

West Central Scotland  
**Field Botany Networks**

Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Dunbartonshire

Newsletter - Spring 2024

**Network update**

*The times, they are a-changin'* [Bob Dylan]

There is no doubt that the environmental agenda has rapidly become a primary focus and there is a real sense of urgency in society at large to engage with the natural world and to become involved in learning and practical action to mitigate biodiversity loss.



*Orchis mascula* (Early Purple-orchid)

Against that background, we are in a very strong position to offer local training and field experience - as well as continuing the vital task of recording and monitoring species distribution at a time of rapid change.

Such has been the growth of interest in field botany across our three local networks, that we have had to accept the challenge of doing things in new ways.

Following a recent Zoom consultation with a representative cross-section of many of our most active people, it has been decided to amalgamate some of our functions. This will not only give everyone greater opportunities for fieldwork and learning, but also avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

Big thanks must go to all who have contributed ideas, helping us evolve boldly to a new way of working.

Read on for details - there will be lots of new things for you to enjoy!



Across our three local networks there are almost **200** people now linked up. Just in the last three years, we have held over **150** field outings and uploaded over **118,000** records to the national database.

## Newsletter

This issue of the Newsletter is the first to include all three of our vice-counties in a single publication. But it is also a 'transition edition' . . .

We are delighted to announce that, from the Summer issue onwards, Frazer Henderson has agreed to take on the editorship of an expanded newsletter for the Network. Like many of us he is an enthusiastic, amateur botanist. Though a long-time gardener, as well as a grower and shower of bulbous and alpine plants, it wasn't until he took a Field Botany course at RBG Edinburgh that a serious interest in plants blossomed. That subsequently led to a series of sabbaticals from his work as a policy advisor to governments in order to search out interesting plants, particularly tulip species in central Asia.



Frazer examining *Asteriscus sericeus* (Canary Island Daisy) in Fuerteventura

Last summer, having taken early retirement, he joined BSBI (and our Network) with the intention of learning more about the flora of Scotland and can be occasionally found on the shale bings and coal tips of the Central Belt recording clubmosses and, as he says, ". . . studiously avoiding (at least for now) any identification of grasses or sedges!"

Under Frazer's leadership the Newsletter will have a completely new look, and will be bigger and more varied. He is already calling for submissions of photos (especially of people doing botany); brief reports of outings; interesting species finds; short articles which tell stories of your experiences and learning; helpful identification tips; progress reports; opinion pieces; ideas and correspondence. Please support this significant new development by sending in material!

Frazer's email address is:  
[frazerhenderson1@hotmail.com](mailto:frazerhenderson1@hotmail.com)

Due to the expected increase in file-size, we are choosing to discontinue emailing the Newsletter to you as a PDF. From now on we will publish it only on the BSBI website and a link will be sent to you by email. You can then choose whether to read it online, download it or print it.

### **Best find of 2023!**

On a walk in Craighendran last July, Alison Rutherford saw an unusual plant which had recently appeared on a footpath.

The shoot had escaped under a high stone wall in response to severe cutting-back of the parent shrub.

In case it was further attacked by over-zealous weedkillers, Alison collected a specimen and potted it up.



Examination by an expert in Araliaceae (excluding *Hedera*) at the National Plant Collections led to its identification:

*Tetrapanax papyrifer* 'Rex'

Although the BSBI database had this species & cultivar in its menu, it had never before been required, so this is **a first record for the British Isles!**

## Outings Programme

The Outings Programme for the first half of the 2024 season has now been published.

Because the programme now covers all three vice-counties, this year you will have a much wider choice of dates, venues and geographical range! There is also a greater emphasis on training and learning, with numerous outings now given specific bias towards encouraging you to build your skills.



View south across Loch Lomond from Glen Douglas

The combined territory of our three vice-counties is huge: approaching 4,000 square km from the Dumfries and Galloway border all the way to the north end of Loch Lomond, and from Gourrock to Biggar. While some of you may relish the challenge of travelling to remote areas and rough terrain, others will prefer more local and accessible walks. Please support your local events as well as allowing yourself to explore more widely sometimes.

