

Cambridgeshire Flora Group

Newsletter 2021

3rd Edition

News

The year 2020 has been notable for the disruption caused by the coronavirus and this looks set to continue into 2021. It has however provided the excuse for a lot of local recording, which when combined with a new date class means that more records have been made in v.c.29 during 2020 than in any previous year. Some of these are particularly notable records and Alan Leslie gives some highlights in his usual section, with full details presented in *Nature in Cambridgeshire* (NiC), which will be published in the summer. For the first time for many years this publication will also include a charophyte (Stoneworts) report as I've made a couple of interesting finds of these multicellular algae. Although adopted by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) for recording purposes they don't fit in the vascular plants section of NiC. I've put together a programme of meetings for 2021, however I suspect that at least the early ones may be subject to limitations. For this reason I've included a few half day meetings in Cambridge in the hope that these may be possible for people without access to transport.

I've been learning how to use QGIS software for plotting distribution maps and whilst I've got a long way to go, have managed to produce some maps that look different to those produced by both MapMate and the BSBI Distribution Database (DDb). It also allows me to produce maps showing the distribution of groups of species. Groups might include axiophytes, Register of Plants of Conservation Concern (RPCC) species or a plant family. The axiophytes and RPCC plots are broadly similar, showing the hotspots of Newmarket Heath, Chippenham Fen, Wicken Fen, Gamlingay, the Ouse and Nene Washes and the linear features. Cambridge itself comes out as a major hotspot. Plotting orchids shows that Chippenham Fen comes top over the last decade, followed by Fulbourn Fen and Thriplow Meadows. Cambridge comes top for ferns by a long way, with Gamlingay being the runner up. At the moment selection is a bit clunky, but there should be ways to improve it.



White-flowered *Anacamptis pyramidalis*
(Pyramidal Orchid) at Balsham
(Richard Pargeter).

Another lockdown activity has been writing papers. The NatHistCam project book is taking shape and may reach publication in 2021. It will have several chapters on the plants of Cambridge. As an offshoot of this, Mark Hill has analysed all the v.c.29 records and produced a novel distribution analysis, which appeared in the BSBI scientific journal *British & Irish Botany* (B&IB). I've been looking at the county protected road verges for a paper in NiC, and Alan is reporting on the Rose research that he has done with Peter Leonard, in addition to a paper on the flora of Bottisham Hall.

On the BSBI front I remain as the Hon. Field Meetings Secretary and Chair of the Committee for England (CfE). The three BSBI meetings in the county that were due to take place in 2020 have been carried over to 2021. Two of these are more specialised (Elms and Cotoneasters) and one is intended for beginners. There are the usual Flora Group meetings and these cover a variety of sites across the county. We made a start on compiling records for a register of good county botanical sites last year and I've organised meetings at several more of these. A possible project for study across England was discussed in January by the CfE, but



Betonica officinalis (**Betony**) in the Madingley 800 Wood on July 11 (Oli Glenister). It is an RPR species as it is county endangered and was last seen in Madingley Wood in the late 19th century.

in the end it was thought best to leave it as a shopping list for the moment. One idea that was put forward is a study of caravan sites, so some ad hoc visits might be arranged.

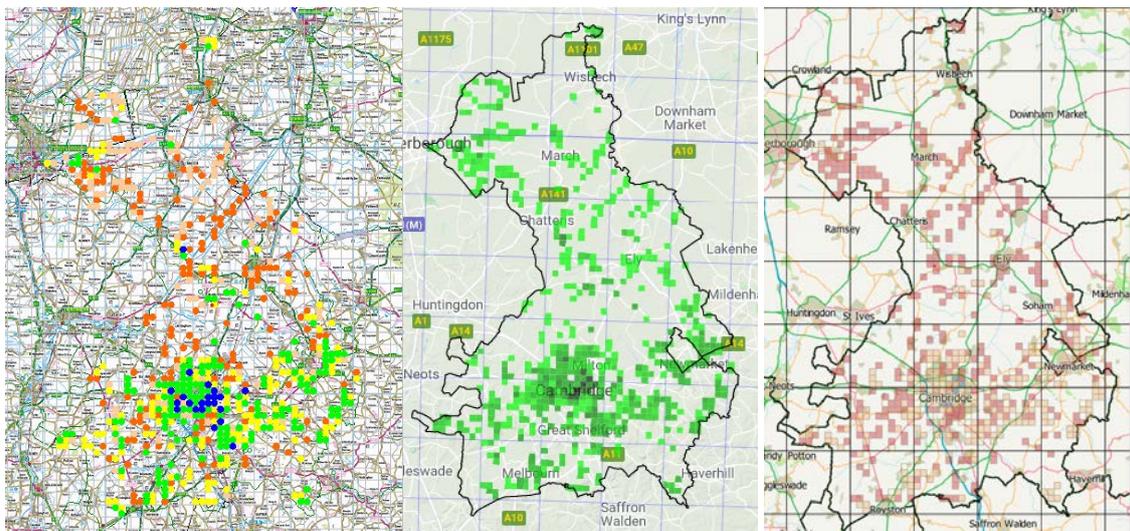
Gigi Crompton, the county recorder from 1974 to 2002, died on 2020 January 12. There have been many obituaries for her, with a detailed one appearing in BSBI News. She was responsible for compiling the valuable online [Cambridgeshire Flora Records since 1538](#), a very convenient source for quickly checking on county records. Trevor James, county recorder for neighbouring Hertfordshire, died on June 5. He contributed around 1000 records for Cambridgeshire, most recently around Addenbrooke's Hospital when he had appointments there.

Recording News

The RPCC was updated midway through 2020 to include an Appendix of species that are of concern, not because they are scarce or declining, but because they may be a cause of such declines, that is they are invasive or potentially so. The annual update of the Rare Plant Register (RPR) and the RPCC at the end of the year to cover the period 2001-2020 revealed that a few species showed a continued decline at monad level, despite increased recording at this resolution. A few species were deleted from the RPR because additional sites had been found, a few were added either because of finds new to the county or because a significant decline has occurred and a couple

were moved to the extinct list. The list of those species not seen recently, which is subdivided into decades has also been updated. All of these are on the web page. The decadal listing might help people to target specific species and perhaps re-discover them. This was suggested as another possible project for England, along with looking for plants that are at the edge of their distribution range.

There have been several re-finds of species that had not been seen for some years or in some locations for over a century and a few of these are described by Alan in his notes later in the Newsletter. Of the 728 [743 – numbers in square brackets are last year's figures] species on the RPCC at the beginning of 2021, 316 (43%) [349 (47%)] were seen in 2020, 542 (74%) [549 (75%)] have been seen since 2011 [2010] and 580 (80%) [592 (80%)] since 2001 [2000]. *Hieracium acuminatum* (**Tall Hawkweed**) has not been seen since 2001 and has been added to the potentially extinct group. Of the 292 [293] species (which excludes 135 [137] probably extinct species) on the RPR at the beginning of 2021, 118 (40%) [136 (45%)] were seen in 2020, 258 (88%) [268 (89%)] have been seen since 2011 [2010] and 283 (97%) [292 (97%)] since 2001 [2000]. *Galeopsis angustifolia* (**Red Hemp-nettle**) has not been seen since 1991 and is therefore presumed extinct. The details of the insertions and deletions are given in the Registers. There is still a chance that some species thought to be extinct will be re-found in the county, either as casuals, or as returning natives. There are seven species not seen since the last decade of the 20th century and these are perhaps the most likely to be re-found. They are described later in the newsletter.



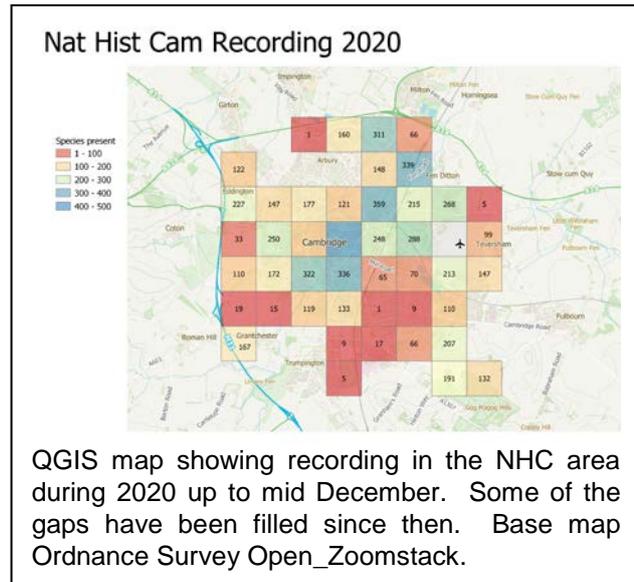
Three maps of different styles showing recording in 2020 a) MapMate, b) BSBI DDb, c) QGIS (base map Ordnance Survey Open_Zoomstack). Scattered records in the Fens come from a final push to track “missing” species for the Fenland Flora. The concentration of records around Cambridge is as always notable.

