



## 2019 Annual Reports from Welsh VCs

This is a collation of the Annual Reports submitted by Welsh Vice-counties for 2019 by April 2020. It is fascinating to read how different VCs tackled the final year of Atlas 2020 and about some of their most notable highlights. However, it is the great variety of other botanical activities carried out by Recorders and members that is most impressive. A huge thank you to all involved.

### Monmouthshire (vc35)

*Stephanie J Tyler and Elsa Wood*

We spent on average two to three days a week recording in poorly covered tetrads for Atlas 2020 and amassed over 19,000 records. All our records have been entered on MapMate and sent to the DDb. We have also received many records from our Local Records Centre (SEWBReC) and most of these have now been validated. All except several border tetrads have more than 200 species recorded and many now over 400. Seventeen of our 25 10km squares have between 700 and 900.

We added over 70 new hectad records this season, many of them neophytes that are becoming established in the wild. The main highlight was *Turritis glabra* (Tower Mustard) - a new county record (assuming an apparent earlier record by Mary Gillam was an error). *Polygonum rurivagum* (Cornfield Knotgrass) found by Mike Ogden was also a new county record as were eight species of neophyte found by us 'in the wild'.

We have updated our Rare Plant Register which is available online and submitted the revised RPR to Natural Resources Wales. We led monthly meetings of our local Botany Group and plant recording at three Bioblitzes organised by SEWBReC and The Living Levels initiative. We have also written articles for SEWBReC and the Welsh bulletin.

We attended meetings of the Caerwent MOD Conservation Group, the Monmouthshire Local Wildlife Sites advisory group, the Monmouthshire County Council 'Nature isn't Neat' initiative steering group, the Woodland Trust and Keep Wales Tidy 'Long Forest Project' and meetings of Gwent Wildlife Trust. We are also involved with carrying out surveys and advisory reports for both Gwent Wildlife Trust and Monmouthshire Meadows Group.

### Glamorgan (vc41)

*Julian Woodman*

This year saw the transfer of thousands of records from the local record centre into the DDb for which we are most grateful. Though this has given us quite a verification burden. Throughout the year David Barden and Karen Wilkinson have been inputting records of their own and the Glamorgan Botany Groups. They are now joint recorders with Julian for East Glamorgan. In the West, Barry Stewart continues to provide comprehensive coverage with the help of Charles and Hilary.

### Brecknock (vc42)

*John Crellin*

The Brecknock Botany Group had 64 outings in 2019 covering all months of the year and adding Atlas records right up to the end including *Carduus nutans* (Musk Thistle) near Hay in December, for example. One welcome development was that a county recorder was not present at all events, such

is regular members' increased confidence. We are all improving in our ability to record accurately out of season. The strategy remained a combination of chasing up "not yet refound" species and getting whole county coverage up to a good level. We have also had an eye on as yet unrecorded areas, such as the limestone moorland around a major road south that has attracted little attention in the past.

An analysis of county coverage, after submission of over 10,000 records for the year, now shows only a few "not spots" for the county – two entirely predictable - the Army Range Impact Area and the back of the Black Mountain. All validation marked "needs validation" has been done and work continues on reviewing other highlighted validation queries – notably the county produces a high number of "records near the maximum of their (inferred) altitudinal range".

The most notable find of the year was *Persicaria mitis* (Tasteless Water-pepper), by the Wye near Hay, spotted on a Sunday stroll. It is the second county record (1927 previously). We have continued to work with other organisations, notably the Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales; Biodiversity Information Service for Powys & Brecon Beacons National Park; Caring for God's Acre and the Elan Valley Links Project.

### **Radnorshire (vc43)**

*Liz Dean*

During 2019 the main effort went into recording for Atlas 2020. This involved covering unrecorded areas or looking for specific species which had been seen prior to 2000 but not since. Often the missing species for the different hectads were the same. For example, *Sisymbrium officinale* (Hedge Mustard) and *Viola riviniana* (Common Dog-violet) and it will be interesting what regional and national trends are revealed by the Atlas 2020 data. Thanks must go to Barbara Brown, the Welsh Officer, who, with friends and on her own, visited unrecorded squares and to Ray Woods who hunted for missing species whilst recording his downy mildews.

After the recording, work has continued on completing the inputting for Atlas 2020. An unknown cache of over 3,000 records came from Anthony Vaughan and a significant number from Ray Woods' notebooks. Many others including the Hereford Botanical Society, the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust and our Local Recording Centre also contributed records.

Barbara Brown did several sessions introducing beginners to botany and we are very sorry to be losing her as Welsh Officer after her significant contributions in the year. At the very end of the year, Barbara started updating the Radnorshire Rare Plant Register and we are very grateful to NRW for funding this work. Sue Spencer has retired as joint recorder and I would like to record my thanks to her for her hard work over past years. Sue will continue recording and assisting me with identity problems (especially on the garden escapes) and computer inputting.

