

# Lanarkshire Botany

Autumn 2023



## Review of the season

This edition of the Newsletter is a patchwork of short items of interest, looking both backward at another busy year of botanical recording and forward to some of what next year may hold in store.



Group fieldwork during the Ferns Workshop at Falls of Clyde

## Ferns Workshop

We were delighted to host a BSBI Scotland workshop on 2nd September. Entitled “Ferns for Complete and Utter Beginners”, this attracted around 18 people from as far afield as Newcastle and Aberdeen to the wonderful Falls of Clyde Reserve to take the plunge into the identification of a dozen species of ferns.

Big thanks to our tutors Matt Harding, Liza Downie and Grahame Jarvis - and to The Scottish Wildlife Trust for making their classroom available for this training day.

## Local Partnerships

2023 has seen further development of our local partnerships with The Scottish Wildlife Trust, particularly at the Falls of Clyde, and with Countryside Rangers in South Lanarkshire Council. We have held outings in support of both, providing botanical records and informal training for staff and volunteers.

The botanical re-survey at Falls of Clyde is nearing completion: the final challenge will be a specialist visit next year to get into areas deemed to dangerous for the public!

Our support for South Lanarkshire's Countryside Rangers has included visits to Hamilton Low Parks and Fernbrae Meadows, building plant lists and offering botanical experiences for volunteers. A day at South Haugh in Hamilton was especially well attended: we gathered records for about half the site, with a promise to return next year!

## Urban Flora Project

2023 has been the final year of data collecting for the Botanical Society of Scotland's 'Urban Flora Project'. As in recent years we have played a full part, ensuring that west central Scotland will be well represented. Since the start of 2021 we have contributed detailed records from outings in numerous Lanarkshire towns:

**Airdrie** \* (2021); **Biggar** \* (2023); **Blantyre** (2023); **Coatbridge** (2023); **East Kilbride** (2021); **Glasgow** (various); **Hamilton** (2021); **Lanark** \* (2022); **Motherwell** (2022); **New Stevenston** (2023); **Shotts** (2022); **Strathaven** \* (2022); **Viewpark** (Uddingston) (2021); **Wishaw** (2021)

\* joint outing with a group from Botanical Society of Scotland

## Ravenscraig

The enormous brownfield site at Ravenscraig, Motherwell, continues to see gradual redevelopment. But there are botanical riches here, further highlighting the need for some imaginative intervention to see such places as worthy of conservation in their own right. Brownfield sites are not just 'waste ground' but havens of biodiversity and should be recognised as such.

Hamshya Rajkumar, a local artist and environmental M.Sc. student, has a particular love of the site and knows it intimately. This year she has discovered that the rare Yellow Bird's-nest is widespread there.

Other noteworthy species found in number on the site include:

*Pyrola minor*  
(Common Wintergreen)

*Neottia ovata*  
(Common Twayblade)

*Neottia nidus-avis*  
(Bird's-nest Orchid)



*Hypopitys monotropa* (Yellow Bird's-nest) at Ravenscraig

## **Study Groups**

Peter Wiggins will again be running study groups over the winter. They will follow the same pattern as the series which he ran two years ago, where the group looks together each time at a different family of plants.

If you are interested in taking part, please let Peter know.

Peter says, "This series will cover largely the same material as the previous winter course. Every session you will be asked to look at one or two species in advance and come prepared to contribute information briefly about these species. Together we will all learn about plants such as Bedstraws, St. John's-worts, Speedwells or Forget-me-nots."

These sessions will be using Zoom on Monday evenings starting at 7.30pm on the following dates:

13th November 2023

11th December 2023

15th January 2024

5th February 2024

26th February 2024

18th March 2024

Please note that this is a formal group activity: so if you choose to take part, please commit to full attendance if at all possible. The size of the group will be limited to 8 people (though, if there is sufficient demand, Peter will be happy to arrange a separate timetable for a second group).

Contact Peter to book your place - and it's free of charge!

[pswiggins@gmail.com](mailto:pswiggins@gmail.com)

## **Develop your skills**

Do you want to develop your plant identification skills?

One of the most effective ways is to take a walk in familiar territory and try to identify all the plants you see, and then regularly repeat this walk throughout the year. You will learn to see things, and learn to identify plants, in all stages of their growth. This means that you will be able to identify plants more easily when they are not yet in flower or when they have 'gone over'.

