

# NATURAL HISTORY REPORTS

## VASCULAR PLANT REPORT 2009

In the past, records which added to our knowledge of the flora of Somerset were published annually in these *Proceedings*. It is our intention to recommence this practice, but in a slightly different form. Records included in this report are those made in 2009 falling within any of the following categories:

- A taxon recorded for the first time in the wild in Somerset (Watsonian vice-counties 5 (South Somerset) and 6 (North Somerset)), ie a *new county record*;

- A taxon recorded for the first time in the wild in one of the vice-counties, either VC5 or VC6, ie a *new vice-county record*;

- Other records of particular interest, for example second or third vice-county records, species being re-found after a long absence, or newly discovered populations of nationally rare or threatened species.

The records detailed below are arranged according to these three categories, and are listed alphabetically within each. A 'taxon' may be a species, microspecies, subspecies, variety or cultivar.

We have included records of both native and introduced species in our list, with more recently introduced taxa (so-called 'neophytes') being distinguished by an asterisk before the name. Neophytes are plants which are thought to have been introduced into Britain since AD 1500: many of them have escaped from cultivation, while others may have arrived as contaminants, for example in birdseed. More ancient introductions are termed 'archaeophytes': these mostly arrived as crop contaminants, or indeed as early cultivated crops, and include many of our familiar arable 'weeds'. As a group, archaeophytes are of great conservation

interest, with arable archaeophytes in particular having declined markedly during the 20th century as a result of agricultural intensification, improved seed-cleaning, increased use of herbicides and fertilisers and the shift from spring-sown to autumn-sown crops. In accordance with common practice, we do not distinguish in the lists below between archaeophytes and native species.

It is perhaps not surprising that most of the new species found in 2009 in the wild in Somerset (or in VC5 or VC6) were neophytes, since the native flora of Somerset is so well known – thanks in large measure to a long tradition of botanical recording in Somerset, and a succession of fine county Floras (of which those by Green *et al.* 1997 and Green *et al.* 2000 are the most recent). Thus, the discovery of a native species new to the county, or a new population of one of our more rarely encountered native taxa, is always a noteworthy event, and often the cause of great excitement amongst the county's botanists.

In the following lists, nomenclature follows the second edition of the *New Flora of the British Isles* (Stace 1997) for all taxa included in that work. The vice-county is given for each record; the boundary between VC5 and VC6 follows the River Parrett/River Yeo/A303.

The names of contributors not printed in full are abbreviated as follows:

HJC	Helena Crouch
IPG	Ian Green
PRG	Paul Green
LH	Libby Houston
SJL	Simon Leach
SJP	Stephen Parker

JP John Poingdestre  
 TCGR Tim Rich  
 AR Ashley Robertson  
 FJR Fred Rumsey  
 MW Margaret Webster

NEW COUNTY RECORDS

- \**Armeria alliacea* – Taunton (ST236244), 15 Jun, single plant in pavement outside 13 Trinity Street, self-sown from plant in adjoining garden, later destroyed when off-road parking bay was resurfaced, SJL. VC5.
- \**Cotoneaster atropurpureus* (Purple-flowered Cotoneaster) – Taunton (ST217260), 17 Jan, single bush self-sown on top of wall, PRG. VC5.
- \**Cyrtomium fortunei* (Fortune’s Holly-fern) – Ashton Court Estate, Bristol (ST556720), 26 Jun, c. 100 plants over an area 10 x 20m on wooded slope in the Summerhouse Plantation, Richard Bland (det. HJC). VC6. (Fig. 1)
- \**Elaeagnus umbellata* (Spreading Oleaster) – Sand Bay (ST330641), 7 Sep, two plants on seaward side of fence at top of dunes, HJC & MW. VC6.
- \**Polystichum tsus-simense* (Korean Rock-fern) – Bath (ST747654), 22 May, one plant in basement in Rivers Street, HJC & FJR. VC6.
- \**Pontederia cordata* (Pickerelweed) – Berrow Dunes (ST291524), September, three or four plants at edge of pond on golf course, possibly planted, R.G. Corns (det. SJP). VC6.
- \**Pteris umbrosa* (Jungle Brake) – Bath (ST747654), 17 Mar, one plant in basement in Rivers Street, Mark A.R. Kitchen and Clare Kitchen (det. FJR). VC6.
- \**Smilax aspera* (Rough Bindweed) – Cannington (ST285395), 29 May, growing out of a wall, SJP (conf. PRG). VC5.
- \**Trapa natans* (Water Chestnut) – Bridgwater (ST312359), 7 Nov, one plant at edge of Bridgwater & Taunton Canal close to houses, with *Eichhornia crassipes* and *Pistia stratiotes*; possibly planted, SJL & SJP. VC5.