### **Carmarthenshire (vc44)**

*Richard & Kath Pryce*

Our constantly updated post-2000 tetrad species-total map dictated where VCR recording effort was to be concentrated in 2019. Early in the year this was combined with expanding Taraxacum collections in previously unworked areas. All recording continued at 10m or 1m precision. A few interested people living in the county also made valuable contributions by recording in their areas. Both the BSBI Welsh AGM field excursions and the annual Carmarthenshire Glynhir Recording Week contributed new records with the latter concentrating on tetrad bashing and rare species monitoring.

The target of recording a reasonable number of species in every tetrad for the period 2000-20 was largely achieved, although a few peripheral part tetrads have not been visited since 2000.

Amalgamated into hectad records, the coverage of recording for the Atlas was considered to be satisfactory. All field data received was entered onto the Carmarthenshire database before 31/12/2019 and checked. It was then submitted to Pete Stroh for uploading to the DDb.

Progress with updating the RPR and writing the County Flora continued through the year. Several local groups continue to welcome our input such as Llanelli Naturalists, Carms LBAP partnership, WWBIC and Carmarthenshire Meadows Group. A number of conservation-minded landowners took up our offer to record on their land and give management advice if asked. They have each provided with a report although several such requests remain outstanding. The VC submission to Welsh Plant Records will detail all new VC and hectad records.

### Montgomeryshire (vc47)

Kate Thorne

About 32,000 records have been submitted to the DDb in 2019 as our main focus was to improve tetrad coverage. As well as individual recording we had ten days of flora group recording and a Rubus weekend with expert Dave Earl. The latter provided a major boost with over 300 new bramble records comprising 28 different species.

Notable finds have included:

- i) the first confirmed records in the county for *Potentilla x mixta* (*P. anglica* x *reptans*). *Betula celtiberica*, in open wood pasture, *Dactylorhiza x venusta* (*D. fuchsii* x *purpurella*), on a road bank in the Vyrnwy area close to both parents and some Hieracium species: *H. aviicola*, *salticola*, and *spilophaeum*, identified by Tim Rich & David McCosh.
- ii) a second confirmed record for *Rorippa islandica* (Northern Yellow-cress).
- iii) second records for the post 2000 period for *Scleranthus annuus* (Annual Knawel) and *Botrychium lunaria* (Moonwort).
- iv) a single plant of *Galeopsis speciosa* (Large-flowered Hemp-nettle), the seventh post-2000 record for this declining species.
- v) *Trollius europaeus* (Globeflower) and *Vicia orobus* (Wood Bitter-vetch), (both priority species) at new sites in the west.
- vi) two non-native species appearing for the first time along our waterways - *Impatiens capensis* (Orange Balsam) along the Montgomery Canal and *Lathraea clandestina* (Purple Toothwort) near rivers in the west.
- vii) a post 2000 increase in the numbers of locations of *Equisetum telmateia* (Great Horsetail) and *Rorippa amphibia* (Great Yellow-cress), both rare/scarce species.

The final year of recording also brought more records for some of the harder to identify species e.g. *Circaea x intermedia* (Upland Enchanter's-nightshade), *Euphrasia* spp. (confirmed and/or identified by Chris Metherell), *Dryopteris cambrensis* (Scaly Male-fern) and *Equisetum x litorale* (*E. arvense* x *fluviatile*, Shore Horsetail).

### Merionethshire (vc48)

Jo Clark

I have taken over the role of Recorder for Meirionnydd from the inimitable Sarah Stille, who retired in December 2019. As I wasn't aware that I would need to write a report like this so soon into my tenure, I must apologise as I am not yet on top of how to extract data such as new County records etc. from MapMate. By next year I will be better prepared!!

In 2019 on the whole we concentrated on tetrads with few records and collected a grand total of 8,000 records towards the Atlas. Amongst many enjoyable field visits, a memorable day was held on the

Berwyn Hills in June, where we found *Asplenium viride* (Green Spleenwort) and *Neottia ovata* (Common Twayblade) nestling by a stream in the midst of a conifer plantation and had a fabulous view of some red deer. In August, Sarah and I set forth onto the Migneint in appalling weather and struggled to find 40 species before giving up due to being too wet to even remove our waterproofs!

In 2020 we are intending to go to sites which are notified as SSSI's in particular grassland sites and try to re-find old records of rarer species such as *Saxifraga granulata* (Meadow Saxifrage) on the banks of the River Dee, *Gentianella campestris* (Field Gentian) at Morfa Dyffryn and *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (Adder's-tongue), *Botrychium lunaria* (Moonwort) and *Coeloglossum viride* (Frog Orchid) above Harlech.

