

Plant Records, 2017.

The *Flora of Staffordshire* dealt with records made up until the end of 2011. This short account is the sixth annual report listing some of the more interesting results of later fieldwork.

Dates are all 2017, unless stated otherwise.

New records for VC39.

Arum italicum ssp. *italicum* 'Marmoratum' SJ7941, in roadside ditch and by the main road SJ7940, N of Baldwin's Gate. Also SJ8741, in three places on stream banks; also SJ8740, a large patch in scrubbed-over area, Ash Green, I.J. Hopkins. Ian points out, however that, as this is the form usually cultivated in gardens for its very ornamental leaves, he would suspect that most, if not all, the Staffordshire records of *Arum italicum* ssp. *italicum* would be of this plant.

Berberis buxifolia SJ9756, grassy bank, W side of Wallbridge Drive, Leek, J. E. Hawksford.

Carex comans SK1210, side of footpath off St. Michael's Road, Lichfield, D. Hall, 2016.

Crataegus x *lavalleyi* (= *C. crus-galli* x *pubescens*) SP0193, presumably planted, roadside hedge, West Bromwich (north), P. Newton.

Dittrichia graveolens SJ7751 (& just into SJ7752), several thousand; SJ8734, several hundred: on central reservation of M6, P. Stanley.

Garrya elliptica SO9499, large spreading relict bush by entrance to an old factory, Wednesfield (south), PN.

Hypericum forrestii SO9498, relict bush, waste ground, Wednesfield (south), PN.

Jasminum beesianum SJ8950, growing from a strip of rough ground and scrambling over a wire fence between Holden Lane & Milton, IJH.

Linaria purpurea 'Canon J. Went' SJ9856, patches on waste ground N of Broad Street, Leek, JEH.

Mahonia x *media* (= *M. lomariifolia* x *japonica*) SJ8542, disturbed woodland near houses, western side of Ferndown Local Nature Reserve, IJH.

Narcissus 'Cheerfulness' SP1599, *flore pleno*, road verge, Carroway Head, PN.

N. x *boutignyanus* (= *N. moschatus* x *poeticus*) SP1699, several clumps, road verge, Shirral Hall; also SP1999, several clumps, road verge, not close to houses, Drayton Bassett (south): both PN.

Phlomis fruticosa SO9498, large, possibly relict bush, waste ground by roadside Wednesfield (south), PN.

Populus nigra 'Gigantea' SJ7425, two trees (one larger than the other), hedgebank, S of Knighton, PN.

Pulmonaria rubra SK1246, several plants, eastern verge of lane, Stanton, A. Amphlett & E.C. Amphlett, conf. I.P. Green.

Symphytum caucasicum SJ7542, along 10m of roadside verge, Onneley, IJH.

Species seen again after a gap of several years.

Abutilon theophrasti SJ8746, area of rubble and disused soil in front of a roadside advertising hoarding with other uncommon ruderal species, Cliff Vale, IJH. The only previous record was in 1991 (SO9093, Gospel End).

Hieracium sublepidoides SJ7938, several, W side of road, by bridge; also a number in grassy grounds of the church on hillside overlooking Maer Hall, IJH. Last recorded there by Edees, in 1950: Maer, roadside between the War Memorial and the Hall. Only seen in one other site (SO7680, Arley House, 1997), thereafter,

New tetrads for rarer taxa.

The following have been seen in a total of less than about seven tetrads, since 1994.

Abies nordmanniana SJ9055, Ladymoor Gate; also SJ9056, planted in a roadside verge near a farm, S of Ellins Field Farm, E. Radford.

Achillea filipendulina SJ8546, foot of brick wall, Newcastle-under-Lyme, IJH. Has been cultivated only a few tens of metres away in the past.

Allium roseum SO9186, abundant in neglected churchyard, Brierley Hill, 2016, A.P. Daly.

Anemone blanda SJ7940, on shaded lane verge, Baldwin's Gate, IJH.

Astrantia major SK1110, naturalised on grassy bank, by house, off Gaia Lane, Lichfield, DH.

Berberis wilsoniae SJ8851, introduced on the footpath through the Whitfield Valley Nature Reserve, IJH.

Betula utilis var. *jacquemontii* SO9499, ten or so, planted roadside trees, Wednesfield (south); also SP0093, two planted street trees, West Bromwich (north): both PN.

Brachypodium pinnatum SJ8951, growing about a small car park, Norton-in-the-Moors: either a deliberate introduction or an originally chance arrival, IJH.

Buddleja x *weyeriana* (= *B. davidii* x *globosa*) SJ8454, probably introduced bushes by a track about a reclaimed grassy area, Kidsgrove (east), IJH.

Carex hostiana x *demissa* SO9094, several plants, small flushed area immediately N of fairway of 4th hole of golf course, Alder Coppice, I.C. Trueman.

C. vesicaria SJ8855 & SJ8955, Greenway Bank Country Park, Biddulph, V. Brooks.

Carthamus tinctorius SJ8746, area of rubble and disused soil in front of a roadside advertising hoarding with other uncommon ruderal species, Cliff Vale, IJH.

Chaenomeles speciosa SK1210, near sluice gate at N end of Stowe Pool, Lichfield, D. Wall.

Colutea arborescens SJ8852, bush planted in country park, Whitfield, IJH.

Corydalis solida SO8985, good sized patch under shrubs on bank, Wollaston Road, J. Hough.

Corylus maxima SJ8454, tall bushes introduced by a footpath in a reclaimed grassy area, Kidsgrove (east), IJH.

Crocasmia 'Lucifer' (= ?*C. masoniorum* 'Lucifer') SJ7851, flowering clump on steep, grassy bank overlooking pavement and road, Park End; SJ8950, flowering clump on slopes above footpath, Ford Green (throw-out or escape from nearby houses): both IJH.