In addition to the above, in 2009 a number of new Whitebeams (*Sorbus* species) were formally described for the first time and eight of these occur in Somerset (Houston *et al.* 2009; Rich & Proctor 2009; Rich *et al.* 2009). We thought it might be helpful to list these new taxa here, even though they were discovered before 2009. All are still extant in the county. For each taxon, the authority and



Fig. 1 *Cyrtomium fortunei* at Ashton Court

holotype (if from Somerset) are given; the holotype is, in effect, the ‘type specimen’ on which the formal description of the taxon is based. Herbaria sheets of all the holotypes are in the herbarium of the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff (NMW).

- Sorbus cheddarensis* L. Houston and Ashley Robertson (Cheddar Whitebeam). Holotype: Cheddar Gorge (ST472544), 19 Sep 2007, TCGR & LH. VC6. Endemic to Cheddar Gorge.
- Sorbus eminentoides* L. Houston (Twin Cliffs Whitebeam). Holotype: Cheddar Gorge (ST466539), 19 Sep 2007, TGCR & LH. VC6. Endemic to Cheddar Gorge.
- Sorbus leighensis* T. Rich (Leigh Woods Whitebeam). Holotype: Quarry 4, Leigh Woods (ST561739), flowers 15 May 2007, TCGR & AR, fruits 19 Sept 2007, TCGR & LH. VC6. Endemic to Avon Gorge.
- Sorbus margaretae* M.C.F. Proctor. Holotype from VC4, formerly named ‘Taxon D’, also known from Culbone. VC5. Endemic to a small area of Exmoor coastal woodland in VC4 and VC5.
- Sorbus rupicoloides* L. Houston & T.C.G. Rich (Gough’s Rock Whitebeam). Holotype: Cheddar Gorge (ST467539), 19 Sep 2007, TGCR & LH. VC6. Endemic to Cheddar Gorge.
- Sorbus x avonensis* T. Rich = *S. aria* x *porrigentiformis* (Avon Gorge Whitebeam). Holotype from VC34 but also occurs on W side of Avon Gorge (ST5673), between the railway line and the towpath. VC6. Endemic to Avon Gorge.
- Sorbus x houstoniae* T. Rich = *S. aria* x *bristoliensis* (Houston’s Whitebeam). Holotype: Stokeleigh Camp (ST561732), flowers 24 May 2005, TCGR & LH, fruits 31 Oct 2004, TCGR, AR & LH. VC6.

Currently only known as a single tree, and named after the equally singular Libby Houston, renowned Somerset botanist and acknowledged authority on British Whitebeams.

*Sorbus x proctoris* T. Rich = *S. aucuparia x scalaris* (Proctor's Rowan). Holotype: Leigh Woods (ST557743), top edge of Quarry 2, flowers 11 May 2007, TCGR & AR, fruits 19 Sep 2007, TCGR & LH. VC6. Apparently endemic to Avon Gorge.

#### NEW VICE-COUNTY RECORDS

*Arum italicum x maculatum* (Hybrid Lords-and-Ladies) – Chilton Priory (ST373389), 15 Jan, patch on E verge of Priory Road, with *A. italicum*, IPG & PRG. Third record for Somerset and first for VC6.

*Callitriche brutia* var *brutia* (Pedunculate Water-starwort) – Priddy (ST521522), 12 Jun, small amount on mud at edge of more northerly of two small ponds, FJR. VC6.

\**Cordylone australis* (Cabbage-palm) – Sand Bay (ST331644), 7 Sep, two plants at top of dunes, on seaward side of fence opposite bus-stop, HJC & MW. VC6. (Fig. 2)

\**Pistia stratiotes* (Water Lettuce) – North Newton (ST305314), 2009, in Bridgwater & Taunton Canal at King's Lock, where it is reported to have been for last 4 years, Environment Agency. VC5.

\**Eichhornia crassipes* (Water Hyacinth) – Dunball (ST3140), October, many plants scattered along margins of King's Sedgemoor Drain from A38 bridge (ST311408) to M5 bridge (ST314410), Environment Agency. VC6.

#### OTHER INTERESTING SOMERSET RECORDS

*Agrostemma githago* (Corncockle) – Yeovil (ST577173), 14 Jun, about 30 plants on made-up ground with imported soil and stone material, Robert Osborn. VC5. First record for VC5 since publication of *The Atlas Flora of Somerset* (Green *et al.* 1997).

\**Anisantha tectorum* (Drooping Brome) – Minehead Golf Course (SS9846), 29 May, many plants, SJP. VC5. Third record for VC5.

\**Coriandrum sativum* (Coriander) – Regil (ST537619), 27 Oct, on a heap of earth and rubble at edge of a field, MW. VC6. First record for VC6 since 1979.



