



Special Covid Edition No. 3

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Historic records of *Carex filiformis* (Downy-fruited Sedge) in Wiltshire

Reprinted from BSBI News 145, September 2020

Dave Green

I have always held a great fascination for old county floras so when I first came to Wiltshire in the late 1970s I swiftly acquired a copy of Donald Grose's *Flora of Wiltshire* (Grose, 1957).

It has been a revelation to me that botanists had spent many years finding plants and then many more writing a book about it. After poring over the text, it became very evident to me that it was just like a giant treasure map. The anecdotes, comments and locations it contained drove me on to investigate over the following years, and in many cases refind the records that had been reported decades before and sometimes even in the previous century.

I continue to be fascinated by these books and historic records and still investigate the past accounts that they hold but I was beginning to wonder how on earth were all the locations of plants and of the sites, pre-computer database, passed on? Word-of-mouth obviously, but many of the botanists lived far apart and so letters – many, many letters – were written.

When I inherited the vice-county recordership for North Wiltshire (v.c. 7) in 1981, I also inherited a card index box. This metal equivalent of a shoebox contained several hundred cards, alphabetically indexed, and interleaved with notes, maps and letters. There was also another box full of miscellaneous items; this had obviously been handed down, via my predecessors – and what gems it held – maps and letters from the great and the good botanists of the past. I have included one of these below and have set out the history around it and where we are with that species up to the present day.