### Caernarvonshire (vc49)

Wendy McCarthy

Progress with recording for Atlas 2020 took priority for the year, focusing on species which needed updating from the previous date class. Caernarvonshire Recording Group met for a programme of six monthly meetings and in addition a small core of loyal supporters went out together at least once weekly. Individual recorders also sent some excellent records. Julian Driver found new sites for *Hammarbya paludosa* (Bog Orchid) and *Asplenium obovatum* (Lanceolate Spleenwort) and also discovered two new sites for the gametophyte stage of *Trichomanes speciosum* (Killarney Fern). (Being a bryologist, he is ideally placed for the latter species when searching dark chasms and damp fissures!)

A small group of recorders visited Cors Gyfelog where Andrew Graham collected a bladderwort belonging to the *Utricularia intermedia* aggregate. Fred Rumsey was able to determine this from Andrew's excellent photographs as *U. stygia* (Nordic Bladderwort). Visits are planned in 2020 to the remaining fens in the county to see if the plants long known from there are the same species. Visiting botanists are always very welcome and Geoffrey Kitchener sent 299 records from his Llyn Peninsula holiday, including 5 *Epilobium* hybrids, 14 *Rumex* hybrids and *Juncus x surrejanus* (*J. acutiflorus* x *articulatus*) found with parents on coastal dunes at Abererch. Roger Maskew also visited the peninsula and sent some *Rosa* records.

### Denbighshire (vc50)

Delyth Williams

The overall target by 2020 was to have full records from 2000 in at least one monad, preferably more, in each tetrad in VC50. The aim in 2019 was to 'mop up' outstanding monads and tetrads. The Denbighshire Recording Group met on over 20 occasions in a final attempt to cover as many tetrads as much as possible. Several other recorders contributed significantly as part of a programme that attempted to avoid duplication of effort. Finally, 25,000 records were submitted to the DDB and a 99% coverage has been achieved. Of 550-odd tetrads, about 200 surveyed since 2000 have fewer than 200 taxa recorded and of these 60 yielded less than 100 taxa. Some of these tetrads are part-tetrads, most are moorland or upland.

There were no remarkable re-finds and only three NCRs were native: *Carduus acanthoides* (Broad-winged Thistle), *Anisantha diandra* (Great Brome), *Epilobium parviflorum* x *ciliatum* (*E. x floridulum*). *Ophrys apifera* var. *chlorantha* (Bee Orchid) was a nice find and an ever-increasing number of NCRs were flourishing garden escapes and seed-mix introductions e.g. *Symphotrichum lanceolatum* (*Aster lanceolatus*, Narrow-leaved Michaelmas-daisy) had clearly been dumped, *Buddleja globosa* (Orange-ball-tree) was running wild around some allotments and *Dipsacus laciniatus* (Cut-leaved Teasel) introduced in an embankment seed-mix. All meetings were instructional, some more than others

depending upon group member demand. All Denbighshire records have been digitised, including those from our Local Records Centre COFNOD and attempts were made to complete validation requests as per the 'My County' section of the DDB and BSBI *eNews*.

### **Flintshire (vc51)**

Gail Quartly-Bishop

In 2019 the Flintshire BSBI group enjoyed six field meetings. April's meeting was put back to May due to poor weather, so in mid-May we met on consecutive weekends and enjoyed some of the best of the county's ancient woodlands, searching for our nemesis, *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* (Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage). Once again, this plant eluded us, but many other ancient woodland specialists were in full effect, including plenty of one of our favourite plants, *Sanicula europaea* (Sanicle). In June and July, we investigated typical Flintshire landscapes of pasture, copse and hedgerow and in August, for a change, had a trip to the seaside to the salt marsh at Bagillt. September's meeting at Buckley was led by Julian Laidler and included a variety of urban and arable finds.

Altogether, we generated and received 6,650 records over the course of the year. Once again, the top individual recorder in the county was Jonathan Shanklin. Significant finds included new sites for *Allium oleraceum* (Field Garlic), *Bromus secalinus* (Rye Brome), *Centaureum littorale* (Seaside Centaury), *Neottia nidus-avis* (Bird's-nest Orchid), *Parapholis incurva* (Curved Hard-grass), *Petrosedum (Sedum) forsterianum* (Rock Stonecrop), *Scabiosa columbaria* (Small Scabious), *Sorbus rupicola* (Rock Whitebeam) and *Stachys arvensis* (Field Woundwort). Thank you to everyone who contributed records in 2019.

### **Anglesey (vc52)**

Nigel Brown

Please see Ian Bonner's full report in the Welsh Bulletin No. 105, Feb 2020 and on the [BSBI Anglesey webpage](#).