Further records for 2018 and 2019 have come in and their DDb totals now stand at 28758 and 25968 records respectively, whilst so far there are an astonishing 46269 for 2020. In reality there are probably even more than this as the DDb counts as duplicates records that are made at different sites in the same monad. We have DDb records for 2798 different species, with 2328 seen from 2000 onwards. 1274 species were recorded during 2020, slightly below the record of 1295 set in 2018. Rather like records of temperature, 15 of the 16 years with records of over 1000 species have occurred in the 21st century, but I doubt if this is caused by climate change! June was

the most popular month to record (7831 records) with February being the least (899). Overall in the v.c. MapMate database the most frequent species remain as *Urtica dioica* (Nettle) (664) tetrads out of the 665 in the v.c.), followed by *Galium aparine* (Cleavers) (661) and *Dactylis glomerata* (Cock's-foot) (658).

Although recording for the NatHistCam project lead by the Cambridge Natural History Society had finished, I continued with the botanical recording, in part to monitor future change, and in part for something to do during lockdowns, though it also showed that our recording was by no means complete. Because of all the local recording, TL45 regained its top spot for the most species recorded in a hectad in Britain & Ireland during 2020 with 1028, with next best ST69 (Thornbury to Berkeley north of Bristol) having 893. TL46 came third with 738 and SK50 (Leicester) was in fourth place. Taking all records into consideration TL45 has records of 2006 species in the DDb.

If you have lists of records, please submit them promptly, in properly formatted spreadsheets if possible. This makes it much easier for me to verify them and import them into the local and thence national database. Casual records of interesting species can be submitted in any format and images are also welcome, particularly where they can help illustrate the newsletter. There are [hints and tips on format and recording](#) on the county web page. There is also a very [helpful xls utility](#) to input records which will create nicely formatted records. Phone apps are being developed by the BSBI and others for direct recording, and iRecord is operational, though does introduce erroneous records. Records from iRecord will only be accepted if they clearly meet the standard for what is a good record, in particular that the recorder gives a name rather than a pseudonym.



QGIS map showing recording in the NHC area during 2020 up to mid December. Some of the gaps have been filled since then. Base map Ordnance Survey Open_Zoomstack.

If you are not already a member of the BSBI do consider joining. The Society journal *BSBI News* comes out three times a year and is full of interesting material as is their open access scientific journal *British & Irish Botany (B&I)*. Some abstracts from the latter follow. By joining BSBI you can get discounted rates on many publications, including their Handbook series.

Abstracts of Recent Papers

The following papers from B&I are either about or mention Cambridgeshire. The links should take you to the paper.

[The phenology of an urban street flora: a transect study](#). Chris Preston. 2(1)
Vascular plants in flower along a fixed 3.8 km route in eight streets in a primarily residential area of urban Cambridge, U.K., were recorded at monthly intervals between



Stellaria media in flower at Cambridge Hill on the March 22 excursion (Peter Leonard)

January 2016 and December 2019. There was a consistent annual pattern over the four years; the number of flowering species was greatest in June or July but there were still appreciable numbers of species flowering when totals were at their lowest in February or March. Five annuals (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*, *Euphorbia peplus*, *Poa annua*, *Senecio vulgaris*, *Stellaria media*) and one perennial (*Parietaria judaica*) were very frequent and flowered from January to December. Perennial species showed greater variation through the year than annual species. In most months the

number of flowering British native species exceeded the combined number of archaeophytes and neophytes, but the native total peaked earlier in the summer and then declined more rapidly than that of the introductions. The transect method appeared to be effective in identifying the main annual phenological trends and also revealed the effects of extreme weather on the patterns in some seasons.

[Changes in the distribution and abundance of *Carex ericetorum* in Britain since the 1970s.](#) Kevin Walker & Peter Stroh. 2(2)

British populations of *Carex ericetorum* Poll. (Rare Spring Sedge) were visited between 2008 and 2015 to assess size, habitats, associated vegetation, management, threats and changes in abundance since the 1970s. *C. ericetorum* was relocated at 40 of the 64 sites visited, mainly in northwest England (24 sites) and East Anglia (nine sites); most populations that couldn't be relocated were in southern and eastern England. Population sizes were usually small (<100 individuals) and had remained relatively stable or had increased in size since the 1970s. In southern and eastern England, *C. ericetorum* was restricted to species-rich calcareous grassland overlying chalk or limestone dominated by *Festuca ovina* and *Bromopsis erecta*. In northwest England, it was confined to limestone grassland dominated by *Sesleria caerulea*. Ideal management for *C. ericetorum* comprised autumn and winter grazing to maintain a short sward (<6 cm), although it had persisted in the absence of grazing where the growth of dominants was restricted by exposure and/or soil infertility. The main threat to its survival is now a lack of grazing leading to increased competition with tall grasses, although agricultural intensification had caused losses in the lowlands. Nitrogen deposition is also likely to have compounded these threats on some sites. Its survival on many sites will require the maintenance or reinstatement of grazing.

[Ranunculus leslieanus \(Ranunculaceae\) - a new name for a recently described species.](#) Franz G Dunkel. 2(3)

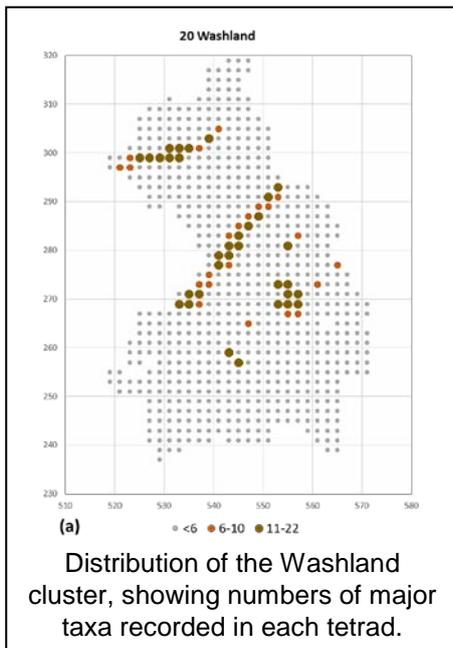
Within the *Ranunculus auricomus* complex, the name *R. multidentatus* A.C. Leslie is illegitimate. This taxon is renamed *R. leslieanus* in honour of its finder.

[Schoenoplectus x flevensis \(S. lacustris x S. tabernaemontani, Cyperaceae\) in Britain.](#) Richard Lansdown & Fred Rumsey. 2(3)

Intermediates between *Schoenoplectus lacustris* and *S. tabernaemontani* have been recognised at least since the late 19th century and for much of that time, there has been

speculation that such intermediates may involve hybridisation. In 2017 the hybrid status of a population growing in the South-Forty-foot Drain in Lincolnshire was confirmed using molecular tools. This article presents information on the hybrid, both from the Lincolnshire population and from the literature, as well as providing an indication of how hybrid populations might be recognised. The binomial *Schoenoplectus* × *flevensis* (D.Bakker) Lansdown & Rumsey is proposed for the hybrid.

[Geographical patterns in the flora of Cambridgeshire \(v.c.29\)](#). Mark O. Hill, Christopher D. Preston, & Jonathan D. Shanklin. 2(4)



Cambridgeshire data collected for the BSBI's Atlas 2020 project include 347,496 records at monad (1 km) or finer resolution. We used these data to cluster taxa by spherical k-means to produce 21 clusters of taxa with similar patterns of distribution. Some of the clusters correspond to well-defined habitats such as chalk grassland, ancient woodland, traditional fenland, and saline riversides and roadsides. Other clusters were less expected, corresponding to arable clayland, washland (the Ouse and Nene washes), waste ground and garden escapes. There was a cluster of ubiquitous species and another of common arable weeds. The distributions of the clusters are displayed as coincidence maps. Some species are intermediate between two clusters. These can be recognised by their relatively poor goodness of fit to any one cluster. The clusters differ markedly in ecological attributes and whether they include rare or threatened species. We interpret these differences using Ellenberg values and the vascular plant Red List for England.

The 2020 edition of NiC (No 62) had a wealth of botanical papers, including Management at Wicken Fen – maintaining the variation (Owen Mountford & Tim Sparks), New chalk grassland communities beside the Devil's Ditch (Alan Leslie), An update on the history, ecology and fate of **Fen Ragwort** (*Jacobaea paludosa*) in Britain (Pete Stroh), The story of Arthur's Meadow (Philip Oswald), Cherry Hinton: A report on the CNHS Field Studies of 2019 (Jonathan Shanklin), Vascular Plant Records 2019 (Alan Leslie) as well as several book reviews and obituaries. Subscription details are on the [NiC web page](#). All [back issues](#) over five years old are freely available and often offer fascinating views of how some of our sites appeared in the past.