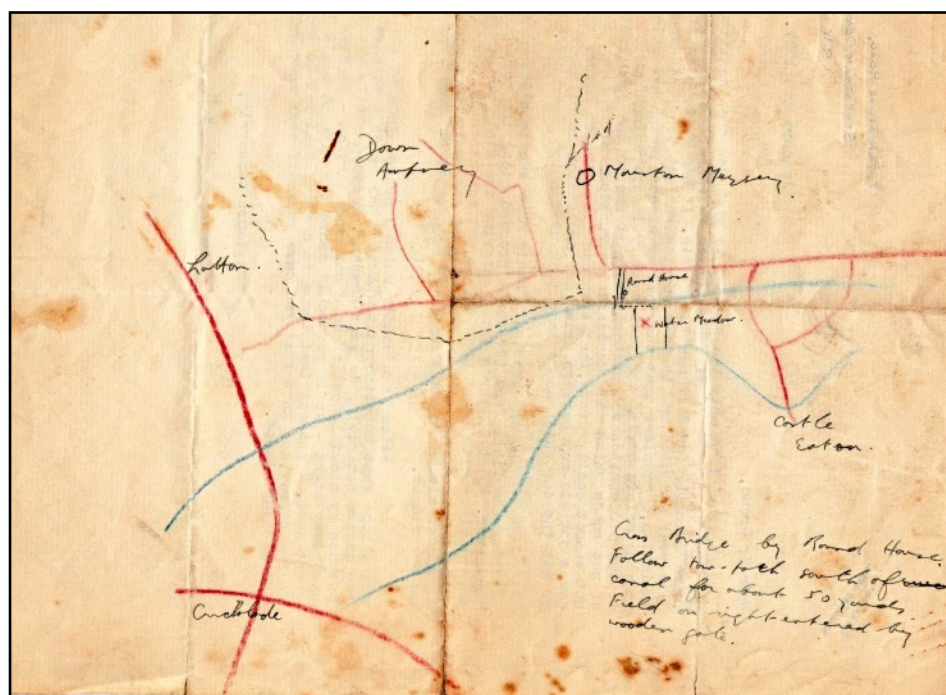
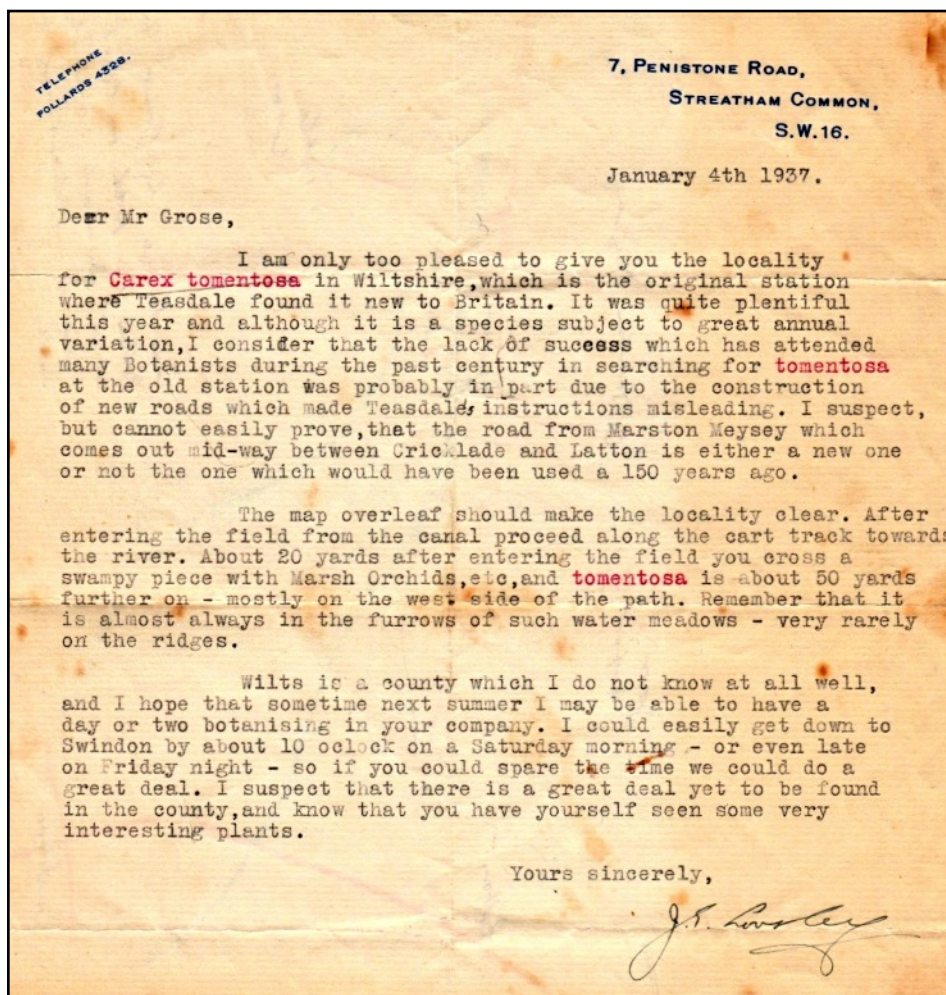
Downy-fruited Sedge *Carex filiformis* (previously known as *C. tomentosa*) was classified as Nationally Rare and included within the Red Data Book on Vascular Plants, 1st edition (Perring & Farrell, 1983). Comments within this publication and also the *New Atlas of British & Irish Flora* (Preston et al., 2002) state that there are just 13 known populations in the British Isles, all afforded some form of protection.

The species was first recorded in the British Isles by Teesdale in 1799 at Marston Meysey, Wiltshire, on the headwaters of the River Thames. Grose, in his 1957 flora, commented on this record 'it is remarkable that no new locality has been found for it in Wiltshire. It is uncertain in appearance, sometimes being abundant, at other times being detected only with difficulty'. The location apparently was lost for over 130 years, until refound by J.E. (Ted) Lousley in 1936. Ted Lousley, was probably the most famous botanist of his day and later in life, renowned for writing *Wild Flowers of Chalk and Limestone*, in the New Naturalist series. He was also author of the *Flora of the Scilly Isles* (1971); he named species of plant new to science and re-found the then extinct Military Orchid (*Orchis militaris*) in Buckinghamshire. Grose, on hearing of the refind of the *Carex*, asked for the location and opposite is a copy of that reply in letter form and on its reverse the map.

