

Pyramidal Bugle *Ajuga pyramidalis* Blacks Hope May 2024



The presence of this interesting species in the Moffat Hills was first noted by J. T. Johnstone a Moffat botanist. He knew the area well and in the 1896 Flora of Dumfriesshire is credited with finding the Pyramidal Bugle in 1888 at about 1250ft (though perhaps 1750ft in other accounts). It went for many years unseen. For example it had not been refound when Derek Ratcliffe (DAR) wrote his paper "Mountain Plants of the Moffat Hills" in 1958. But in a later listing of the Flora of the Moffat Hills DAR noted that both R. J. Birkett and John Mitchell found a cluster of vigorous flowering plants at c 2050ft in 1977. From the DDb it appears

John Mitchell visited the site with J. B. Mason in 1976 and 1977. There was then a gap until the plant was refound by Jeff Waddell in 2007. In his record he saw 11 flower spikes and as many non-flowering plants.

In 2024 Jeff Wadell and two other botanists, Matt Parratt and Chris Gray went back to relocate the site seen on 2007. They found it and gave excellent location details for the plants in an area of calcareous grassland measuring about 5-10m up the slope and at about 600m (c2000ft). Chris Miles was able to follow their excellent photos to visit the site two days later and counted 23 flower spikes and 12 non-flowering plants.

It is possible that this is the only colony of this species in the Moffat Hills and the whole of Southern Scotland. However the Victorians recorded the plant in Black Hope in the Flora and on Falcon Craig (a BM specimen from E. F. Linton). They also estimated different altitudes so the possibility that other colonies existed or still exist remains.