Many of us started doing this during the lockdowns and it has really improved our botany knowledge.

We would like to encourage you to try this next season starting in March. To help, Peter and Michael will be delighted to accept pictures of plants you would like help with and we may be able to join you on a walk. We will also hold a monthly Zoom meeting to learn from each other and discuss what we are all finding. We will send you an email throughout the season highlighting what to be looking out for in the streets and waste ground around us.

Whether you want to improve your plant identification skills for work, for fun, or just to make those dog walks more interesting, this is a great way to do it!

If you are interested, let Peter know:

[pswiggins@gmail.com](mailto:pswiggins@gmail.com)





A selection of photos from our website

Left: *Galeopsis speciosa* (Large-flowered Hemp-nettle)

Above: *Rubus chamaemorus* (Cloudberry)

Lower left: *Centaurium erythraea* (Common Centaury)

Below: *Potentilla sterilis* (Barren Strawberry)



Unbelievably, [vc77botany.org](http://vc77botany.org) is now **ten** years old!

It was set up in October 2013, to showcase wild plants that grow in Lanarkshire and now has over 900 species illustrated, using nearly 4,000 photographs from more than a score of contributors.

The website is intended to show our wide range of plants and to assist identification by highlighting some key features. It is great to hear feedback from people from using it: for example, following a request, there is now an additional index using common names.

Please have a look at the website. If you have any pictures taken in Lanarkshire that you think could be used, please include a note of the location, i.e. the 1-kilometre map square (monad) where each photo was taken, and the date, and send them to Peter: [pswiggins@gmail.com](mailto:pswiggins@gmail.com)

Peter will welcome your comments and suggestions: we want to make this great website even better.

The Facebook Group **Lanarkshire Botany** has been active in the second half of the season and Peter is hoping to develop this further next season as well. Please have a look: feedback welcome!

## Network update

Our Lanarkshire Botany Network was formed in the autumn of 2016 and has grown steadily ever since. There are currently exactly 100 people on our contacts list, many of whom have joined us in fieldwork whether regularly or occasionally.

With this upsurge in interest in wild plants has come some spectacular achievement! Since the start of 2017, through regular field outings, occasional special events and partnerships, and lots of dedicated work by some busy individuals, we have contributed over 81,000 plant records to the BSBI Plant Distribution Database.

And as people join in, they bring ideas with them. As you have read above, our photographic website has really taken off and the use of Zoom has made possible not only a programme of Study Groups but also occasional meetings for a wider audience. For example, the recent Zoom evening on the subject of people's favourite flower books and reference material produced some great stories - as well as bringing to our notice some titles we might like to put on our Christmas list!

We have played a full part in the BSS Urban Flora Project (see above) and we've hosted three BSBI Workshops (Brambles in 2019, Grasses in 2022 and Ferns in 2023).

In total, we have recorded plants in 1,204 monads (1km map squares) in the last seven years, which is roughly half the total area of the vice-county of Lanarkshire.

On the basis of such activity, sister networks were launched in the neighbouring vice-counties of Renfrewshire and Dunbartonshire in 2021 and these have been enjoying similar success.

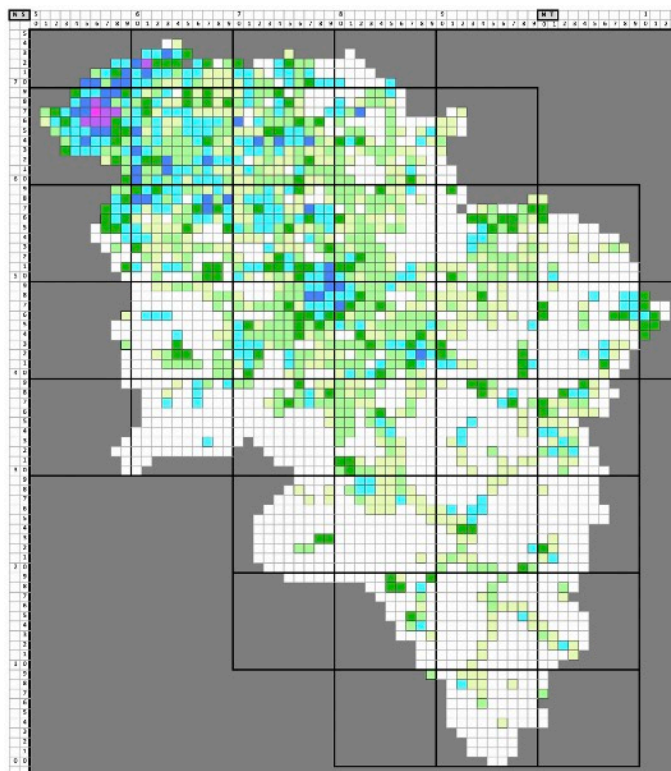
However, for this activity to be sustainable in the years ahead, we are now at the point of having to restructure a little. During the coming winter we will be consulting with those of you who have been most involved and inviting your feedback and creative ideas. We envisage a preparatory questionnaire followed by a Zoom get-together to explore options. Some things may be scaled back, some things may be rethought - and no doubt some brand new ideas will be implemented.