Alas, the site is now gone. I visited the location and reported in the Wiltshire Flora that 'in 1985 DG found the field to be a flat wheat field'. The area is in North Wiltshire (v.c. 7) in what is now the Cotswold Water Park. Until the late 1960s the region was very much off the beaten track not only to botanists, but to all naturalists. The gravel extraction spine road that opened up the locality at about that time allowed access to the unimproved upper Thames meadows.



Carex filiformis (Downy-fruited Sedge), John Norton



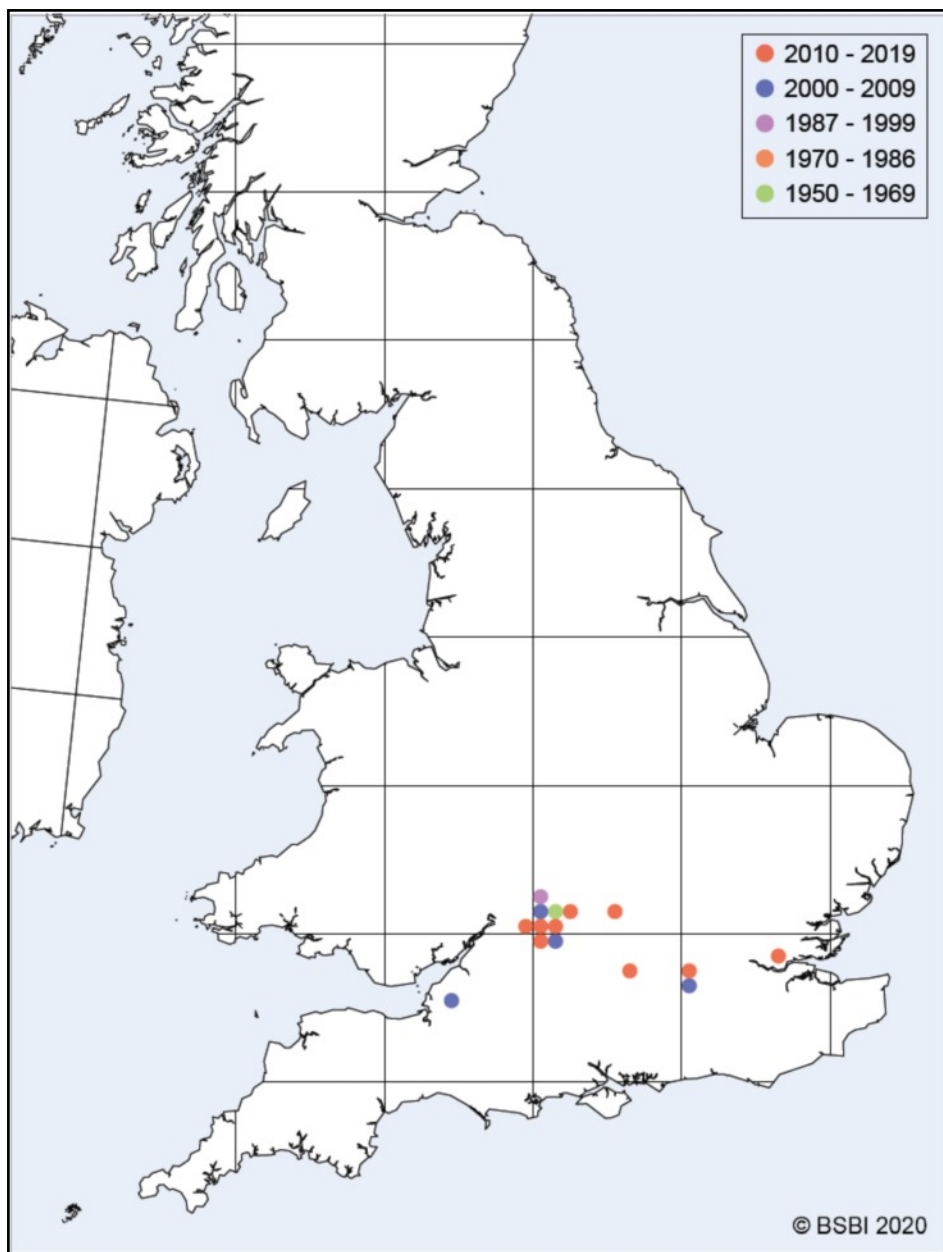
Unfortunately, these were being bought up and destroyed for the gravels that lay below them but through surveys carried out by the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC, now Natural England), albeit piecemeal, identified a number of them as being of national importance. In 1974 a population of *Carex filiformis* was found at Clattinger Farm, by NCC national neutral meadow expert Derek Wells. These meadows had been designated a SSSI in 1971 based on their botanical diversity. Further records over the years in differing locations at Clattinger now makes this site's population possibly the largest in the British Isles.

