

What does a VCR do?



Vice-County Recorders (VCRs) are voluntary post-holders of the Society, appointed by the Society to collect and maintain records of vascular plants and charophytes on its behalf within a specific vice-county, and to provide information based on these records in response to enquiries.

The network of more than 150 VCRs covering the whole of Britain and Ireland is an enduring source of pride to BSBI, and one of its most distinctive features. VCRs are a huge source of energy and expertise and support many of the BSBI's projects and objectives.

This paper provides a summary of the functions that VCRs agree to undertake, and guidance on how they should be carried out. It also outlines the support that the Society will endeavour to provide. Further relevant information is available on the BSBI website.

1. SUMMARY OF FUNCTIONS OF RECORDERS

1.1 Requirements VCRs are volunteers, but by accepting their appointment they agree:

- To make, receive, compile and maintain records of vascular plants and charophytes within their vice-county on behalf of the Society and to provide these records frequently to the BSBI central Distribution Database (DDB) in full detail
- To ensure that, where necessary, records are expertly verified, and supported by authenticated voucher material (plant voucher specimen or photo verified by a plant referee)
- To validate and verify records on the DDB
- To report to the Society on recording activity within their vice-county
- To assist other Society members with identification or information requests concerning vascular plants in their vice-county
- To ensure, in the event of a VCR's retirement, resignation or death, that the Society has returned to it, or passed to their successor as

- To participate in Society projects as set out in the current Recording Strategy. Where this might not be possible, they should talk to the relevant Country Officer, so that alternative plans can be made
- To participate in and promote botanical activity within their vice-county
- To develop and maintain a web page on the BSBI website
- To host a BSBI Field Meeting in the vice-county regularly
- To answer outside requests for information on plants in the vice-county, in line with the policies of the Society.

Writing a County flora or other publications is encouraged by the Society, but not required.

2. SOCIETY SUPPORT

The Society will support VCRs by making available:

- Support from its staff, particularly the Country Officers, who are there to help and advise VCRs
- Training events and workshops (such as the Country and Recorders' Conferences)
- Access to all the data for the vice-county held by the Society on the DDB, together with guidance on how to use it and how to validate records
- A VCR discussion forum within the DDB
- A list of members for the vice-county, and for adjoining counties if required, through the Membership Secretary
- Advice on computer hardware and software, including licensing and support for BSBI's preferred software (currently MapMate), and on GPS systems
- Assistance with obtaining data and other materials from the previous incumbent
- Advice on publications, on funding for these, and on publicity relating to recording activity
- Advice on dealing with third parties (see section 6, below)

