

Warwickshire Flora Group

Newsletter No. 22 March 2022

ADDITIONS TO THE FLORA OF WARWICKSHIRE 2020 and 2021

Please read the Additions to the Flora of Warwickshire that is attached to this Newsletter.

As the title suggests, it is a compilation of all of the new and important species that have been added to the county list during the last two years. We have been this bi-annual article since we took over as Recorders and until now they have been for publication in the Proceedings of the Birmingham Natural History Society. Unfortunately, due to the disruption caused by the pandemic and its elderly membership, the BNHS has had to close after 164 years as the principal scientific society covering natural history in the West Midlands. This year it will be sent to members of the Flora Group and other interested parties and it will be freely available on our Warwickshire page on the BSBI website, <https://bsbi.org/warwickshire>. As it covers the last two years of botany, I make no apologies for repeating some of the material that you may have come across before in previous Newsletters and at the Recorders' Zoom meetings.

In future, perhaps either the WBRC or the Wildlife Trust could publish an annual digital report where recorders of all families, butterflies to mosses, could send in their latest findings.



Hieracium eboracense, Northern Hawkweed
Nuneaton Parish Church, Photo J. Walton

AN UNUSUAL REQUEST.

A few weeks ago I received an interesting email from botanist David Pearman. In 2017 David published a book called *The Discovery of the Native Flora of Britain and Ireland*, which lists all of the earliest records with dates of all the British native plants. It is not a great read, but a useful reference book and a thorough piece of research.

David asked us to send him details of some of the specimens in the Warwickshire herbarium as he is now working on his second book on the non-native flora. Of the six specimens he was interested in only three were found. The first British record of the now very common *Symphytum x uplandicum* **Russian Comfrey** was seen at Ashow Mill in 1813 by W. G. Perry, and the first record of *Avena sativa* **Cultivated Oat** near Kenilworth in 1875. The third species *Urtica membranacea* **Roman Nettle** is still growing in Swan Street, Warwick, first seen in 2007.

We were pleased to visit the herbarium which is now housed in new premises at Hawkes Point, Heathcote, Leamington Spa. Our thanks go to Collection Assistant Natasha Allen-Smith and volunteer Jane O'Dell for their help.

BSBI NEW YEAR PLANT HUNT 2022

Congratulations to all who took part in the 2022 BSBI New Year Plant which this year was held in Stratford-upon-Avon. When we did a recce of the town a week before the meeting we did not see much out, however on the day we managed to find 55 species in flower, which is the longest list our group has ever seen. Amongst the more unusual flowering species, there was abundant *Erigeron karwinskianus* **Mexican Fleabane** on the stonework by the river, a fully flowering *Epilobum ciliatum* **American Willowherb** by the station and some very showy naturalized *Eranthis hyemalis* **Winter Aconite** and *Petasites pyrenaicus* (*fragrans*) **Winter Heliotrope**, by Stratford Parish Church. The top places on the national league table of the most species seen always go to southern coastal counties which of course have more more species than we have to start with.

FIELD MEETINGS 2022

With the planned removal of all COVID restrictions announced yesterday, we should be able to run a full list of field meetings this year. The main season will begin in the second half of April and details of these will be emailed to you later. However, to get you out in the field and refreshing your identification skills there will be two early spring meetings.

The first will be on **Saturday 5th March** at 10 a.m. at **BANNAMS WOOD** (SP111639, B80 7EL), south of Morton Bagot and Oldberrow church. Although we visited Bannams with the group seven years ago to see the Green Hellebores, we have never visited them early enough in the season to see the plants in flower rather than in seed. We will have a short walk around the wood identifying what we can and then drive to **STUDLEY PARISH CHURCH** and cemetery, Castle Road, (SP081638, B807AB). The group visited the churchyard in August 2016 but we have no post-2020 records from the area. This is an ideal time to attempt to identify naturalized spring bulbs and to familiarize ourselves with common grassland species. Please bring Stace if you have one.

The second meeting will be held on **Monday 14 March** at 10 a.m. We will have a short walk around **LEAM VALLEY NATURE RESERVE**, Radford Road, Leamington Spa (SP330658, CV32 4EW), to see the wonderful and unusual colony of *Scilla sardensis*. We will then drive to **St. GREGORY'S CHURCH, OFFCHURCH** (SP357565, CV33 9AS) to see what we can find there.

Please note these meetings are early in the year. If you plan to come please check your emails before setting out as it may be necessary to cancel meetings due to bad weather.

Churchyards have not been covered for a while. In the 1980's a full survey of all of the Warwickshire churchyards was made but unfortunately all of those records, which were on paper, have been lost and were never added to either the WBRC or the BSBI databases. If you know of a particularly rich churchyard near you, can you let us know please, and any species lists would also be appreciated.

SHARPEN UP YOUR RUSTY BOTANICAL SKILLS ONLINE.

The BSBI has three events in the next month that you need to watch!

You don't have to be a BSBI member and the talks are free, although donations are welcome. If you cannot see them on the date that they are broadcast, all talks will be on the BSBI Youtube channel a later for catch-up.

The first is the **English Annual Meeting** on Sunday 27 February which will feature subjects such as Juniper conservation, beginner botany, and a talk by Jonathan Shanklin entitled "How I became a botanist". Jonathan's life is an interesting one and includes the discovery of the ozone hole in Antarctica, so it will not be dull. Book on <https://bsbi.org/england-agm>

On the 2 March at 7.30 p.m Alan Walker will give a talk on **Mountain Flowers**.

Book on <https://bsbi.org/events/winter-talk-mountain-flowers-how-they-survive-up-there>

The BSBI Spring Conference will be on 26 March between 10.30 a.m. and 3.30.p.m.

There will be sessions on the ecology of The Fens by Owen Mountford (who is writing a fenland flora), rare arable plants and local boy Ian Truman will be talking about recording the urban flora. There will also be an online identification workshop on the three easily confusable Whitlow Grasses (*Erophila sp.*) which are of course now in flower. I am not quite sure how an online ID workshop will work, as I am sure the camera on my laptop probably won't show details of leaf hairs, but it will be good to find out.

Book on <https://bsbi.org/bsbi-spring-conference>