Another record close by, was found by Lorna Wild in 1988 in similar habitat, and adjacent to Clattinger, at Swillbrook Meadows. Lorna presented me a single specimen that I was happy to identify as *Carex filiformis*. I returned to the site twice over a period of ten years only to be confronted by grazing cattle each time, however, on a revisit in 2018 I recorded the plant in six locations across the meadow.

Further populations over time were found by Francis Rose in 1987 at Pike Corner just 3 km east of Clattinger, and this site was made a SSSI in 1986. The national centre of this sedge does appear to be the headwaters of the Thames in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire; recent Wiltshire finds have added to this number with Martin Buckland and myself, bringing the number to four localities with the finding of a brand new site in 2018, near Upper Waterhay just 2 km east of Pike Corner.

Whereas some GB sites only contain a few plants, several of them have thousands of plants each year. Over the years, other populations have been found, all in the south of England. The vascular plant Red List for England (Stroh et al., 2014) now lists *Carex filiformis* as Least Concern.

Plate 1. Letter written and sketch map drawn by Ted Lousley, dated 4 January 1937 and forwarded to D Grose, relating to the refinding of a population of *Carex filiformis* in its first known location, 137 years after the original discovery by Teesdale. The contents of this letter were passed on to relevant government agencies and this information is now included in the history of this species in Britain. To help with interpretation, the red lines are the roads, and the lower blue line is the Thames; the upper blue line is the disused Wilts & Glos. Canal.



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Martin Buckland for his input and editorial skills.

References

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Current 10km square distribution map for *Carex filiformis*. BSBI Distribution Maps.

Plant records 2019

Explanatory notes

The following list contains all species that are new to the County or Vice-counties and those considered of national importance. In this list 'new' refers to records gathered since the early 1980's and the publication of the 1993 Wiltshire Flora. In addition, the word 'recent' refers to this period also.

Recording in 2019 again pushed botanists into areas not previously covered that well that with so many eligible records gathered, this report would have stretched to over 21 pages. As a result the full list will be available to view only on the WBS website.

The information contains both scientific and common names based on the New Flora of the British Isles 3rd edition. (Stace); together with site, brief information where supplied and the initials of the recorder. First County or Vice-county records appear in bold italics. For interest, some species may have the IUCN threat criteria attached as documented in A Vascular Plant Red List for England (BSBI:2014).

Initials of Recorders

AA Anne Appleyard
DG Dave Green
DH Darrell Harrison
HCr Helena Crouch
JBr Jane Brown
JPe Jane Pearson
JRM John Moon
JSB Jessica Brooks
LBa L. Bainbridge
MBu Martin Buckland
MGU Mark Gurney
PLe Penny Lee
PMW Pat Woodruffe
PSk Paul Skelton
RAi Richard Aisbitt
RDu Rosemary Duckett
RHu Ron Hurst

SFi Sue Fitzpatrick
SPi Sharon Pilkington
SS Simon Smart
TCGR Tim Rich
TS T. Smith
VW Vanessa Williams
WBS Wiltshire Botanical Society (Outing).

