The Plant Atlas illustrations are taken from BSBI Atlas Launch material.

* Remember you're always welcome to send in photos, either for potential inclusion in the Newsletter or the webpage, or to request help in identifying a plant. Photos of 'people doing botany' are especially wanted!