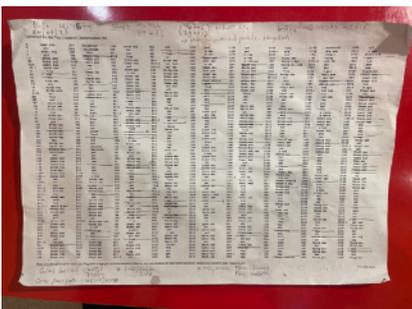
We have added other new dimensions to the Programme: not all outings are at weekends, some are evening events, and information on public transport options is now provided for most outings.

## Social Media

We owe a great debt to the many people who do plant recording on their own. A large percentage of the records gathered in the past three years across our territories has been submitted by individuals.

To encourage more spontaneous collaborations in the field, we want to enable messages like: "I'm heading out to Whitelee Forest on Thursday to do some recording. Anyone like to join me?"

This will be on a social media platform, and strictly on an 'opt in' basis. Further news on this soon.



**We get to some great places!**



Bizzyberry Hill, near Biggar



Hill country north of Glen Douglas



The Clyde shore, near the Erskine Bridge



Above Port Glasgow



Hamilton Low Parks (very close to M74)



Inchmoan island, Loch Lomond

## Develop your skills

The very best way to build skills is to spend time in the field with people who know a bit more than you do. However, we also offer a range of other ways you can engage with learning and fieldwork:

- **Study Groups** Short Zoom group study courses are arranged from time to time by Peter Wiggins. Some are aimed at beginners, while others are for the more experienced. Please contact Peter for more information: [pswiggins@gmail.com](mailto:pswiggins@gmail.com)
  
- **Facebook** There is a Facebook Group called **Clyde Wildflowers**. This is where you can share news or photos and ask questions. This group is closed to the general public, but you are welcome to join. Just contact Peter for details.
  
- **WhatsApp** A brand new WhatsApp Group is being formed. Its purpose is exclusively to make it easy for people to meet up more spontaneously to do recording. Again, Peter's the man to apply to if you would like access.
  
- **Photo website** 'Flowers of Lanarkshire' is our website devoted to the county's flora. The photo galleries present a wide range of wild plants, and draw attention to some of their most helpful identification features. Go to: <https://www.vc77botany.org/>
  
- **Training Pack** Again based on the Lanarkshire flora, this PDF publication covers 50 of the most common species. There are photos and jargon-free descriptions - and even an optional TEST to help embed knowledge! This is available from Michael Philip on request: [botany@opus44.co.uk](mailto:botany@opus44.co.uk)
  
- **Workshops** The Outings Programme includes (in grey italic) a wide range of plant identification workshops, both local and national, some charged and some free.  
  
There are many, many more Workshops, Training Field Meetings and Residential Courses offered by BSBI, the Field Studies Council and other organisations.
  
- **Courses** The BSBI offers two, more formal, training opportunities:  
  
The [Field Identification Skills Certificate](#) (FISC) is designed to give you an assessment of your current skill level, and to point you towards next steps.  
  
[Identiplant](#) is a one-year home-study course, supported by a personal Tutor. It is designed for those who want to go deeper into botany.
  
- **BSBI website** There is a mine of helpful learning material on the BSBI website: <https://bsbi.org/>  
  
Please take time to explore this, including the dedicated YouTube channel which has many excellent videos on identifying species.  
  
There is also a dedicated page for each of our three vice-counties:  
  
vc77 **Lanarkshire** <https://bsbi.org/lanarkshire-v-c-77>  
vc76 **Renfrewshire** <https://bsbi.org/renfrewshire>  
vc99 **Dunbartonshire** <https://bsbi.org/dunbartonshire>  
  
Here you can access the Outings Programme and all past issues of Newsletters. It's also a route for you to get back in touch if we ever lose track of each other!