Qualifying initials

IUCN International Union for the Conservation of Nature
NS Nationally scarce
CR Critically endangered
EN Endangered
VU Vulnerable
NT Near Threatened

VC7

Allium roseum (Rosy Garlic); Murhill (ST76), five colonies over 30m of steep bank. Known here for at least three years, DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Anthemis arvensis (Corn Chamomile) [GB:EN Eng:EN]; Cumberwell Landfill site (ST86), a single plant, DG.

Arum italicum ssp. *neglectum* (Italian Lords-and-Ladies); Ford (ST87), a population growing at the side of a track, DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Bromus hordeaceus ssp. *longipedicellatus* (Soft-brome); Kitchen Barrow Hill (SU06), RDu, MGU, PLe, SPi & SS. **1st VC7 record.**

Cardamine quinquefolia (Whorled Coralroot); Bradford-on-Avon (ST86), garden arrival, not sown or planted. Two patches of over seventy flowering plants, RHu. Confirmed by Tim Rich. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Catananche caerulea (Blue Cupidone); Hardenhuish, Chippenham (ST97), four plants at wall to pavement angle, MBu & DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Chenopodium giganteum (Tree Spinach); Kellaways (ST97), a single plant at the edge of an arable field, DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Cornus canadensis (Creeping Dogwood); Bowood (ST9669), many thousands growing in Bowood Rhododendron gardens. The estate confirms that it was originally planted in 1987 and has spread ever since, DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Cosmos bipinnatus (Mexican Aster); New Zealand (SU07), growing atop piles of dumped soil, MBu. **1st Wiltshire record.** Bushton (SU07), self-sown into accumulated soil at road kerb edge, MBu. 2nd VC7 record.

Cynoglossum germanicum (Green Hound's-tongue) [GB:CR Eng:NT]; Rivermead, Swindon (SU18), deliberately introduced onto the 'Tree Mound' Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Rivermead reserve. A 6x6m patch, sometimes dense, with outlying plants, RAi. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Echium plantagineum (Purple Viper's-bugloss); (ST86), a single plant, DG. Confirmed by Helena Crouch. **1st VC7 record.**

Erigeron philadelphicus (Robin's-plantain); Frankleigh Farm, derelict market garden (ST86), a single plant, HCr & DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Eryngium bourgatii (Mediterranean Sea-holly); Bradford-on-Avon (ST86), a single plant at kerb edge. HCr & DG. Identified by HCr and confirmed by Fred Rumsey. **1st Wiltshire record.**
On the BSBI database there are only five other records of non-garden or deliberately planted specimens – Ed.

Eryngium giganteum (Tall Eryngo); Hardenhuish, Chippenham (ST97), five plants in kerb cracks and at edge of pavement, MBu & DG. Identified by DG and confirmed by Helena Crouch. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Euphorbia exigua (Dwarf Spurge) [GB:NT Eng:VU]; Cepen Park, Chippenham (ST97), two sites, one of which had substantial numbers, both DG.

Euphorbia stricta (Upright Spurge) [GB:LC Eng:DD]; Cherry Orchard Farm (ST86), eight plants along base of hedge, DG.

Fragaria vesca (Wild Strawberry) [GB:LC Eng:NT]; Straight Soley (SU37), roadside verge, RAi.