Vascular Plant Records 2020 – Alan Leslie

Despite the vicissitudes visited upon us in 2020, it was another year with many interesting and surprising botanical records from within Cambridgeshire (v.c.29). Although our formal meetings were restricted in number and extent, many individuals managed to keep recording, if only locally. Some have also had an eye on the historical record, investigations which have brought to light our earliest known reports for *Carex canescens* (**White Sedge**), *Osmunda regalis* (**Royal Fern**) and *Atropa*

belladonna (**Deadly Nightshade**), whilst study of nineteenth century herbarium material has resulted in only the second confirmed record for *Potentilla anglica* (**Trailing Tormentil**), from Sutton Dole. The past features in a number of other records as well, as refinding plants in old sites from which they had not been reported recently is rather a feature of this year's records. Perhaps the most remarkable of these is *Prunus cerasus* (**Dwarf Cherry**) from Gamlingay Wood, where it was last reported in the early part of the twentieth century, but has probably been ever since: its identification required a careful and revealing appraisal of the vegetative characters separating this from *P. avium* (**Wild Cherry**). Other notable refinds included *Hieracium aviicola* (**Many-toothed Hawkweed**) on the Devil's Ditch, *Catabrosa aquatica* (**Whorlgrass**) in Ditton Meadows and a host of records for *Rosa micrantha* (**Small-flowered Sweet-briar**) on the boulder clay, in or near areas where it had been recorded by W.H. Mills, probably in the 1930s, but not seen since.



The stand of *Prunus cerasus* in Gamlingay Wood. Leaf detail inset in bottom right corner.

There are as always a slew of new or rare aliens, several of which reflect current increasing trends in their occurrence elsewhere in the country, such as the annual grass *Rostraria cristata* (**Mediterranean Hair-grass**), the biennial garden plant *Eryngium giganteum* (**Tall Eryngo**) and the annual crucifer *Sisymbrium irio* (**London-rocket**). In the case of bird-sown *Vitis coignetiae* (**Crimson-glory-vine**) we are perhaps a little ahead of any such trend, and whilst *Equisetum ramosissimum* (**Branched Horsetail**) may only have been a garden centre weed here, this mirrors its occurrence in Surrey and perhaps elsewhere and this may potentially be a more widespread alien in the future. There are also new records for a slightly confusing group of plants, some of which (like *Potentilla verna* (**Spring Cinquefoil**) and *Herniaria glabra* (**Smooth Rupturewort**)) are rare natives in the county, but have also been found escaping from gardens (or been introduced in other ways). Others such as *Geranium purpureum* (**Little-Robin**), *Fumaria capreolata* (**White Ramping-fumitory**)

and *Rosa agrestis* (**Small-leaved Sweet-briar**) are definite natives elsewhere in Britain, but probably not here, although it is possible the rose is bird-sown (but from where?).

New records for our scarcer native species have also been accumulating, not least the reports of *Himantoglossum hircinum* (**Lizard Orchid**) in no less than three sites within seed-blowing distance of the main Devil's Ditch colony, as well as new records for *Astragalus danicus* (**Purple Milk-vetch**), *Baldellia ranunculoides* (**Lesser Water-plantain**), *Trifolium medium* (**Zigzag Clover**) and *Veronica officinalis* (**Heath Speedwell**), and confirmation of a large population of *Dipsacus pilosus* (**Small Teasel**) in Out Wood on the south-eastern boulder clay (as well as an entirely new population near Caxton Moats).

We always seem to have a handful of new hybrids to report each year and this year is no exception. One of these, *E. x litorale* (*E. arvense* x *fluviatile*) (**Shore Horsetail**), which has been a surprising absentee from our lists until now, has been confirmed from

two sites, one in Cambridge and the other near Pondersbridge in the Fens. It is probably overlooked elsewhere. Also newly confirmed is a colony of *Elymus x drucei* (*E. athericus* x *repens*) from the guided busway just south of Cambridge city and this is another hybrid that may be overlooked elsewhere, but always needs expert verification.

Finally there are records of a number of distinctive variants that have been spotted during the year. Perhaps the most attractive was a white-fruited *Euonymus europaeus* (**Spindle**) from the margin of Langley Wood, although a green-flowered *Scrophularia nodosa* (**Common Figwort**) in Gamlingay Wood might be reckoned a close second. The latter site also boasted a remarkable variant of *Vicia sepium* (**Bush Vetch**) with long pointed leaflets. There had been earlier suggestions in the nineteenth century that a form of *Erodium cicutarium* (**Common Stork's-bill**) with some dark-spotted petals occurred in the county, but these had never been localised. This year a number of recorders got their eye in for this and it may be more widespread than was realised. Finally, it is becoming evident that at least some of our modern records for *Myosotis discolor* (**Changing Forget-me-not**) (nearly always in sites where it is a presumed accidental introduction) are for a smaller-flowered variant, in which the buds and newly opened flowers instead of being yellow, are white or creamy white, and these appear to belong in subsp. *dubia*. Certainly the large population in rabbit-grazed turf at the base of the large chalk pit beside Coldham's Lane in Cambridge are all of this type.

This is of necessity only a summary of these records and further details of these and more will be published in this year's *Nature in Cambridgeshire*, which is due out in mid-

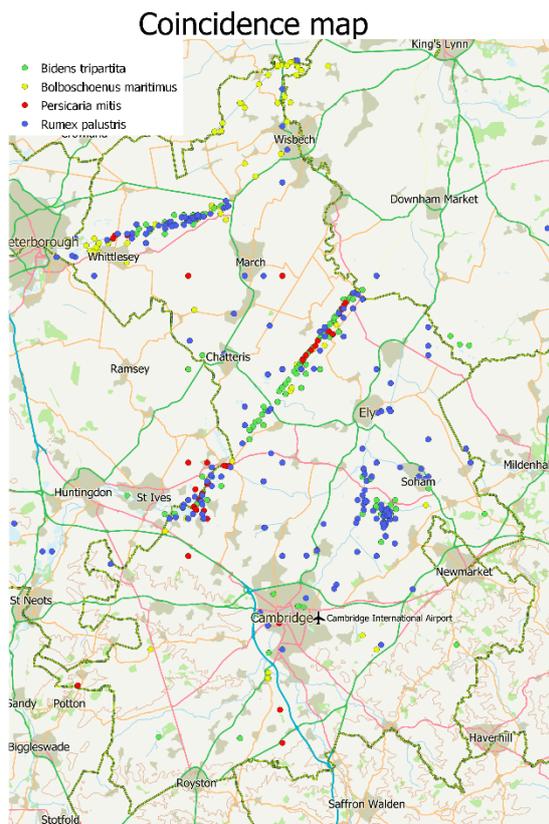


Lizard Orchid rosette at a new site on the Devil's Ditch (Monica Frisch).

summer. Even those are only a selection of a much larger volume of records made in the county in 2020, all of which are now available on the BSBI database. Thank you to all those that make a contribution to our knowledge of the county's flora by submitting their new plant records.

Cambridgeshire Native Plants

I am not a fan of long lists of new hectad records, but when chosen with care they can tell a story. In this section I detail a few such stories of native species that have been recorded in new hectads in 2020.



The CFG excursion to the RSPB Nene Washes produced several new hectad records, at least in part because of a desire to sample the Nene banks in the small part of TF20 that was within the reserve. One plant of *Bidens tripartita* (**Trifid Bur-marigold**) was recorded at TF29740003 on August 29. This is an extension (just!) to a new hectad of the expanding population along the Nene Washes, which extends from Peterborough to Rings End, although all but one record is east of Whittlesey. The other major population in the county is along the Ouse Washes, with another minor concentration around Wicken Fen. *Bolboschoenus maritimus* (**Sea Club-rush**) was also recorded on the banks of the Nene in the same hectad, but this time it is probably more a question of being previously un-recorded rather than not being present. It has a broadly similar distribution to the *Bidens*, but is also found in Fenland drains north of Rings

End. A plant to watch out for is *Bolboschoenus laticarpus*, a recently split native species that grows in non-saline habitats and which so far has only been recorded in the county as planted. There is a [paper in B&IB](#) that describes the differences. The main population of *Persicaria mitis* (**Tasteless Water-pepper**) in the county is in the Ouse Washes, but there is a small population along the Nene Washes and it was duly found in TF20. *Rumex palustris* (**Marsh Dock**), which is relatively widespread in the county was also added. As with many apparent range extensions, searching in a previously unrecorded habitat in a hectad is likely to produce interesting results.

Carex remota (**Remote Sedge**) was found by Jonathan Graham at Bassenhally Pit in TL29 on March 29, where it was growing on the bank of a drain under hawthorn scrub. The plant is mostly found in the southern woods and streamsides and in the county the nearest location to this one is at Wicken, though it grows a little closer in neighbouring

counties. It is perhaps undergoing something of a resurgence as for example Oliver Rackham noted it as extinct in Madingley Wood in 1996, where it is now common.

The distribution of *Crepis biennis* (**Rough Hawk's-beard**) in the county is centred on Cambridge, with most of the records being recent. Perhaps not surprisingly it is spreading and a record made in Chippenham in May drew little attention at the time, although it was the most easterly record in the county. Alan Leslie suggests in the Flora that it might be being introduced with seed sown on verges or being moved around with soil.

New locations for *Galium uliginosum* (**Fen Bedstraw**) are rarely found, so it was a surprise to find it in a damp ditch at Ditton Park Wood in June. This is some way from any other records and south of the A11 there is only a 1997 record for it in Linton.



Iberis amara at West Pit, Cherry Hinton

Iberis amara (**Wild Candytuft**) has been appearing at a multitude of new sites over the last few years and the origin has been obscure. It appeared in two more hectads during 2020, but these perhaps suggest a likely origin. Some plants appeared on a wild-flower ceramic mound at Bramblefields LNR in Cambridge, and there were also plants on chalky ground associated with a burial at Brinkley Woodland Cemetery. This suggests that at least some of the other appearances may be due to wild-flower sowing either for amenity or as a memorial.