BSBI VCR Guidelines

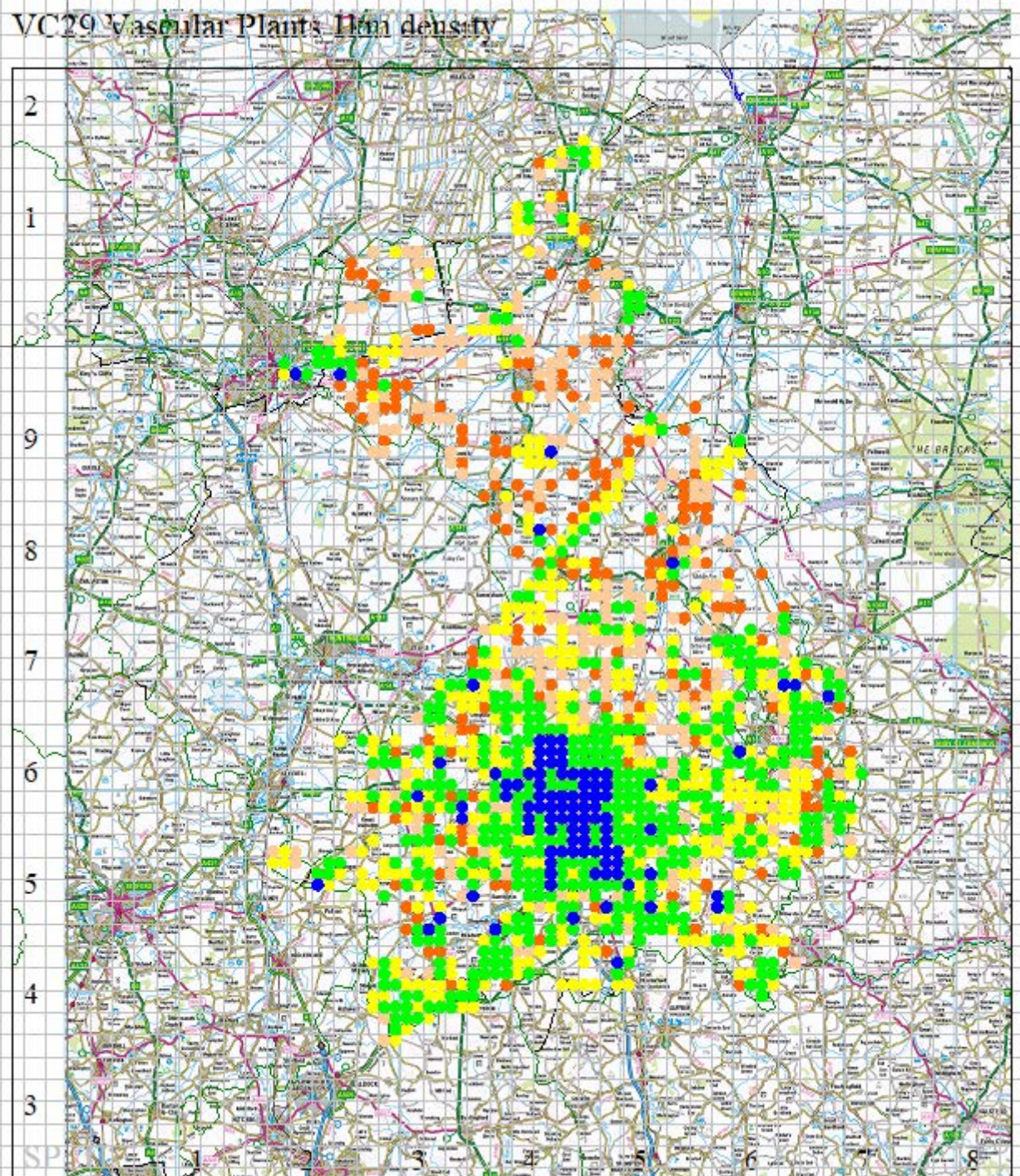
These are not easy to find and are more about what to do than how to do it.

Are they too daunting?

VC29 Vascular Plants Item density

Make records

A rather large proportion of the post Atlas 2020 records in v.c.29 are mine. I do need to visit the fens more though!



Record entry

Data Entry: New Record - Vascular Plants (microspecies) and Charophytes in VC29

Records Fields Query Help

Taxon

Quantity Stage

Site

Date Status

Recorder Determiner

Method

Reference

Comment

Ready

The majority of my records go in through the MapMate interface. A few species not listed in MapMate used to go in through the DDb interface, but.....

Distribution Database > New Record (observation or specimen) [my mapmate](#)

Tools New maps search search history

Record of a plant occurrence, based on a field observation, voucher specimen or literature report.

taxon original id id comment

date date (dd/mm/yyyy) single date

site name

grid reference grid square source recorder

locality altitude (m) site notes

people recorder/collector

attributes label →

notes label comment note

reference

images image url title description

record status

type of record



Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland

Record a plant

Add a one-off find quickly.

Resume survey

Continue Cambridge, Donkey's Common TL4558
2024-03-20

Start a new survey

Enter records for a single site.

Add a set of casual records

Enter a mixed set of records from several locations or dates.

Spreadsheet records

Some recorders do submit records in a spreadsheet, but only rarely are these in a standard format. Other issues include using a mix of Stace II, III and IV names. I wrote a computer program to correct names and then check through records and show species that are either on the RPCC or are uncommon in the county. This last stage could be done on the DDb.