Fuchsia magellanica (Fuchsia); Bradford-on-Avon (ST86), A single plant growing out of vertical stonework adjacent to River Avon footbridge was first seen in October 2018 and confirmed May 2019. This plant is the narrow budded pale pink form, DG. **1st VC7 record.**

Fuchsia x hybrida (Hybrid Fuchsia); Red Lodge (SU08), at woodland edge, presumed dumped, MBu. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Geranium sibiricum (Siberian Crane's-bill); Cherry Orchard Farm, Lower Wraxhall (ST8263), a single plant on a dry wooded bank, DG and confirmed by BSBI Geranium referee, Helena Crouch. *** 1st UK record ***

Helianthus tuberosus (Jerusalem Artichoke); Mill House, Lower Seagry (ST98), relic of previous crop; single plant in gateway, DG. **1st VC7 record.**

Hyoscyamus niger (Henbane) [GB:VU Eng:VU]; Kellaways (ST97), over fifty plants growing at edge and within flax crop, DG.

Hypericum olympicum (Mount Olympus St. John's-wort); Hankerton (ST99), at wall to pavement angle and pavement cracks. Self-sown from adjacent garden, MBu. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Knautia macedonica (Macedonian Scabious); Frankleigh Farm, derelict market garden (ST86), a single plant on landfill site, HCr & DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Lathyrus aphaca (Yellow Vetchling) [GB:VU Eng:VU]; Littleton Drew Verge WCC 1-10 (ST88), JPe.

Lathyrus grandiflorus (Two-flowered Everlasting-pea); Woolley, Bradford-on-Avon, (ST86), in alleyway growing against a wall, DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Lavandula angustifolia (Garden Lavender); Bradford-on-Avon (ST86), at Budbury Close, DG. **1st VC7 record;** Bradford-on-Avon (ST86), at Meadowfield [Road], growing in pavement verges, DG. **2nd VC7 record;** Purton (SU08), seeded into top of wall, MBu. **3rd VC7 record.**

Leonurus cardiaca (Motherwort); Frankleigh House (ST86), very large population with over two hundred flowering spikes. They have spread and seeded across a derelict market garden creating new 'hubs'. Some of the original plants top eight feet high. Originally discovered in November 2018 by DG but unable to identify until July 2019, HCr & DG. **1st VC7 record.** This represents only the second ever VC7 record; the first was in 1946 by J.D.Grose, 'roadside near Old Eagle, Rockley'.

Limnanthes douglasii (Meadow-foam); Kellaways (ST97), a large patch in gateway, DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Malva x clementii (Garden Tree-mallow); South Wraxhall, west of (ST86), two sites. A total of four plants on dumped soil within a derelict area, both DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Melilotus indicus (Small Melilot); Cumberwell Landfill site (ST86), a single plant, DG. **1st VC7 record.** There have been only three other records for this species; 1909, 1940 and 1959. – Ed.

Myosurus minimus (Mousetail) [GB:VU Eng:VU]; Wanborough (SU28), dozens of plants in muddy field gateway Rai. This only the third recent VC7 record and only the ninth since 1888! – Ed.

Nassella tenuissima (Argentine Needle-grass); Purton (SU08), self-sown into kerb edges from adjacent garden, MBu. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Parthenocissus inserta (False Virginia-creeper); Chittoe Heath (ST96), a single young plant in market garden, WBS. **1st VC7 record.**

Salix triandra var. *hoffmanniana* (Almond Willow); Summerlands Farm, Christian Malford (ST97), one very large bush, 3m x 10m, on stream edge, but may have consisted of multiple plants but unable to approach. DG. Confirmed by SPi. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Do you have any news or comments? I would be pleased to publish these in the next issue. Maybe you would like to write a full-blown article.

By email: richard@theaisbitts.co.uk. By post: Richard Aisbitt, 84 Goddard Avenue, Swindon, SN1 4HT

Valerianella dentata (Narrow-fruited Cornsalad) [GB:EN Eng:EN]; Kitchen Barrow Hill (SU06), AA, SFi, VW & PMW.

Verbascum densiflorum (Dense-flowered Mullein); Frankleigh Farm (ST86), four plants on nearby landfill, HCr & DG. **1st VC7 record.** Lower Stanton St. Quinton (ST98), four plants within grass area of petrol station forecourt, Holt (ST86), two plants on landfill site, both DG.