A detailed survey at the former Mepal Outdoor Centre turned up several new hectad records. One is described in Alan's section, but there was also *Fragaria vesca* (**Wild Strawberry**), *Myosotis ramosissima* (**Early Forget-me-not**) and *Taraxacum glauciniforme* (a **Dandelion**). The key factor to these finds was the extensive area of

open sandy ground, something quite unusual in the fens, although large scale nearby gravel working could support similar habitats.

Alan Leslie has an eye for the salt loving *Parapholis incurva* (**Curved Hard-grass**) and spotted it for the first time on the Newmarket Road near the Teversham roundabout. He has made all the previous sightings, along the A505, just south of it on the A11 and on the A14 east of Cambridge. It must surely be present elsewhere on the A14 and perhaps the A428, so do have a look in May or June if you can stand the traffic and wear a fluorescent jacket.

For some reason *Sison segetum* (**Corn Parsley**) is relatively common on the barrier banks of the Ouse Washes. Oli Glenister extended its range a little further north, finding it in TL59 on April 23. There is only one site north of the Washes, on the dismantled railway at Chatteris, but it is widely scattered in the county to the south of them.

Cambridgeshire Rare Plants



Ajuga chamaepitys (Kevin Walker)

For this issue I have chosen some plants that have not been seen in the county for over 20 years. All were known from only a few sites, so I haven't included distribution maps. The introductions come from the BSBI Atlas accounts. For further information see the Flora of Cambridgeshire.

Ajuga chamaepitys (**Ground-pine**) 1996. *An annual or biennial herb of arable field margins and bare tracks on calcareous soils, and on open chalk downland. Its seeds are long-lived and this has led to its reappearance following disturbance at some sites. The only records of the last 100 years were from Morden Grange Plantation along a few field margins and near Penny Loaf Hill, Odsey. The Morden Grange field margins are often well sprayed, but on occasion a field corner might be left so it could still be worth looking. Penny Loaf Hill hasn't been visited since 1993, and perhaps it might survive there.*



Blysmus compressus (Kevin Walker),
Alum Pot, v.c.64



Berteroa incana (Alla Mashanova),
Hatfield, v.c.20

Berteroa incana (**Hoary Alison**) 2000. *A biennial, but occasionally annual or perennial herb, rarely naturalised on waste ground, and predominantly occurring as a casual in arable fields, on waste ground, around docks and in newly sown grass or clover leys. Our locations conform to this, with the plant last seen at Chesterton Sidings and previously on the railway near the Newmarket corn-silo and at Cambridge Sewage Farm. Only the first of these sites is still accessible and it is rapidly being developed. This does however mean that there is plenty of disturbed ground to search.*

Beta vulgaris subsp. *maritima* (**Sea Beet**) 1998. *A much-branched perennial herb found on coastal rocks and cliffs, saltmarsh drift-lines, sea-walls, and on sand and shingle beaches, favouring nutrient-enriched sites such as sea-bird cliffs and coastal paths popular with dog-walkers. It also occurs on waste ground near the sea and, rarely, inland as a casual of rubbish tips and roadsides. Our problem is that we don't have much sea-side! The only reported locations for the plant are Wisbech Docks and Foul Anchor. Perhaps we'll be lucky and find it on the CFG excursion.*

Blysmus compressus (**Flat-sedge**) 1996. *A rhizomatous perennial of open areas in marshes and fens, and in short, sedge-rich, damp grassland, calcareous flushes and stream borders which are subject to flooding. The most recent location for the plant was Thriplow Meadows, but the site has changed since 1996 along with many other Cambridgeshire fen sites. The water table is generally low and despite searching the*

plant has not been re-found. It might still occur at Dernford Fen, where it was last seen in 1960, but that too suffers from a low water table.

Dactylorhiza incarnata subsp. *ochroleuca* (**Early Marsh-orchid (Pale Form)**) 1995. A tuberous perennial herb restricted to moist, periodically inundated calcareous fens, preferring areas of low competition that are slowly but only partially drying out. The plant used to grow at Chippenham Fen but it is over 100 years since it was seen at Wicken Fen. Chippenham Fen is well managed, so here it is not the fault of a low water table and the reasons for its disappearance are uncertain.

Eleocharis multicaulis (**Many-stalked Spike-rush**) 1997? A densely tufted perennial herb mainly of acid bogs, wet heath, valley mires, pools and wet hollows over peat, and at the edge of acidic lakes; also occurring in coastal dune-slacks. The 1997 record is from Kingfishers Bridge, however it is one of several contentious records from the site at that time. Most likely it was last seen on Sheep's Green in Cambridge in 1881.



Galeopsis angustifolia (Kevin Walker), Micheldever, v.c.12

Galeopsis angustifolia (**Red Hemp-nettle**) 1991. An annual of arable land, waste places and open ground on calcareous substrates, including limestone pavements and scree; also found on eskers and on coastal sand and shingle. This late-flowering species often fails to set seed within winter-sown crops. The plant used to be quite widespread on the chalk in the southern half of the county, but has undergone a precipitous decline. It was last seen on the Magog Trust land in 1991 and although

there have been searches for it since, it hasn't been re-found. Such cornfield weeds sometimes have a long lived seed bank, so perhaps with suitable management it could reappear. Sadly very few sites in the county are managed for cornfield weeds and this is not an objective of the Magog Trust. There are however a few field corners in the adjacent arable where scarce weeds have recently appeared, for example *Valerianella dentata* (**Narrow-fruited Cornsalad**) appeared in one this year.



Galium tricornerum (Ian Denholm), Rothampsted, v.c.20

Galium tricornerum (**Corn Cleavers**) 1998. An annual of cereal fields and disturbed ground, chiefly on dry calcareous soils. Rarely, it can arise as a casual from the seed bank during earth-moving. The plant was last seen on what was then a new slip road from the A11 to Little Abington. It was looked for there again over the next few years, but not found. I wonder whether it is sometimes overlooked and dismissed as *Galium aparine* (**Cleavers**)? I saw some *Galium* in flower in December but didn't look closely and recorded it as *G. aparine*. Perhaps I should have looked more closely, as *G. tricornerum* does flower later than *G. aparine*.

Hieracium salticola (**Bluish-leaved Hawkweed**) 2000. Hawkweeds are tricky plants to determine to species, and it may well be the case that this has been recorded since 2000, but as *Hieracium* agg. There have been several records of Hawkweeds from March in the last decade, but none definitively identified to species. Rather surprisingly there have been no records from Chesterton Sidings since 2000, when it was present "in some quantity". [Ken's Keys](#) (Ken Adams from Essex) shows some illustrations.



Pedicularis palustris (P Shannon), Cothill, v.c.23

Pedicularis palustris (**Marsh Lousewort**) 1998. An annual to biennial root-hemiparasitic herb of a wide range of base-rich to acidic, moist habitats, including wet heaths, valley bogs, wet meadows, ditches, fens and hillside flushes. Its sites are usually more enriched than those preferred by *P. sylvatica* (Lousewort). The plant was only known from a few locations in the county and was lost from most by the end of the nineteenth century. It survived at Wicken Fen until the 1950s and was last seen in Chippenham Fen in 1998. Alan Leslie didn't find any despite searching when he made a comprehensive survey in 2015. Perhaps the Water Buffalo that are used to manage the site will create the open boggy conditions needed for it to reappear.

Viola canina subsp. *ruppii* (**Heath Dog-violet**) 1995. A perennial herb of open, moist, peaty ground in fens and on their margins. Reproduction is by seed, which may lie dormant for many years, germinating in response to disturbance which opens up the habitat and reduces competition. Known only from Woodwalton (v.c.31) and Wicken Fens, Clive Stace suggests that it might not be a distinct sub-species. The other subspecies



Viola canina (C. Gibson), The Burren, v.c.H9

Viola canina subsp. *canina* hasn't been seen from Newmarket Heath since 2010, so we may have lost the plant from the county.

Review of the 2020 excursions

The coronavirus outbreak meant the cancellation of all BSBI meetings that were due to be held in the county. Flora Group meetings were however able to continue. The first was held the day before lockdown commenced. The two held during the lockdown had only one participant. With the relaxation of lockdown it became possible to hold excursions with a maximum of six participants.

Sunday, March 22, South-east Cambridgeshire churchyards

Our planned destination for this outing was Hardwick Wood, but the Wood was closed, not because of the coronavirus but because the rides were too muddy. Thanks to fear of the virus numbers in the group were depleted, however four met at Castle Camps church. This churchyard is a County Wildlife Site because it supports a population of *Trifolium ochroleucon* (**Sulphur Clover**), though we didn't see it. There are also several species of orchid and we did see a rosette of *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (**Pyramidal Orchid**). Most previous recording visits have been later in the year and these have missed species that flower in the spring. We added 16 species to the site list including *Viola odorata* var *odorata* and var *imberbis* (**Sweet Violet**) and *Viola reichenbachiana* (**Early Dog-violet**). Next stop was Shudy Camps church, where the churchyard was in fair condition, though not quite up to Wildlife Site standard. Here we recorded 82 species, adding 31 to the site list. With the sun shining and reasonable shelter from the wind we ate our lunch here, keeping the regulation two metres apart.