UC: *Dactylorhiza x grandis* 15 Wicken Fen: Sedge Fen: Compartment 11: Spinney Bank
north TL55870929 Anon Somebody 16/06/2023 "2 tall
spikes, annual cut area"

RP: *Juncus acutiflorus* Wicken Fen: Sedge Fen: Compartment 11: Spinney Bank north
TL55870929 Anon Somebody 16/06/2023 freq in fen
meadow

My local records centre has software that checks grid references against site names and this often throws up mistakes made by the recorder.

Individual reports

In case you have not seen, there looks to be quite a few patches of *Filago vulgaris* (Common Cudweed) on the slope up to the Stapleford Parish Pit. There are a couple of small plants as you go past no. 3 of the cottages, and then more as you go up the slope, here and there almost up to the Pit gate. Most of it is near the middle, where people walk. I'm attaching a few photos, which I thought good to have as it is listed as near threatened in Harrap's guide to Wild Flowers, although locally common in E. Anglia.

Agrostis stolonifera* x *Polypogon monspeliensis (a) Four plants, with both parents, on a disused area of agricultural hardstanding, north side of New Road, west of Delve Farm, Chatteris, TL4159.8662, 8 August 2021, ACL (**CGE**); (b) Three plants, with both parents, in winter wet area on former chicken farm, Broad Lane, Cottenham, TL4469.6860, 12 August 2021, ACL (**CGE**).

Verify BSBI records

122 records matched your query.

<< first < prev 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 next > last >>

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> record	<input type="checkbox"/> taxon	recorder	<input type="checkbox"/> vc	locality	grid ref	date	<input type="checkbox"/> status
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Luzula campestris	jerry2018	VC29	Cambridgeshire, UK	TL4960744892	8/4/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Caltha palustris	Miles, Lera	VC29	Cambridgeshire, England, GB	TL4215960032	5/4/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Erodium cicutarium s.s.	jerry2018	VC29	Cambridgeshire, UK	TL5010544364	4/4/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Anthriscus sylvestris	jerry2018	VC29	Cambridgeshire, England, GB	TL4963244809	3/4/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Glechoma hederacea	jerry2018	VC29	Cambridgeshire, UK	TL4941244623	3/4/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Mahonia aquifolium	Helfand, Rosalind	VC29	Huntingdon Rd, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0JG, UK	TL4229160998	30/3/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Primula veris	Helfand, Rosalind	VC29	Girton, Cambridge, UK	TL4219061085	30/3/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Lunaria annua	Helfand, Rosalind	VC29	Girton, Cambridge, UK	TL4229961174	30/3/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Glechoma hederacea	jerry2018	VC29	Cambridgeshire, UK	TL5017444248	26/3/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Pentaglottis sempervirens	martinward	VC29	1 Buff Lane, Sandy, England, GB	TL2822350941	22/4/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Alliaria petiolata	martinward	VC29	Main Street, Sandy, England, GB	TL2857050874	21/4/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Primula veris	martinward	VC29	Main Street, Sandy, England, GB	TL2856850864	21/4/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Bellis perennis	jerry2018	VC29	A1301, Saffron Walden, England, GB	TL5005144445	2/1/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Urtica dioica	jerry2018	VC29	CB10, Saffron Walden, England, GB	TL4974444017	2/1/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Helleborus foetidus	jerry2018	VC29	Mill Lane, Saffron Walden, England, GB	TL5014544280	4/1/2019	RPR
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Phragmites australis	Miles, Lera	VC29	Cambridgeshire, England, GB	TL4800562266	13/1/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Capsella bursa-pastoris	Pople, Rob	VC29	Cambridge, UK	TL4640159168	27/1/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Ilex aquifolium	Pople, Rob	VC29	Cambridge, UK	TL4600758323	28/1/2019	
<input type="checkbox"/>	not transferred	Bellis perennis	Pople, Rob	VC29	Cambridge, UK	TL4614259029	29/1/2019	

A lot of older records on iRecord are not acceptable due to use of a pseudonym or a mismatch between grid reference and site name.

Exchange records with the local environmental records centre

I verify records for CPERC and then incorporate them in my database and the DDb, and also send records to them in return. CPERC has software that checks grid references against site names and this often throws up mistakes made by the recorder.

