

Appeal for Volunteers From the WBRC

Birmingham Natural History Society and the Botany Department of the University of Birmingham were co-sponsors of the Vice County 38 Mapped Flora survey when it began in 1950. This was a co-operative study, involving a team of amateur and professional botanists in many hours of field work over 15 years and a book of computerised distribution maps was published in 1971: **“A Computer-Mapped Flora – A study of the County of Warwickshire”** by **D. A. Cadbury, J.G. Hawkes and R. C. Readett.**

This was the first ever computerised flora in the world and was also featured in an article in the New Scientist journal in 1972. It was stated in that article *“A county flora with a difference: it represents a triumph of effective collaboration involving amateur and professional botanists and the computer. It is the first county flora in which computer methods have been used”*.

Although the results of this survey work were summarised and published in computerised distribution maps in the book, the original paper records have never been entered in a currently accessible database in the detail they are needed today. It is estimated that data files contain approximately 175,000 records.

With the generous support of the Birmingham Natural History Society, the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC) are now organising a project for the digitisation of these significant county files.

Volunteers are needed to help WBRC to scan the files and enter the records into the WBRC database so these records can be used in current distribution maps in order to monitor landscape and environmental change over the recent decades in Vice County 38.

Volunteers will receive appropriate training to interpret botanical scientific names with the use of identification guides and internet resources, use the biological recording software Recorder 6 and mapping software MapInfo.

If you are interested in botany and biological recording and would like to help WBRC entering these records please contact Agni at wbrc@warwickshire.gov.uk or phone 01926 418028.

Familiarity with botanical scientific names would be advantageous but is not essential. Willingness to interpret handwritten notes and to use and develop IT skills (Recorder 6 and MapInfo) are essential.

Note: Some standing work involved (scanning files)