Fig. 2 *Cordylone australis* at Sand Bay

\**Cotoneaster salicifolius* (Willow-leaved Cotoneaster) – Coker Hill Bridge (ST504134), 19 Jan, good-sized tree growing on top of road bank by bridge, IPG & PRG. VC5. Second record for VC5.

\**Cotoneaster sternianus* (Stern's Cotoneaster) – West Coker (ST5113), 18 Jan, large bush self-sown at base of wall, PRG. VC5. Second record for VC5.

\**Crocsmia pottsii* (Pott's Montbretia) – Landacre Bridge (SS814362), 11 Sep, abundant on banks of River Barle, HJC & FJR. VC5. Second record for VC5 and county, but it is likely that other plants alongside R. Barle are also this species, not *C. x crocsmiiflora*.

\**Cyperus involucratus* – Wellington (ST129207), 18 Sep, one plant in a pond at The Basins, presumably planted, SJP & Wild Flower Society. VC5. Second record for VC5.

\**Cyrtomium fortunei* (Fortune's Holly-fern) – Bath (ST750645), 10 Nov, one plant in basement in St James' Parade, HJC & FJR. VC6. Second record for VC6.

*Isolepis cernua* (Slender Club-rush) – Walton Moor (ST433726), 1 Oct, six plants on bare mud beside ditch, HJC & FJR. VC6. First record for this area since 1997; now only known from one other site in VC6.

\**Lathraea clandestina* (Purple Toothwort) – Muchelney (ST434234), 5 Jun, naturalised at the John Leach Pottery, JP. VC5. Third record for VC5.

\**Lonicera x purpusii* (*L. fragrantissima x standishii*) – Wellington (ST142199), 18 Jan, one plant in hedgerow surrounding playing field at junction of Webbers Close and Hoyles Road,

probably planted, SJP. VC5. Second record for VC5.

***Orobanche minor* var. *compositarum*** – Berrow Dunes (ST295520), 25 Jun, four spikes beside gravel path S of church and nine further spikes in two other locations on golf course, Somerset Rare Plants Group. VC6. First records for VC6 and county since 1923.

\****Pistia stratiotes*** (Water Lettuce) – Bridgwater & Taunton Canal (ST316317), 26/27 Sep, patch in the canal at Standard's Lock, Hannah Gibbons. VC5. Second record for VC5. Also Bridgwater (ST312349 to ST297365), 7 Nov, about 50 plants scattered along c. 2km of the canal in four 1km squares, SJL & SJP. VC5. Third and subsequent records for VC5. Also Dunball (ST3140), October, many plants scattered along margins of King's Sedgemoor Drain from A38 bridge (ST311408) to M5 bridge (ST314410), Environment Agency. VC6. Second record for VC6.

***Rhynchospora alba*** (White Beak-sedge) – Shapwick Heath (ST415409), 29 Jul, seven plants flowering in middle of field at Canada Lows, HJC, SJL, SJP and Gill Read. VC6. First record for VC6 since 1976.

\****Solanum rugosum*** (Buffalo-bur) – Taunton (ST206260), 3 Sep, disturbed ground by new roundabout, Mrs Frances Waddy (det. HJC). VC5. Second record for VC5.

***Valerianella dentata*** (Narrow-fruited Cornsalad) – Somerton (ST484265), 30 Sep, six plants in fruit in corner of arable field beside Watt's Quarry Lane, JP. VC6. First record for VC6 since 1998. Listed as endangered in the GB Red List (Cheffings and Farrell 2005).

\****Xanthium spinosum*** (Spiny Cocklebur) – Paulton (ST656568), 20 Aug, one plant appeared in garden in Gregory's Tyning, almost certainly arriving with birdseed, Roger Oliver (det. HJC). VC6. First record for VC6 since 1932.

The Botanical Society of the British Isles vice-county recorders in Somerset are: Stephen Parker and Paul Green in VC5, and Rob Randall and Helena Crouch in VC6. There is also an active recording group, the Somerset Rare Plants Group (SRPG),

which holds an annual programme of field meetings, winter talks and identification workshops. The vice-county recorders and the SRPG are presently undertaking a major project to compile a detailed inventory of the county's rare, scarce and threatened vascular plants. Further information on the activities of the SRPG can be found at [www.somersetrareplantsgroup.org.uk](http://www.somersetrareplantsgroup.org.uk).

We would be delighted to receive records for possible inclusion in future reports, which should be submitted to one of the 'receiving recorders', as follows:

VC5 Stephen Parker, 26 Laburnum Road, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 8EL

VC6 Helena Crouch, Bronwen, Farrington Road, Paulton, Bristol, BS39 7LP

## References

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