CPERC
CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH
ENVIRONMENTAL RECORDS CENTRE

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Create and maintain a Rare Plant Register

The v.c.29 register is a relatively simple listing of all plants with a local or England threat status, or which are in significant local or national decline. It includes a few alien plants of local significance. There is also a list of invasive species, which are of conservation concern for a different reason.



Pulsatilla vulgaris

The v.c.29 Register of Plants of Conservation Concern

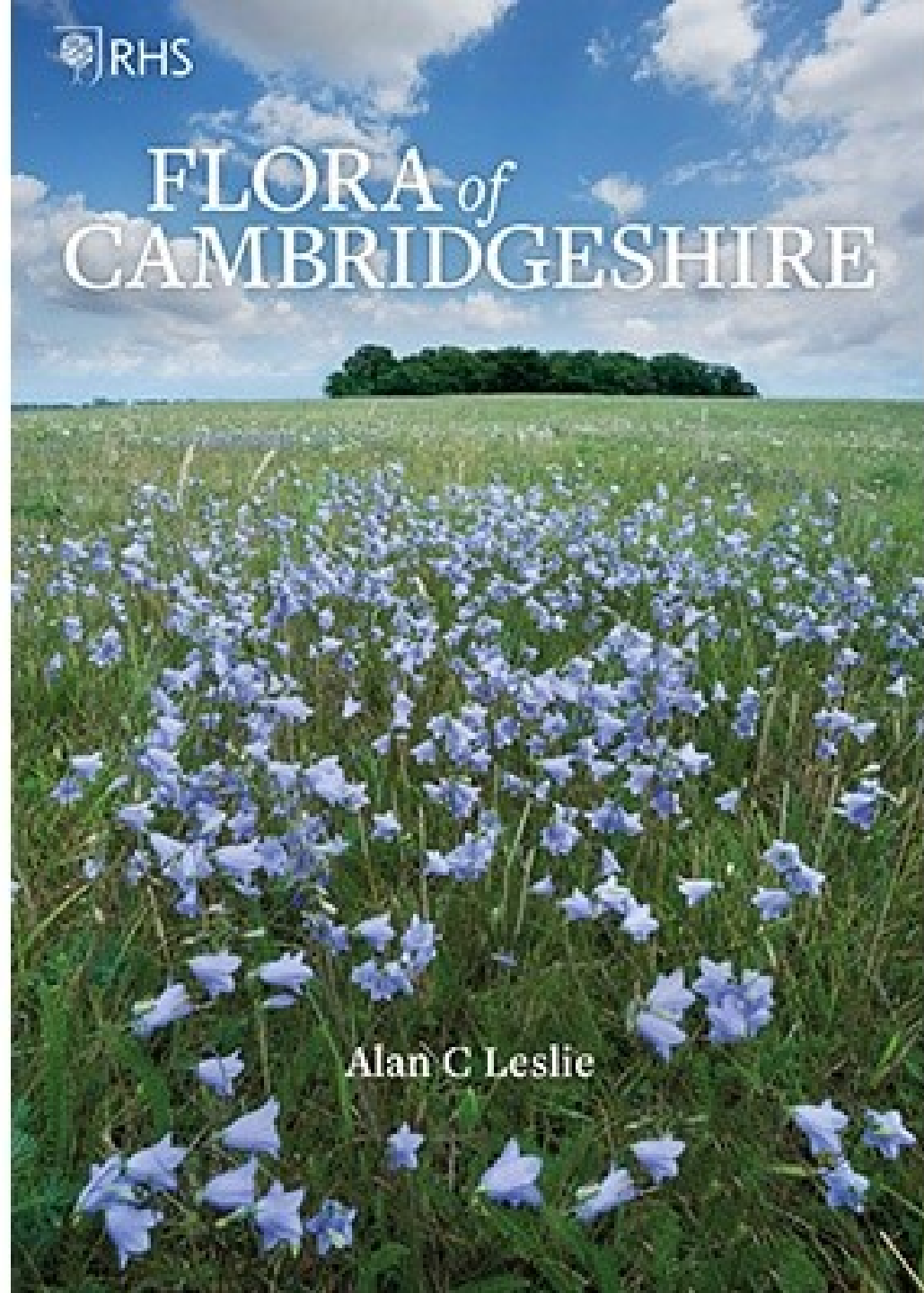
The register gives species status, monad counts and dates of first and last occurrence.