Whether or not you are directly approached, please feel free to feed in your own thoughts to this process by contacting Michael at any time. What have you most enjoyed? What have you learned, or what would you like to learn more about? What suggestions do you have to offer about our Newsletter, our website, our Zoom activities? Who else should we be talking to as we seek to record plants as widely as possible? Can you offer practical help with leading or hosting outings, taking photos, organising events, providing transport (car, minibus, boat, mountain bike), or doing data or research work?

Michael's email address is: [botany@opus44.co.uk](mailto:botany@opus44.co.uk)

As the network grows, there are always opportunities for people to step up and lend a hand in all sorts of ways. Although we are the local face of BSBI, our network operates informally for the most part as a bunch of enthusiasts: so there are no committee meetings, no budget, no regular commitments. This informality and shared load-carrying has been the secret of our success.

Big thanks to everyone who has already shared time, skills and experience to get us to this point.



Plant recording activity in Lanarkshire from 2017 to date.  
Each square is a 1km map square (monad)

Key:

Green = under 100 species

Light blue = over 100 species

Dark blue = over 200 species

Purple/pink = a ridiculous number of species!



## Lee's 'Flora of the Clyde Area'

By way of marking the centenary of this celebrated book (in 2033) we will be part of a wider effort to compare current data with that of 100+ years ago across the whole River Clyde catchment. J.R. Lee noted where each species occurred, simply as a presence or absence in each of the vice-county territories.

Thanks to dedicated work by Liza Downie, we now have Lee's data in digital form. Comparison between the two data-sets can now be undertaken and, once all current records have been accounted for, the hunt will be on to attempt to rediscover any species recorded 100 years ago and not seen this century!

If you'd like to be involved in some way in this fascinating project, do let us know. We'll need people good with data analysis, report-writing, planning - and organising and implementing targeted fieldwork.

## Rare Plant Register

As we've reported previously, a similar exercise is underway to compile the first ever Rare Plant Register for Lanarkshire. Again there are opportunities for research, authoring, data-handling, photography and careful fieldwork. It's a big project to cover, but we're a big team now!

Please get in touch if you'd like to be involved.

*Primula juliae* (Julia's Primrose):  
Lanarkshire is one of just two  
occurrences in the British Isles!



## Keep in touch

We appreciate your emails on all sorts of botanical matters - keep them coming!

You can also keep in touch via the Lanarkshire page on the BSBI website, which is updated regularly: that's the place to read past issues of this Newsletter, and our Outings Programme.

Michael Philip (BSBI Joint Vice-county Recorder, vc77)

email: [botany@opus44.co.uk](mailto:botany@opus44.co.uk)

Peter Wiggins (BSBI Joint Vice-county Recorder, vc77)

email: [pswiggins@gmail.com](mailto:pswiggins@gmail.com)

### Photo credits\*:

Group fieldwork	Michael Philip, Falls of Clyde, 2nd September 2023
<i>Hypopitys monotropa</i>	Hamshya Rajkumar, Ravenscraig, 14th July 2023
(Leafy lane)	Michael Philip, nowhere-in-particular, 25th August 2023
<i>Galeopsis speciosa</i>	Jill Williams, Buchley (nr Bishopbriggs), 29th September 2018
<i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>	John Hawell, Coomb Dod (date not stated)
<i>Centaureum erythraea</i>	Michael Pink, Baron's Haugh, 28th July 2008
<i>Potentilla sterilis</i>	Peter Wiggins, nr Cowgill Upper Reservoir, 14th June 2016
<i>Primula juliae</i>	Peter Wiggins, near Crawford (location withheld), 5th May 2019

\* 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!