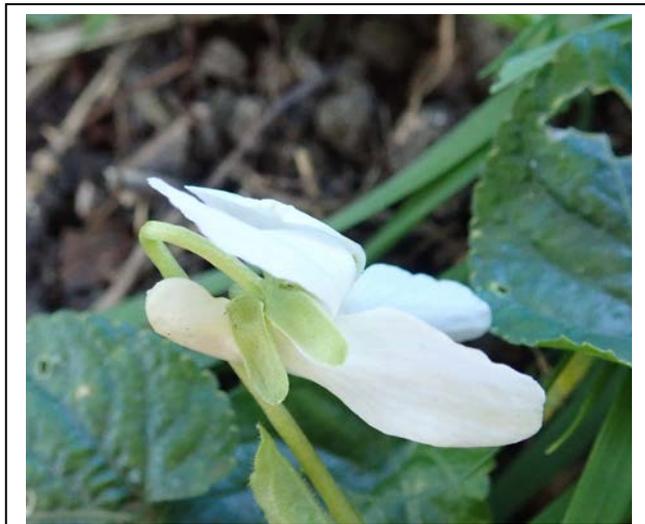
Basal leaf of *Ranunculus auricomus* in West Wickham churchyard (Peter Leonard)

West Wickham churchyard looked unpromising, with mown grass and lots of weed-killer sprayed round graves and the church. Despite this a margin still supported a *Ranunculus auricomus* (**Goldilocks Buttercup**), presumably *R. crassilobus* (**Carlton Goldilocks Buttercup**), known only from here and Carlton churchyards. There had been few recording visits to the churchyard and we added 47 species, more than doubling its total. Our fourth churchyard was West Wratting where again there had been few previous records. Here we found a local having great fun with his son

mowing the churchyard on a sit-on mower. Fortunately, there were areas that the mower couldn't reach which still had a moderately interesting flora and we recorded 72 species, of which 66 were new. The only unusual plant was an *Arum* with cream veins and black spots, presumably a hybrid with the veins coming from *A. italicum* (**Italian Lords-and-Ladies**) and the spots from *A. maculatum* (**Lords-and-Ladies**). The final churchyard was Westley Waterless, another that had few records and which had never been recorded by the bryologists. Here we found four varieties of *V.*

odorata, including the rather unusual all white variety. It was our only churchyard with *Luzula campestris* (**Field Wood-rush**) and we found one plant of *Erophila verna* (**Whitlow Grass**) just inside the churchyard fence.

As it was a nice day, and there was a risk that nobody would be allowed out of doors again for months, we agreed to continue and walk down Westley Bottom Road, which crossed two poorly recorded monads. It turned out that the road was of Protected Road Verge quality, with *Stellaria holostea* (**Greater Stitchwort**), *Plantago media* (**Hoary Plantain**) and *Centaurea scabiosa* (**Greater Knapweed**) amongst other nice species present. There was also a spectrum of varieties of *V. odorata* ranging from reddish to sky blue. Under trees at the top of Cambridge Hill was a patch of *Stellaria* that appeared in places to have flowers with petals and in others not. Careful determination by Chris Preston later found that in fact both *S. media* (**Common Chickweed**) and *S. pallida* (**Lesser Chickweed**) were present. The Road would repay a further visit later in the year.



Unusual pure white *Viola odorata* (Peter Leonard)

Thursday, April 23, Sawston Hall

The restrictions imposed during the coronavirus outbreak meant that the Flora Group excursion could not take place. However, it was permissible to exercise and the owner of Sawston Hall was quite happy for an individual to walk around the grounds, so I cycled out to Sawston. It was another warm, dry April day with barely a cloud in the sky, and the ride was far faster than suggested by the Cambridge Cycle Map, so I had 20 minutes for a quick look round the churchyard. Nothing very notable, but I did add



Sawston Moor (Jonathan Shanklin)

Viola reichenbachiana (**Early Dog-violet**) to the site list. I then cycled down the Hall drive, and was met by John Compton and his two site workers. John took me down to the Moor to explain what management they had done, and then let me loose. Since my last visit they had done a lot of work and the site was in fine condition – the higher north meadow had been hard grazed over winter, and the other meadows had either been grazed or mown for “hay”, so there was no longer any accumulating thatch. I thoroughly covered the meadows during the morning, not

really finding much new, though *Valeriana dioica* (**Marsh Valerian**) was in flower, and there was some early flowering *Potentilla erecta* (**Tormentil**). I finished the meadows

after a picnic lunch (allowed during a long walk!), and then started on the grounds, finding *Neottia ovata* (**Twayblade**), last seen in the grounds in 1982. The tarmac in front of the Hall had *Saxifraga tridactylites* (**Rue-leaved Saxifrage**), with the *Carex caryophyllea* (**Spring-sedge**) on the bank by the tennis court in fine flower. Also on this bank was *Viola riviniana* (**Common Dog-violet**) a new species for the tetrad.



Baldelia ranunculoides at King's Dyke (Jonathan Shanklin)

Wednesday, May 27, Kings Dyke Nature Reserve

Coronavirus prevented the formal excursion from taking place, which was perhaps just as well as the appointed day was very windy with heavy showers. I therefore paid a solo visit a few days later in much more amenable conditions, though apart from a high water level in the main lake, everything else was suffering from drought. Running true to form it took a while to get much further than the parking area. There was a nice surprise here, with the pretty blue flowers of *Pratia pedunculata* (**Lawn Lobelia**) living up to its name in the sales office lawn. With it were the tiny flowers of *Trifolium micranthum* (**Slender Trefoil**) contrasting with *Trifolium dubium* (**Lesser Trefoil**), which was also present. Near the lake I found a small patch of *Myosotis discolor* (**Changing Forget-me-not**), with the pale yellow flowers turning to blue. Just before lunch I found a small buttercup, just past flowering, on a steeply sloping bank, which looked like *Ranunculus parviflorus* (**Small-flowered Buttercup**), but I wasn't sure – perhaps it was a stunted *Ranunculus scleratus* (**Celery-leaved Buttercup**), which I'd seen previously. After lunch I made a small detour down a track, but stopped well short of the lake as the northern part was out of bounds. On the track side I found a group of 12 plants of what was clearly fruiting *Ranunculus parviflorus*, confirming my first find. Some of the newt ponds in the northern area were fringed with flowering

Baldellia ranunculoides (**Lesser Water-plantain**), though I failed to spot any newts. A slightly scrubby meadow had locally frequent *Veronica officinalis* (**Heath Speedwell**), with some more beside a path. The final “nice” plant was *Dactylorhiza incarnata* (**Early Marsh-orchid**), which was locally frequent in compartment 2AA. For most of the day one or more cuckoos were calling, adding to the atmosphere of the site. Another site which will need a return visit next year.



The end of lunch at Shepreth L-moor (Peter Leonard)

Sunday, June 28, Shepreth L-moor and Orwell Clunch Pit

Coronavirus restrictions were slowly easing and so it was permissible for a group of six to take part in the excursion. It had not proved possible to visit a prospective site in Melbourn, so Shepreth L-moor was chosen as the starting point. Although forecast to be dry all day there were a couple of light showers, but these did not require putting on a raincoat. There was a strong breeze, but overall this was far preferable to the heat of a few days previously. Alan Leslie had been finding interesting Roses in the Cambridge area and one made our first interesting find at the L-moor. It had clear glands on the leaves, but no acicles on the main stem, so the consensus was *R. micrantha* (**Small-flowered Sweet-briar**), however the referee, Roger Maskew, determined it as a hybrid between *R. canina* (**Dog-rose**) and *R. tomentosa* (**Harsh Downy-rose**). Nearby was a slightly different looking specimen, which we decided, on the basis of its larger flowers, was a hybrid, but they clearly need further study. We zig-zagged across the reserve, getting rather puzzled by some of the sedges, though in the end decided that the extensive sheets could only be *Carex acutiformis* (**Lesser Pond-sedge**). A damp patch where the winter rains had lasted longer gave a few additional species and an interesting observation. There was a water speedwell, which

had fruiting pedicels that matched *V. anagalis-aquatica* (**Blue Water-speedwell**), however Jonathan thought the petals were pink. The other members of the party saw them as blue. The conundrum was solved when Jonathan looked with his left eye which showed them as blue, whilst his dominant right eye showed them as pink. We clearly don't all see the same colours! On one ant hill Alan spotted a couple of plants of *Danthonia decumbens* (**Heath-grass**), complete with its convincing ligule of hairs, which was previously seen on Shepreth Moor in 1913. Nearby Jonathan spotted *Helictochloa pratensis* (**Meadow Oat-grass**), last seen here by Nick Millar in 1999. We lunched on some suitable ant hills and would have dawdled a little longer but the grazing cattle ambled up with a specimen for us to identify and then gave us a nudge to continue. Heading to the far end of the reserve Alan identified a bramble in the hedge as *Rubus micans* and we then continued round to the railway tunnel.