Taxon	Name	County Status	Monad Count all years	Monad Count to 2003	Monad Count 2004 – 2023	First	Last	Comment	GB Status	Eng Status
<i>Achillea ptarmica</i>	Sneezewort	VU	63	32	43	1660	2023	CP. MTH decline	LC	LC
<i>Aconitum napellus</i>	Monk's-hood	R, EN	5	5	2	1895	2022	Flora. H decline	WL	WL
<i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>	Maidenhair Fern	R	7	3	4	1911	2022	Flora	NS	LC
<i>Adoxa moschatellina</i>	Moschatel	S, VU	14	7	9	1887	2023	H decline	LC	LC
<i>Aegonychon purpureocaeruleum</i>	Purple Gromwell	R	5	2	3	1958	2021	Escape	LC	LC
<i>Agrostemma githago</i>	Corncockle	VU	61	9	54	1823	2023	Mostly introduced. H decline	WL	WL
<i>Agrostis canina</i>	Velvet Bent	R	3	1	2	1860	2017		LC	LC
<i>Agrostis vinealis</i>	Brown Bent	R	6	3	4	1974	2020		LC	LC
<i>Aira caryophyllea</i>	Silver Hair-grass	S, EN	17	9	10	1660	2023	MTH decline	LC	LC
<i>Aira praecox</i>	Early Hair-grass	S, EN	9	4	7	1946	2023	H decline	LC	LC
<i>Ajuga chamaepitys</i>	Ground-pine	R	5	5	1	1660	2022	Wild in CUBG	EN	EN
<i>Alisma gramineum</i>	Ribbon-leaved Water-plantain	R	4	3	2	1972	2007	CBAP	CR	CR
<i>Alisma lanceolatum</i>	Narrow-leaved Water-plantain		108	45	79	1933	2023	CP	LC	Dec
<i>Alisma plantago-aquatica</i>	Water-plantain	Dec	540	291	396	1660	2023	M decline 27%	LC	LC

Some of the plants here noted as in decline in England need revising following publication of Atlas 2020. NS and NR have been updated for the next edition. There may be additions, eg *Lamium purpureum* (Red Dead-nettle) is apparently in decline!

Write a Flora

Fortunately for me, my predecessor, Alan Leslie, who is now the emeritus recorder, completed a Flora in 2019.





Cambridgeshire Flora Group

Newsletter 2024

2nd Edition

Run a local group

I produce an annual newsletter and aim for roughly monthly meetings from March to October.

News

Cambridge was one of the two locations in England that staged the launch of the BSBI Plant Atlas 2020. The British Antarctic Survey (BAS) hosted the event, and there was a good attendance, both in person and on line. Astrid Biddle produced a magnificent pair of iced cakes showing the covers of the two volumes, and one was duly cut by Pete Stroh (BSBI Science Officer and Atlas author) and Daniel Zeichner (the local MP who just happened to be the shadow Environment Secretary). Those assembled didn't manage to consume the other volume and it was duly appreciated the following Monday by the BAS students!



Pete Stroh and Daniel Zeichner cutting the Plant Atlas 2020 cake [Peter Leonard].

"Star finds", those species new to the county, those re-found after a long absence, or rare plants found in a new location continue to be made. Some are the results of deliberate searches whilst others are accidental finds by groups or individuals. Alan Leslie describes some of these exciting finds in his section.

The Cambridgeshire County Wildlife Sites Panel (covering most of v.cc.29 and 31 and some bits of v.cc. 19, 26, 28, 32 and 53) met twice during the year and considered several new sites in v.c.29. A new criterion for designating sites as Important Arable Plant Areas on the basis of their arable plant flora was agreed. Somewhat coincidentally the Wildlife Trust has just purchased a section of the Fleam Dyke as a new nature reserve and the new site includes an arable margin, parts of which are of county significance for its arable flora. The most significant area will hopefully be designated in due course, with the rest being allowed to become chalk grassland.