Our local botany networks are networks in the pure sense - a web of connections between interested people who, through sharing their skills and enthusiasm, have built all the capabilities outlined above. We are not an 'organisation', so have no subscription, no committee, no budget, no AGM.

However we should also take a moment to commend membership of the Society under which we operate. Many of you have taken the plunge and joined BSBI in recent years. (Perhaps you'd like to send a note to our new Editor about why you joined and what you have gained from it . . . ?)

- **Membership** All the resources on the BSBI website are public-facing and free of charge. This includes access to the amazing Plant Atlas 2020: <https://plantatlas2020.org/>

But there are many advantages to be gained from Membership of the Society:

- discounts on plant Workshops
- discounts on all purchases from Summerfield Books
- the annual Yearbook, which includes details of training events nationwide
- the quarterly periodical BSBI News
- access (by request) to the huge BSBI Plant Distribution Database

Full details can be found at: <https://bsbi.org/join-us>



### Keep in touch

We appreciate your emails on all sorts of botanical matters - please keep them coming. We're also happy to identify plants from your photographs (though we can't always guarantee success!)

<u>Name &amp; role</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
Michael Philip (VCR, vc99 & Joint VCR, vc77)	<a href="mailto:botany@opus44.co.uk">botany@opus44.co.uk</a>	Dunbartonshire data Outings Programme Network admin
Peter Wiggins (Joint VCR, vc77)	<a href="mailto:pswiggins@gmail.com">pswiggins@gmail.com</a>	Lanarkshire data Renfrewshire data receiver Website, Facebook & Study Groups
Keith Watson (VCR, vc76)	<a href="mailto:keithjwatson76@gmail.com">keithjwatson76@gmail.com</a>	Renfrewshire data validation Herbarium inquiries
Frazer Henderson (Editor)	<a href="mailto:frazerhenderson1@hotmail.com">frazerhenderson1@hotmail.com</a>	Newsletter

Please, please send in loads of photos and material (however brief) for the Newsletter!!  
The first edition of our new-look publication is scheduled for early July: let's make it special.



View towards Renfrewshire from Dunbartonshire



View towards Dunbartonshire from Renfrewshire

### Photo credits\*:

<i>Orchis mascula</i>	Michael Pink, near Strathaven, 9th May 2013
Frazer Henderson	self-portrait, Fuerteventura, 5th March 2024
<i>Tetrapanax papyrifer</i> 'Rex'	Michael Philip, Helensburgh, 2nd August 2023
Loch Lomond view	Michael Philip, Glen Douglas, 23rd August 2023

#### Solo recording miniatures:

Record card	Grahame Jarvis, 31st July 2023
Dandelion ( <i>Taraxacum faeroense</i> )	Michael Philip, 17th May 2023
GPS location (with <i>Cryptogramma crispera</i> )	Stan Campbell, 23rd July 2023
Alison Rutherford hunting Rustyback	Michael Philip, 2nd August 2022
Bizzyberry Hill	Peter Wiggins, near Biggar, 28th May 2023
Hill country	Grahame Jarvis, Glen Douglas, 2nd July 2023
Clyde shore above Port Glasgow	Kirsty Menzies, Boden Boo, 7th August 2022
Hamilton Low Parks	Liz McTeague, 16th July 2023
Inchmoan	Melanie Craig, 20th May 2023
Renfrewshire from Dunbartonshire	Kirsty Menzies, 18th June 2023
Dunbartonshire from Renfrewshire	Michael Philip, Kilcreggan, 15th July 2021
	Michael Philip, Darndaff Muir, 3rd September 2023

\* 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!

And finally . . .

We just had to share this delightful portrait of *Saxifraga tridactylites* (Rue-leaved Saxifrage) by Fiona Merrilees, taken by holding her phone camera to her hand lens.

This species has been the subject of an intensive solo recording project in recent years by Malcolm Macneill, who has found huge populations of it across our urban areas.

It has long been generally scarce in Scotland, mostly confined to coasts, but has more recently become a highly successful coloniser of waste ground, often in its thousands!