Oenanthe lachenalii at Shepreth I-moor (Peter Leonard)

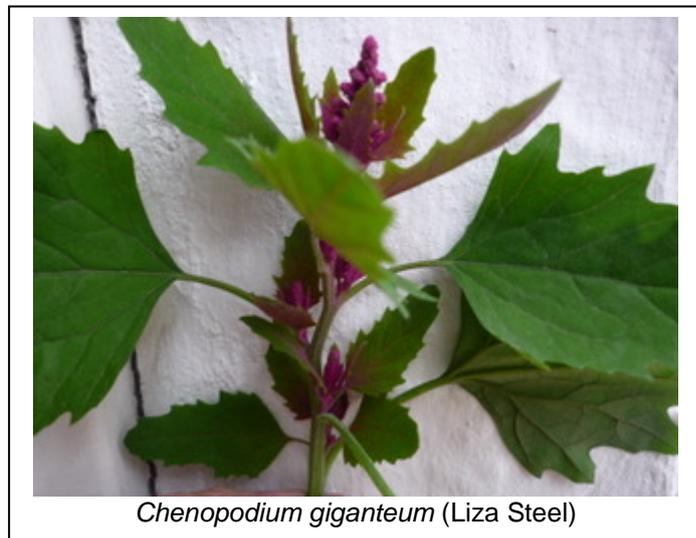
The eastern wing wasn't being grazed, so plants were much easier to spot. We found an *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (**Pyramidal Orchid**), a few *Ophrys apifera* (**Bee Orchid**)

and some *Neottia ovata* (**Twayblade**) in flower. The *Oenanthe lachenalii* (**Parsley Water-dropwort**) was doing well, with plants along a good length of the shallow ditch. Returning across the western section Jonathan spotted several tussocks of *Molinia caerulea* (**Purple Moor-grass**), another grass that has a ring of hairs for a ligule. As it was only mid-afternoon we had time for another location, and the consensus was that Orwell Clunch Pit would be a good place to visit.

It was indeed – the pit had been hard grazed over the winter and some scrub clearance carried out, putting it into much better condition. The thin chalk grassland was full of flowering species including sheets of *Asperula cynanchica* (**Squinancywort**), *Briza media* (**Quaking Grass**) and *Thymus drucei* (**Wild Thyme**). We found a small patch of *Hippocrepis comosa* (**Horsehoe Vetch**) and one flowering *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. The highlight was another Rose, spotted at the side of the track down the pit. This had slightly pubescent leaves, a shortly exserted style, widely spaced leaflets with the bottom pair slightly reflexed and strongly deltate prickles – which matched *Rosa stylosa* (**Short-styled Field-rose**), never seen here before and county scarce. At the bottom all but Jonathan decided to return home, but a further short walk around produced a good patch of *Neottia ovata* on a slightly north facing bank.

Thursday, July 23, Cambridge Guided Busway

Our second attempt at walking a section of the Busway enjoyed much more clement weather, though numbers had to be restricted to match the guidelines under the coronavirus outbreak. In the event only five people took part, led along the route by Alan Leslie, with Jonathan Shanklin endeavouring to keep up with recording. We began at Cambridge North Station, with an uncut verge providing plenty to keep the group occupied until it gave up on the last member due to arrive. Our first detour took



Chenopodium giganteum (Liza Steel)

us to the station grounds, where Alan showed us *Chenopodium giganteum* (**Tree Spinach**), though it wasn't living up to its name. One clear distinguishing feature was the purple colouration of the upper leaves. We returned to the Busway, but quickly diverted into the old sidings to see the hybrid of *Alnus cordata* (**Italian Alder**) and *A. glutinosa* (**Alder**). A third diversion then took us a short way to see the hybrid of *Verbascum thapsus* (**Great Mullein**) and *V. nigrum* (**Dark Mullein**), which had convincingly intermediate features

between the two. Returning to the Busway, the next surprise was a set of Stonecrops: *Sedum acre* (**Biting**), *S. album* (**White**), *S. hispanicum* (**Spanish**) and *S. sexangulare* (**Tasteless**), with a **House-leek** *Sempervirens* sp. thrown in for good measure – in this location all probably planted. Next came a surprise find: a bird-sown *Vitis coignetiae* (**Crimson-glory-vine**) on an earth bank alongside the Busway.

Crossing the main road our next diversion was into the Science Park to see first *Solanum physalifolium* (**Green Nightshade**), then the Breckland plants that grow on a

bank of imported sand. Both *Arabis hirsuta* (**Hairy Rock-cress**) and *Medicago minima* (**Bur Medick**) were still in flower, with a few tufts in lines showing the identity of *Carex arenaria* (**Sand Sedge**). We then headed back towards the Busway, but decided that we might as well enjoy the comfort of some conveniently well separated benches for lunch. Returning to the Busway we made a slight detour to see *Eryngium planum* (**Blue Eryngo**), though sadly it had been mown. A further detour took us to another patch of sandy ground where there was further *Medicago minima* and a patch of *Trifolium arvense* (**Hare's-foot Clover**). Crossing under the A14 we decided to forgo a detour around the lake, but did enter the adjacent wood, which proved a little disappointing, but did add several species that prefer shady conditions. When we reached the Impington stop, Alan suggested an ice-cream, so we paid a visit to the local corner shop.



Hybrid Mullein near the Busway
(Gill & Chris Langley)

Despite having the potential for several, the final leg to Oakington had no detours and at times the party became separated by several hundred metres. Stops were made to compare *Vicia hirsuta* (**Hairy Tare**) and *Vicia tetrasperma* (**Smooth Tare**), *Persicaria lapathifolia* (**Pale Persicaria**) and *Persicaria maculosa* (**Redshank**) and *Tripleurospermum inodorum* (**Scentless Mayweed**) with *Matricaria chamomilla* (**Scented Mayweed**). There was a possibility that one prostrate plant of a Mayweed might have been a hybrid with *T. maritimum* (**Sea Mayweed**), but the oil-glands were not convincing when later viewed under a microscope. Quite a lot of the ground along the Busway here had been disturbed for the installation of services and this had brought up a few cornfield annuals from the original 2009 sowing such as *Glebionis segetum* (**Corn Marigold**), *Agrostemma githago* (**Corncockle**) and *Centaurea cyanus*

(**Cornflower**). Rather to our surprise it was only late afternoon by the time we arrived at Oakington, which seemed a good point to return to Cambridge on the bus. Jonathan was the only one who needed to return to Cambridge North, and somewhat surprisingly added quite a few species to the list on the leg back from the Science Park stop. In all we crossed through 12 monads and made 731 records of 275 species during the day. The most commonly recorded species were *Malva sylvestris* (**Common Mallow**) and *Plantago lanceolata* (**Ribwort Plantain**). Our 2021 itinerary has the next leg in the exploration of the Busway, when baring detours around Northstowe we should get to Fen Drayton.

Saturday, August 8, Dimmock's Cote Quarry

Coronavirus restrictions continued and with the quarry being off public transport routes the number of participants was down to three: Jonathan Shanklin, Oli Glenister and Chris Preston. It was a hot day, but fortunately with some breeze and high cloud to reduce the solar intensity. The quarry is mostly known for its geology being mined for Jurassic limestone, and the older parts have developed an interesting flora. *Polypogon monspeliensis* (**Annual Beard-grass**) was much in evidence along trackways and is

clearly liking the habitat. Our first plant out of the ordinary was nearly passed over as *Medicago sativa* subsp. *sativa* (**Lucerne**), but Oli pointed out the mix of purple and yellow flowers making it the much rarer *Medicago sativa* nothosubsp. *varia* (**Sand Lucerne**). In damper areas we found *Mentha arvensis* (**Corn Mint**) and could contrast this with a smaller patch of *Mentha aquatica* (**Water Mint**). A pondweed in the drainage channel brought out Jonathan's grapnel, but disappointingly it was only *Stuckenia pectinata* (**Fennel-leaved Pondweed**). *Lathyrus latifolius* (**Broad-leaved Everlasting-pea**) was well-established in the western area and putting on a somewhat garish display of its bright pink flowers. One of the lakes had both *Typha latifolia* (**Bulrush**) and *Typha angustifolia* (**Lesser Bulrush**) with its contrasting greener leaves. Although we failed to find *Cladium mariscus* (**Great Fen-sedge**) and 56 other species previously reported from the quarry, we did add 62, so a worthwhile contribution.



Dimmock's Cote quarry (Jonathan Shanklin)

After a late lunch, taken in the shade of trees a bit further down a nearby footpath, we decided to go on to Burwell and have a look at the Devil's Ditch and adjacent disused railway line. The Ditch section between the Burwell Road and Reach is fairly well recorded, particularly as it is a site where conservation work by Wildlife Trust volunteers (including the author) takes place on a regular basis. Most previous recording of the Ditch has taken place along defined sections, but an alternative is to record by monads and the present VCR is following this practice. We did therefore add *Frangula alnus* (**Alder Buckthorn**) to one monad, made obvious by its red berries. We also saw some of the well-known plants, including *Thalictrum minus* (**Lesser Meadow-rue**) and *Berberis vulgaris* (**Barberry**). A major reason for wanting to visit

the disused railway line was for Chris to see *Silene otites* (**Spanish Catchfly**) and find out whether it supported a rust. A problem was that the adjacent field was being combined and a sign warned of the danger of being shot. We decided to take the risk when the combine was on the far side of the field and walked along the line. We passed one very obvious plant which we spotted on the way back and found a patch of plants that was mostly in fruit. Unfortunately, they all looked very healthy with no sign of attacks by the insects or fungi mentioned in the Cambridgeshire Flora. We returned without being accosted by the game-keeper or farmer and walked along the Ditch back to our cars for the journey home.