On the BSBI front I continue as the Hon. Field Meetings Secretary and Chair of the Committee for England (CfE) and do various other odds and ends as well. Both roles keep me pretty busy, particularly when you add in organising the BSBI Annual Summer Meetings (ASM), Recorders' Meetings and the England launch of the new Atlas. 2024 has a Recorders' Meeting aimed at botanists wanting to start recording more formally, which is at Preston Montford near Shrewsbury and the ASM is in Guernsey. You don't have to be a member of the BSBI to participate in these, although being one does make them cheaper.

Run a national meeting

I usually run one every other year, though a local group meeting can be advertised nationally. I did this for our first meeting of this year and attracted a visitor from Skye!

The illustration is from a BSBI beginners' meeting at which they found *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Bird's-foot Clover).



Check rare plants

The LORE project listed native and archaeophyte plants not seen in hectads since 2000. Some of these are still present in the original site, others move around. It is also sometimes worth checking on the health of really rare species, though these are mostly in well known and protected sites.

On one excursion we made an accidental find of *Bromus arvensis* (Field Brome) last seen 35 years ago.



Maintain a web page

Cambridgeshire vc29



The [Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland](#) vice-county (vc) recorder for the "Old" county of Cambridgeshire (ie excluding Huntingdonshire) is Jonathan Shanklin. All county records go into the [BSBI "Distribution Database"](#) so that they can be accessed more widely. Alan Leslie (now recorder emeritus) is a good port of call if you have an unusual specimen that needs checking. Plantlife give the county flower as *Pulsatilla vulgaris*, which is now a rare plant in the county, only found in the wild on the Devil's Ditch.

Contact details:

Jonathan Shanklin, 11 City Road, Cambridge CB1 1DP. Email [jdsh \[at\] bas.ac.uk](mailto:jdsh@bas.ac.uk)

News: [February 1: update / Newsletter 2024 \(2nd edition\)](#) / The annual update of the [Register of Plants of Conservation Concern](#) was made in 2024 January / [Newsletter 2023](#) / [Project LORE in Cambridgeshire](#) / [Violets and others](#) - Peter Leonard's blogpost featuring many of his excellent photographs /

Local meetings with a botanical bias in 2024. All dates are provisional.

See [BSBI Guidance for Participants on Field Meetings](#) **You attend meetings at your own risk:**

2024

March 23 - SE Cambridgeshire churchyards - CFG
April 7 - TL45J - CNHS
April 16 - Hatley - CFG
May 11 - Hope Farm - CFG
May 16 - TL45J - CNHS
June 9 - Abington Piggots - CFG
June 13 - TL45J - CNHS
June 20 - IWM Duxford Airfield - CFG
July 9 - Wicken Fen - CFG
July 18 - TL45J - CNHS
August 3 - A wood TBC - CFG
August 25 - TL45J - CNHS
August 31 - Northstowe - CFG
September 8 - TL45J - CNHS (Galls)
September 21 - River Nene in admin Cambridgeshire CFG
October 6 - TL45J - CNHS (Fungi)
October 12 - Westfield Farm CFG
November 3 - TL45J - CNHS (Bryophytes)

Unfortunately, it is not currently possible for VCRs to maintain their own pages on the BSBI site, so mine is hosted by the British Antarctic Survey.

Sit on the Local Wildlife Sites Panel

Most sites are designated for botanical reasons, so having a botanist on the panel helps when it comes to making decisions.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH'S CWS PANEL

The CWS Panel operates under its own aims and objectives. The CWS Panel maintains an overview of the County Wildlife Sites system, meeting once or twice annually to network, share information, plan and monitor CWS activities, review the CWS selection criteria and assess proposed additions, deletions or amendments to the network of CWS. Membership of the CWS Panel remains open to anyone who expresses an interest. All members share ownership of the CWS system (including this document), and have a responsibility to contribute to and play an active role in helping to administer the CWS system to help meet objectives.

