

# Campaign Cabrach

David Elston, for Scottish Botanists' Conference 2024

## Summary

The parish of Cabrach, now covered by Moray Council, includes some of the highest and most remote land in North Aberdeenshire. Although the botany of some parts including the summit and slopes of The Buck have been well recorded, these hot-spots have perhaps distracted attention from other parts of the parish and adjacent high land to the east. To redress this lack of attention I spent three days exploring these less-known areas in late August 2024 during "Campaign Cabrach", finding three native species new to the Vice County plus many with new sites and refinds for other species.

## *Ulex gallii* Western Gorse

An outlying population of *Ulex gallii* was found on dry heath to the north of Gauch Burn, the first record of this species in North Aberdeenshire. Being in full flower, the *U. gallii* contrasted strikingly with the adjacent, taller, *U. europaeus* (common) Gorse

plants. The DDb contained only two records from this tetrad so the gap filling exercise led to an important discovery.



## *Hieracium dipteroides* Aberfeldy Hawkweed

The majority of *Hieracium* plants found during "Campaign Cabrach" were in seed, hence unhelpful for identification. However, some suitable and interesting-looking plants were found on north-facing rocks near the Burn of Allansheal. The identity of the collected specimen was confirmed as *H. dipteroides*, new to North Aberdeenshire, by the referee Brian Burrow. Visits early in the season may yield further species new to the Vice County.

## Other good records

In addition to the Vice County firsts, many good records were obtained during "Campaign Cabrach" including:

*Equisetum fluviatile x palustre* = *E. x dycei* hybrid of Water and Marsh Horsetails, Scald Hill, refind of 2003 record;



*Epilobium alisinifolium* Chickweed Willowherb, new site by Gauch Burn;

*Goodyera repens* Creeping Lady's Tresses, Creag an Sgor and Scald Hill, both hectad firsts for North Aberdeenshire;



*Sedum villosum* Hairy Stonecrop, new population by Burn of Cookies-shiel.

## *Omalotheca supina* Dwarf Cudweed

There are old records for *Omalotheca supina* within 10 km of North Aberdeenshire, but apart from rocky outcrops the high heaths have always seemed unsuitable due to the density of lichens, bryophytes and higher plants. However,



the creation of hill tracks has made conditions suitable for colonisation, and a large number of plants were found along the stony surfaces above 550 m altitude to the north west of Creag an Sgor.