Saturday, August 29, RSPB Nene Washes

Surely the weather had to be better than when we visited the Washes in June 2019? It wasn't! Overcast skies and a stiff north wind greeted the early arrivals and the temperature was only 11°C. We ended up being a group of five (Chris, Jonathan, Neil, Oli and Peter) and were welcomed by the warden, Charlie Kitchin, who advised us which fields were being grazed and which were due to be shot by the wild-fowlers whose season was soon to start.

Jonathan reckoned that if we got back to the cars by 4pm we might stay dry if we were lucky. We started along the Drove, spotting a few species that we had missed on the previous visit and occasionally getting out grapnels to fish for pondweeds – but there weren't any. A spectacular Wasp Spider provided a diversion, as did a dead crab (possibly of marine origin) in a ditch. Several Willows on the ditch bank had lost their leaves – was this due to the strong winds? Later in the day another Willow gave the answer –



Wasp Spider on the Nene Washes (Peter Leonard)

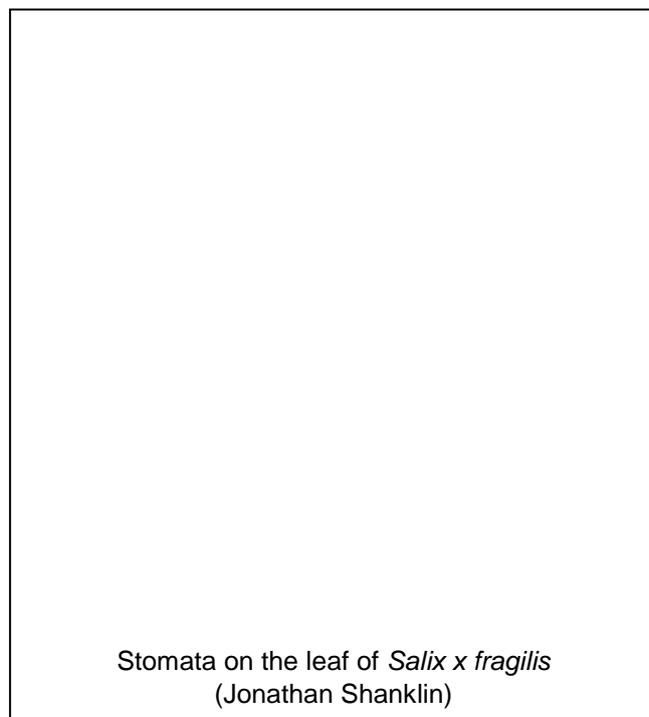
a large green caterpillar! Peter found a stand of *Scutellaria galericulata* (**Skullcap**), which hadn't previously been reported from the Washes. Chris found a small *Persicaria*, which inspection showed had no glands and when tasted wasn't very peppery, so after double checking the key we agreed that it was *Persicaria mitis* (**Tasteless Water-Pepper**). We decided to detour off the drove to see one of the ponds, though by now it was lunch time so we took some shelter on the levee bank of the River Nene.

The slightly higher elevation suggested that the pond was fringed by tall emergent species, so instead we crossed into the full blast of the wind along the river. The bank had abundant *Persicaria hydropiper* (**Water-pepper**), which when tasted had the strong peppery taste. One or two shallow depressions on the bank had a wider range of species, with one having both *Veronica anagallis-aquatica* (**Blue Water-speedwell**) and *V. catenata* (**Pink Water-speedwell**) allowing us to compare both the colour of the flowers and the differing nature of the flower pedicels, the former being erecto-patent and the latter patent. A bit further on we found *Atriplex littoralis* (**Grass-leaved Orache**) in its native habitat on the tidal river. Jonathan spotted an odd mint, which had some branches ending in whorls of flowers and others with only axillary flowers.

The anthers were not exerted and it appeared to be sterile, so had to be *Mentha x verticillata*, the hybrid between *M. arvensis* (**Corn Mint**) and *M. aquatica* (**Water Mint**). We hadn't seen the former, though it is known from the Washes, but the latter was frequent. This was the first record of the hybrid from the washes. We crossed around Popley's Gull, where Chris found an interesting rust on the Water-pepper. By now it was approaching four and there were spots of rain in the air, so we decided to head back to the Drove. We added more species to the record cards, but nothing outstanding in what steadily became heavier rain. Fortunately, the record cards were all printed on water-proof paper, so when the details had all been entered they showed that we had seen 125 different species, including a few of the ones we had hoped to find. Amazingly there were six hectad records for TF20, probably because nobody had previously looked at the banks of the River Nene in this hectad.

Saturday, September 26, Great Shelford meadows

When the north wind doth blow then we shall have snow. It wasn't quite that bad, but we had another cold and windy day for our September excursion, with occasional passing showers, so the winter gear was again essential. Jesus College, who own pasture land along the River Cam, had kindly given permission for us to visit some uncharted territory. We began at Great Shelford church. Here the *Pinus wallichiana* (**Bhutan Pine**) looked decidedly sick and we couldn't see any of the young saplings that had previously been seen in the churchyard. Much of the churchyard has run wild, and on one of the graves surrounded by brambles we found an *Agrostis*, which didn't look right for *Agrostis capillaris* (**Common Bent**), *A. gigantea* (**Black Bent**) or *A. stolonifera* (**Creeping Bent**) as it had a partly open, long panicle, stolons and quite a long ligule. Alan took it home and found that it was sterile and seemed to match *A. gigantea x stolonifera*, which he had had confirmed previously. We moved on to the permissive path towards Hauxton, and as we passed the river saw some Water Crowfoot, probably *Ranunculus penicillatus* (**Stream Water-crowfoot**). As soon as



Stomata on the leaf of *Salix x fragilis*
(Jonathan Shanklin)

we could, we entered the Jesus meadows and although they started with rushes, we quickly found why they had been neglected in the past. There really wasn't anything of note in them. The river did a little better, although the banks were clearly well nutrified, with nettles predominating. Some fishing with Jonathan's grapnel brought up bits of *Elodea nuttallii* (**Nuttall's Waterweed**), mixed with *Myriophyllum spicatum* (**Spiked Water-milfoil**) and we found some **Water Speedwells**, both *Veronica anagallis-aquatica* and *Veronica beccabunga* (**Brooklime**) at the water's edge. We had lunch near the bank of a long abandoned meander, edged by old Willows, though the brisk wind soon prompted us to resume walking. Having rejoined the

permissive path we turned back towards Great Shelford and detoured via an old

coprolite pit. The pit was disappointing, though some farm dumping did give us *Nicandra physalodes* (**Apple-of-Peru**). At this point Alan decided to head back to Hauxton for a quicker journey home (he was wearing shorts!) whilst Jonathan, Lucy and Phil continued along the permissive track. An older hedgeline gave *Nepeta cataria* (**Catmint**) and *Knautia arvensis* (**Field Scabious**). Where the path ran alongside the meadows, we got a taste of what they might have been like, with first a patch of *Carex acutiformis*, then another patch of sedge, which we checked and found was *Carex riparia* (**Greater Pond-sedge**). A patch of ground on the other side left to generate “stewardship” income had a couple of natural colonists in the form of *Centaureum erythraea* (**Common Centaury**) and *Pilosella officinarum* (**Mouse-ear-hawkweed**). Lucy spotted a willow with dark leaves and this keyed to *Salix triandra* (**Almond Willow**), whilst another willow with similar but clearly different leaves, paler on the underside, came out as *S. x fragilis* (**Crack-willow**) as it had stomata on the upper surface. Given the weather we were probably not quite as assiduous in recording as we might have been, but noted 216 plant species during the day.