The Wildlife Trust takes the strategic lead with respect to the management of the County Wildlife Sites system in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) are responsible for disseminating information and making data available on CWS accessible to all those who need to use it.

CWS Panel membership:

- Cambridge City Council
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group for the Eastern Region
- Fenland District Council
- Geological experts
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Natural England
- Natural history experts
- NFU / CLA & landowner representatives
- Peterborough City Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- The Environment Agency
- The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire

Tutor small groups

I act as a tutor for an ecological consultancy and on a local level have taken Cambridge college garden staff around their sites showing them plants that they often overlook.

Trinity College Paddock, with a band of *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks Buttercup), specifically *R. cantabrigiensis* (Backs Goldilocks Buttercup)



Carry out site surveys

These may be on a voluntary basis or occasionally as a commercial contract. If the botany is a sideline for you, the BSBI can act as contractor, with you as a sub-contractor, which is easier from an insurance perspective.

Mepal Outdoor Centre

Botanical Survey Report

Jonathan Shanklin
(BSBI vice-county recorder for Cambridgeshire)



The iconic "tepee" of the former Outdoor Centre

Write papers

I analyse county plant records and publish the results in the local natural history journal.

Nature in Cambridgeshire
No 61 2019



Vascular plants in decline in Cambridgeshire (v.c.29)

Jonathan Shanklin

Most vice-counties have a Rare Plant Register (RPR), which lists in a greater or lesser degree of detail the rare plants of an area. The Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI) give guidance on what should be in an RPR and how it should be formatted (BSBI, 2017). Plants that are Nationally Rare or Scarce, or are in the GB Vascular Plant Red List (Cheffings and Farrell, 2005) or the Vascular Plant Red List for England (Stroh *et al*, 2014) and have a threatened status should be included. In addition, any plants that are locally rare or scarce should be included and any locally determined categories may be included. In the case of Cambridgeshire, the locally determined category was the plants listed in Part 1 of Gigi Crompton's online Catalogue of Cambridgeshire Flora (Crompton, 2006).

Because of the ready availability of the Catalogue, the availability of all recent records in the BSBI database and the imminent publication of a new Flora of Cambridgeshire I chose a minimalist approach to the Cambridgeshire RPR (Shanklin, 2018), simply listing the appropriate rare species, the number of currently occupied monads and their dates of first and last occurrence. A companion listing, the Register of Plants of Conservation Concern (RPCC) (Shanklin, 2018), additionally listed species in the county that are extinct, scarce or less threatened, for example in decline in England but assessed as Least Concern.

A chance remark at the BSBI Recorders' Conference in 2018 October prompted a closer look at what plants might additionally be in decline in Cambridgeshire. Many of the historical Cambridgeshire records are available at hectad level in the BSBI database and a simple query gave the number of hectads occupied pre and post 2000 for each species known from the county. The date was chosen on the basis that 2000 - 2019 is the period of recording for the BSBI "Atlas 2020" and the county has therefore been extensively covered during that period.

The resulting information was copied into a spreadsheet and a simple percentage change calculated for each species. All those native or archaeophyte species that occurred in at least six hectads (there are 42 hectads in the county) were then assessed as of Least Concern or: Vulnerable (decline >30%) (VU), Endangered (decline >50%) (EN), Critically Endangered (decline >80%) (CR). The endangered species were added to the RPR and all three groups added to the RPCC.

Table 1. County status of plants that are of Least Concern in England and GB.

County status: CR, EN and VU as defined in the text, based on hectad decline. Rare (R) present in 6 or fewer monads. Scarce (S) present in 16 or fewer monads. The monad and hectad counts are for post 1999 records. The dates of first and last occurrence as presently known are given. Taxon names follow Stace (2019).

Maintain or contribute to an herbarium

I'm not very good at producing herbarium vouchers. Alan Leslie has his own material and also submits vouchers to the Cambridge University Herbarium (**CGE**).



Go to BSBI meetings

From time to time there are meetings directed at recorders and this is one of them. In future we hope to organise more taxon oriented meetings for training in “difficult” taxa.

There is always something new to learn.