Cyclamen coum SP1499, side of disused road, with *C. hederifolium*, Carroway Head, PN. Probably originally a garden outcast, but looking well established,

Cymbalaria pallida SK2327, roadside verge, Rolleston, IJH.

Dryopteris cambrensis SJ8699, large plant, Belvide Reservoir, M.F. Godfrey.

Escallonia rubra var. *macrantha* SJ9057, near entrance to Barridge Farm, ER.

Euphorbia dulcis SO9391, small patch, bottom of obscure path along fence, Mons Hill Wren's Nest, M.W. Poulton.

Fatsia japonica SJ8547, bush growing out from under *Castanea sativa*, Wolstanton, IJH.

Fumaria capreolata SJ7800, by bench, Burnhill Green, S.R. Moore.

Hyacinthus orientalis SP1999, small clump, road verge, not close to houses, Drayton Bassett (south), PN.

Isatis tinctoria SJ8852, one by path along Whitfield Valley: an atypical regrowth from a moribund aerial shoot, but with distinctive fruit, IJH.

Lavandula angustifolia SJ8546, small clump at foot of a doorstep where it borders a paving slab, Newcastle-under-Lyme; also SJ9658, small bush on bank by footpath, E of Rudyard: both IJH.

Lonicera henryi SJ8850, on E side of street growing up through and over a metal fence bordering a street on steep, grassy bank up to a row of trees, Smallthorne, IJH.

Orobanche minor SO9499, one to two hundred spikes on *Brachyglottis* x *jubar*; roadside shrub bed, Wednesfield (south), PN.

Paris quadrifolia SK1228, two patches (of 9 and 23 plants) on damp, shaded bank on W side of road, near Woodroffe's Cliff, W of Draycott in the Clay, D. Cadman (and, later, IJH).

Phygelius capensis SJ8153, edge of thicket in field: presumably relict of former planting but including one specimen persisting outside cultivation, near Foxholes Farm, Merelake Road, W of Talke, IJH.

Rosa moyesii SJ8554, introduced amongst scrub at the side of the track along course of former railway, Kidsgrove (east), IJH.

Rubus spectabilis SJ8850, forming a thicket by a path, Ford Green, IJH.

Sedum kamtschaticum SJ8353, pavement weed, Kidsgrove, S.R. Hinsley.

Sison amomum SO9399, two plants on edge of pavement, bordering a shrub bed, behind a shopping complex, E of Wolverhampton. PN.

Sorbus glabriuscula SJ7543, planted on a roadside verge, Onneley, IJH.

Tiarella cordifolia SJ7942, clump under shade of trees at Dab Green, SE of Madeley, IJH.

Ulex minor SK0207, single seeding plant near *U. europaeus*, scrubby S facing brow of hill of amenity area erected/re-profiled when services were created, Norton Canes Services, M6 Toll, S. Lemon.

Viburnum tinus SO9499, many around industrial premises, industrial estate, Wednesfield (south), PN.

Weigela florida SJ8546, introduced at W end of Station Walks, Newcastle-under-Lyme, IJH.

A selection of other observations.

David Pearman's recently published *The Discovery of the Native Flora of Britain & Ireland* gives VC39 as having the earliest records for three species.

Agrostis gigantea 1796 in W. Withering's *A Botanical Arrangement of British Plants*: "Blymhill, S. Dickenson".

Salix pentandra 1641 in T. Johnson's *Mercurius Botanicus par altera*: "At Wolverhampton".

Vaccinium oxycoccus 1597 in J. Gerard's *The Herball, or general history of Plantes*: "Upon bogs and fennie places in Cheshire and Staffordshire".

There are interesting references in the new Clive Chatters' *Saltmarsh* volume in the Bloomsbury *British Wildlife Collection* to the inland salt marshes at Pasturefields (p. 35-38) & Branston (p. 46-48).

In the 2011 *Flora of Staffordshire*, in the index entry on p. 417 for "*Ulex minor* 244, 248" "248" should be deleted.

Polygonum viridis was first recorded in the county in 1969. It was not reported again until 2005. It appears to be spreading rapidly: of the 51 new tetrad records, one third were made in 2017! It is most commonly found on pavements (often at their interface with a wall), but has also been reported (sometimes in quantity) from damp waste places and on the banks of water bodies.

Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles* gives 86 taxa of *Cotoneaster* as appearing in the wild, either naturalised by bird-sown seed from gardens or from roadside ornamentals. 25 have been recorded in VC39, but half of these are very rare in the county. Identification is extremely difficult without flower or fruit. It is suspected that *C. x suecicus* (= *C. conspicuus x dammeri*) and its cultivars has been appreciably under-recorded because of this problem, but careful examination during 2017 raised its tetrad count from 7 to 13.

There is a very detailed, informative and fascinating illustrated article by John Winterton entitled "This vegetable and unparalleled wonder: Johnson's Willow" in the *Johnson Society Transactions, 2017*. Dr. Samuel Johnson was extremely interested in this very large specimen of *Salix x fragilis* (Crack Willow), growing on the west bank of Stowe Pool, Lichfield, in the 1780s. It is thought that it was planted c. 1700. It had grown to a height of thirty-nine feet in 1785.

Unsurprisingly, for this brittle-branched species, it was gradually destroyed by high winds during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. One of the "pea-sticks" taken from a fallen limb was found to have taken root in a nearby garden and was transplanted on to the original site, in 1830. It, too, was felled in the same way in 1881. Cuttings from it were eventually established as the Third Willow. It remained there until 1956, when it became unsafe and was felled. A further cutting developed into the Fourth Willow which, sadly, had to be diminished in size, by pollarding, in 2014 and 2016, to meet modern safety standards.