VC8

Achillea filipendulina (Fern-leaf Yarrow); Devizes (SU06), several plants self seeded into local authority road constructed of block pavers, MBu. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Allium roseum (Rosy Garlic); Winterslow (SU23), naturalised on trackside bank from nearby garden, AA & SFi; Pewsey (SU16), two flowering plants at path side of allotments, JBr. **1st VC8 record.**

Alnus rubra (Red Alder); Devizes (SU06), self-sown seedlings by garden fence; planted trees adjacent, MBu. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Anchusa arvensis (Bugloss) [GB:EN Eng:EN]; Knook, north of (ST94), RBr; Larkhill (SU14), plants along 20m of disturbed ground, AA & SFi.

Anemanthele lessoniana (Pheasant's-tail); Westbury Leigh (ST85), a single plant growing out of tarmac, DG. **1st VC8 record.**

Anthemis cotula (Stinking Chamomile) [GB:VU Eng:VU]; Upper Pertwood (ST83), three sites, all SFi; East Knoyle (ST83); Bishopstrow (ST84), both AA & SFi; Franchises Wood, Pylon track (SU21), AA, SFi & PMW.

Aster novae-angliae (Hairy Michaelmas-daisy); Semley (ST82), escape from nearby garden and naturalised, AA & SFi. **1st VC8 record.**

Bidens ferulifolia (Fern-leaved Beggarticks); Hilpertown Marsh, Trowbridge (ST86), self-seeding in garden centre, Marsh Road. Over fifteen well grown plants and known here for two years, DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Campanula rapunculoides (Creeping Bellflower) [GB:EN Eng:EN]; SPTA: Dumbell Copse (SU14); several large patches of leaves at the foot of beech trees in the eastern half of the copse but only one flowering spike. Spread is probably limited by army activity. The copse is isolated; at least 2km from the nearest house so unlikely to be a garden escape. JRM; determined by G. Knass.

Cerastium pumilum (Dwarf Mouse-ear) [GB:NT Eng:NT], Wylde Downs (ST93); Wylde Downs (SU03), both on anthills, both SFi.

Cichorium intybus (Chicory) [GB:LC Eng:VU]; Kinghay (ST82), frequent in lay field; East Grafton (SU26), RAi.

Consolida regalis (Forking Larkspur); Codford (ST94), single plant growing along a pathway, presumed garden escape, LBa. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Erigeron glaucus (Seaside Daisy); Devizes (SU06), plants self-sown at wall to pavement angle from overhanging flowers in adjacent garden, MBu. **1st VC8 record.**

Fumaria parviflora (Fine-leaved Fumitory) [GB:VU Eng:NT]; Knap Barrow Farm (SU01), JSB.

Fumaria vaillantii (Few-flowered Fumitory) [GB:VU Eng:EN]; Whitsbury Manor Farm (SU12), edge of arable field, JSB. Confirmed Phil Wilson.

Gnaphalium luteoalbum (Jersey Cudweed); Westbury Cement Works (ST85), a single plant in flower, DH, confirmed by SPi. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Lepidium virginicum (Least Pepperwort); Pewsey (SU16); in pavement crack; flowering and fruiting, JBr. Confirmed by SPi. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Nassella tenuissima (Argentine Needle-grass); Devizes (SU06), several plants seeded into local authority road constructed of block pavers, MBu. **1st VC8 record.**

Contacts

Chair, newsletter, records	Richard Aisbitt	01793 694680	richard@theaisbitts.co.uk
Treasurer	Sue Fitzpatrick	01722 410807	susan@fitzpatrick7.plus.com
Plant ID queries, records	Sharon Pilkington	01373 827074	sharon.pilkington1@btinternet.com
Secretary	Alison Robinson	01793 731947	alisonrobinson300@gmail.com

Nepeta cataria (Cat-mint) [GB:VU Eng:VU]; Rivar Down (SU36), three plants in sown field edge, with *M. arvensis*, RAi.