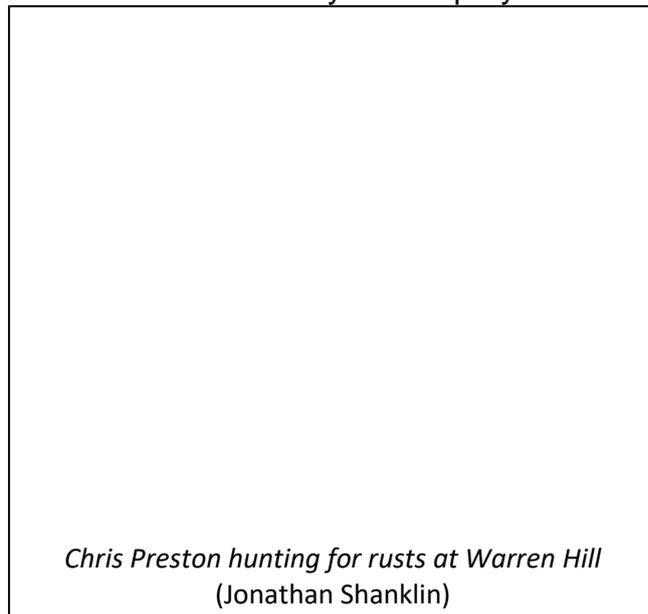
Newmarket cemetery (Jonathan Shanklin)

Saturday, October 10, Newmarket and Cheveley

Our final excursion of the year took place on a cold, breezy autumn day, with heavy showers at start and end. Although we'd hoped to have a student along, in the end Jonathan, Alan and Chris were the team on the day. We began at Newmarket cemetery, which proved to be a good site, which, if it was in administrative Cambridgeshire, would be a County Wildlife Site; however it is the responsibility of Suffolk County Council. Here we had a couple of species on the RPCC that hadn't been seen here for 20 years to refind, quickly finding *Cirsium acaule* (**Dwarf Thistle**),

which was still in flower. Indeed plants still in flower was a theme throughout the day and overall we recorded 85 in flower out of the 220 seen during the day. The second plant remained elusive until towards the end of the visit when Chris spotted the basal leaves of *Salvia verbenaca* (**Wild Clary**). We also found a couple of other plants on the RPCC and added *Campanula rotundifolia* (**Harebell**). We then went on to Cheveley churchyard and cemetery, which were quite disappointing, with perhaps the most notable species being *Vicia sepium* (**Bush Vetch**) and two alien grasses *Echinochloa crus-gallii* (**Cockspur**) and *Panicum miliaceum* (**Common Millet**). It did however provide a convenient spot for lunch and the sun even came out for a while.

We then moved on to the Jockey Club training grounds at Warren Hill, which become open access in the afternoon. We began on the Warren Hill side of the road, where we hoped to find *Gentianella amarella* (**Autumn Gentian**) and did indeed find it growing under the protective railings, although the ground immediately underneath them had unfortunately been sprayed earlier in the year. We failed to find *Thesium humifusum* (**Bastard-toadflax**), which had last been seen here in 1992. We meandered through Warren Hill Plantation, where Jonathan spotted an Oak with distinctly petiolate leaves, which once seen in comparison with good *Quercus robur* (**Pedunculate Oak**) leaves, Alan agreed was probably the hybrid with *Quercus petraea* (**Sessile Oak**). Crossing to Long Hill, things did not initially look promising, with the ground on the “plateau” looking distinctly “improved” compared to how it must have been 30 years ago when *Calluna vulgaris* (**Heather**) had been recorded here. However, there was a relatively



Chris Preston hunting for rusts at Warren Hill
(Jonathan Shanklin)

narrow band alongside a gallop with a better flora. Here Alan spotted the leaves of a Violet, which will need a further visit to fully confirm. At the north edge of the Hill there were several tempting spoil heaps and a small cliff face, but was this in Cambridgeshire or Suffolk? The GPS confirmed that the county boundary was just to the north, so we could record the area, which was nice and weedy. Notable was *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* (**Perennial Wall-rocket**), with much larger flowers than *Diplotaxis muralis* (**Annual Wall-rocket**), which we had seen earlier, and with a very pruinose stem. The cliff face, with its layers of gravelly strata, looked as if it might be good for a Local Geological Site until closer inspection showed plastic sheeting within it! With dark clouds to the north we decided it was time to return and headed back to the car, arriving just as the rain began to get heavier.

Excursions for 2021

Please take careful note that our excursions vary both in the day of the week on which they take place and in the time at which we meet on each occasion. Coronavirus restrictions are likely to be in force, at least at first, and if so the number of participants

will be limited. If this is the case, priority will be given to those who have not previously attended a meeting during the year and please do not just turn up. I will send out an email before each meeting reminding you of the details and of any changes, and they will also be posted on the web page. Participants are normally welcome to join us for all or part of any excursion, but please arrive promptly at the start. We often have to give a site briefing at which you must be present. If a booking system is in place please cancel your booking if you find you cannot come. Failure to do so will put you at the bottom of the queue for future meetings. A packed lunch will be required for many meetings and we will generally finish towards the end of the afternoon. On



Potentilla verna (**Spring Cinquefoil**) found as a garden escape on a road verge in Longstanton (Peter Leonard)

occasion we will be walking for some distance over ground which may be rough. Please do read the [BSBI advice to participants on field meetings](#). Meeting places have been chosen as having some parking space, but this can not be guaranteed. Several landowners specifically request no dogs, and the BSBI guidance is not to have dogs (except guide dogs) at meetings, so if you do have a dog, please leave it at home. Our meetings often produce some surprising and interesting records so do come along if you can. This year our outing venues have largely been chosen for ease of organisation given the uncertainty imposed by the coronavirus. In this first edition the meeting times and places in the first half of the year are redacted as booking will probably be required.

Tuesday, March 30, 10:00, South-west Cambridgeshire churchyards

Having explored several south-east Cambridgeshire churchyards at the start of 2020 in what proved to be the final “open” excursion, we turn to the south-west for our opening meeting of 2021. We will begin at Caxton churchyard, which appears to have no detailed records. We will then visit Little Gransden, Gamlingay (church and cemetery), Hatley St George and Hatley St Denis. If time permits there are then reserve options on the way back to Cambridge.

Sunday, April 18, 14:00, Eddington

An afternoon visit to the Cambridge University North-west Cambridge site including the sown meadows and lake of Brook Leys. Parts of the area are still a building site, so there is the possibility of casual species in the disturbed ground. Meet at the junction of Eddington Avenue and Madingley Road. The Madingley Road P&R is nearby.

Tuesday, May 4, 10:30, Kings Dyke Nature Reserve

Kings Dyke Nature Reserve is home to several species in the RPR, such as *Baldellia ranunculoides* (**Lesser Water-plantain**) *Sagina nodosa* (**Knotted Pearlwort**) and many Stoneworts, and was last visited by the Flora Group in 2010. Sarah Lambert and I have carried out surveys more recently, though some plants have not been seen for 20 years. Meet at the Reserve car park TL249973.

Saturday, May 22, BSBI beginners' meeting at Trumpington Meadows.

This is not a CFG meeting, however BSBI meetings are open to all those interested. Trumpington Meadows is the venue for the CNHS field studies in 2021 and so there are CNHS visits to the site throughout the year.

Sunday, May 23, 14:00, Accordia

An afternoon visit to this new Cambridge housing development, which includes a tree trail, several ponds and is bounded by Hobson's Brook. We may return via Empty Common if time permits. Meet at the junction of Brooklands Avenue with Aberdeen Avenue TL455569.

Tuesday, June 15, 10:00, Guided Busway

We will aim to complete our walk along the Busway to Fen Drayton, possibly detouring off in a few places and returning on the bus. Meet at the Oakington guided bus stop TL418650.

Tuesday, June 29, 11:00, Suffolk

This is a visit to a site on the Cambridgeshire border that is part of the Jockey Club estate. Numbers are restricted to ten, so please contact me if you would like to attend.



Geranium molle (**Dove's-foot Crane's-bill**) on the Guided Busway (Gill & Chris Langley)

Sunday, July 4, 11:00, Litlington Parish Pit

For some reason this good site has not received many visits. It supports a hybrid *Euphrasia* (**Eyebright**) swarm and *Clinopodium acinos* (**Basil Thyme**) was recorded in 2004. Over 60 species have not been seen for over a decade, though some of these, for example *Potentilla recta* (**Sulphur Cinquefoil**), recorded during a Wildlife Trust survey, need confirmation. If time permits we will go on to Whitethorn Wood, a nearby open access site. Meet at the junction of the minor road with Ashwell Street in Litlington TL316421.

Saturday, August 14, 10:30, Sawston Hall

We plan to pay another visit to Sawston Hall. As with much of the south of the county, water supply is an issue for the "Sawston Moor" and *Selinum carvifolia* (**Cambridge Milk-parsley**) has not been seen there since 2006. We will try and find it. Meet by the church at TL487492. There is parking space along the road.

Saturday, September 11, 10:30, Foul Anchor

Although several people have visited our sea-side location over the last few years, it is nearly a decade since the Flora group did. We will try and re-find *Bupleurum tenuissimum* (**Slender Hare's-ear**) last seen in 2019 and some of the species not seen since the last visit such as *Salicornia dolichostachya* (**Long-spiked Glasswort**). Meet at Foul Anchor TF465176.

Saturday, October 9, 10:30, Soham

Despite being a County Wildlife Site, Soham Cemetery hasn't had a comprehensive survey since 1995. We will then go on to explore some of the Commons. Meet at the cemetery TL599724.

There may be additional meetings organised after publication of this newsletter. In addition to the Flora Group meetings, many of the Cambridge Natural History Society field meetings have a botanical bias. This year the Society is carrying out a detailed survey of the Trumpington Meadows. There may also be further "Nature in my neighbourhood" visits to explore Cambridge streets, and visits to Wandlebury Country Park or Magog Down. Dates for all these will be included on the [county web page](#).



Gentianella amarella (**Autumn Gentian**) at Wilbraham Common (Roger Horton)

Jonathan Shanklin
11 City Road, Cambridge CB1 1DP jdsh@bas.ac.uk 01223 571250