Polycarpon tetraphyllum (Four-leaved Allseed); Trowbridge (ST85715644), several plants flowering in pavement crack. Probably var. *diphyllum*, SPi. **1st Wiltshire record.** Trowbridge (ST84805728), numerous well-grown plants in silt at kerb to road angle, in cul-de-sac for 50m, SPi. **2nd VC8 record.**

Sanvitalia procumbens (Creeping Zinnia); Hilperton Marsh, Trowbridge (ST8660), Two plants, self-sown at garden centre, DG. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Sasa palmata (Broad-leaved Bamboo); Fonthill (ST93), naturalised in wet woodland, AA, SFi & VW. **1st VC8 record.**

Spergula arvensis (Corn Spurrey) [GB:VU Eng:VU]; East Knoyle (ST83), two sites, both on and near paths, AA & SFi; Fonthill Gifford (ST93), locally abundant, WBS.

Stachys arvensis (Field Woundwort) [GB:NT Eng:NT]; Semley (ST82), in maize field, AA & SFi.

Taraxacum oxoniense; Perham Down (SU257499), TGCR. **1st Wiltshire record.**

Trifolium fragiferum (Strawberry Clover) [GB:LC Eng:VU]; Ruddlebats Hanging, Stert (SU05), two sites, one a railway bank, both DG.

Veronica crista-galli (Crested Field-speedwell); Staples Hill, Freshford (ST792594), many hundreds of plants on newly cleared garden bank and, also on footpath, DG.

1st VC8 record.

Veronica officinalis (Heath Speedwell) [GB:LC Eng:NT]; SPTA (West), a single plant, PSk.

Puzzles

Answers to Martin's crossword

Across

3. *Silene flos-cuculi*
8. Small-leaved Lime
9. Woodrush
11. Kickxia
12. Asparagus
14. Tufted Hair
15. Burnt Orchid
16. Beech
17. Corn Parsley
18. Euphorbia
20. *Carex sylvatica*

Down

1. *Pseudonarcissus*
2. Scarlet Pimpernel
4. *Melampyrum*
5. *Fraxinus*
6. Filiformis
7. Early Spider-orchid
10. Fritillary
13. *Lolium perenne*
19. *Sambucus*

Botanical Trackword (with apologies to Radio Times trackword)

E	R	P
P	I	N
M	L	E

How many words of three letters or more can you find by tracking from one square to the next, going up, down, sideways or diagonally in order?

You may not use the same letter square twice in any word.

Proper nouns or foreign words are not allowed.

What is the nine-letter botanical word? (Most of the other words have no botanical connection) I have found 39 words....

Paul Darby

New Year Plant Hunt

BSBI has run the New Year Plant Hunt (NYPH) for several years. It is a partly competitive, partly fun exercise. Local groups would explore an area for any plants in flower and send their lists in to BSBI. The number of species could be quite high; Swanage found 115 last year.

NYPH will run again this year, but neither the BSBI nor the Wiltshire Botanical Society is encouraging organised teams to take part. However, you can do the NYPH as an individual or you could gather a small local group. You should, of course, observe whatever Covid rules apply at the time.

If you want to take part, you can find the details at <https://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>. The survey must be done between 1st and 4th January and is limited to a three hour search. There will be a recording app on the BSBI website to help you to record your finds and send in your list. Good hunting.

Cover picture: the hybrid orchid featured in Sharon Pilkington's article in the November issue, showing wasp pollination in progress. Orchids package their pollen into lumps called pollinia. These stick to visiting insects and get carried to the next flower that they visit. The individual in the picture is carrying such a heavy load that it must affect both its vision and its flight trim. This splendid photo is by Ann Goodfellow.