

Neotinea ustulata (L.) R.M. Bateman, Pridgeon & M.W. Chase

(formerly ***Orchis ustulata*** L.) **Burnt Orchid**

Native

GB: Endangered

England: Endangered

UKBAP & Section 41

GB Scarce

VC5 Absent; VC6 Extinct

A tuberous perennial orchid of closely grazed calcareous grassland and occasionally alluvial water meadows, which has declined dramatically in Britain due to habitat destruction and changes in agricultural processes. Extinct in Somerset for about fifty years and only seen at three sites in the century before that. White (1912) listed several former sites: Worle Hill (1838), Churchill (1847), Weston-in-Gordano (1850), Leigh Down, Brean Down and pastures near Christ Church, Weston-super-Mare; however he himself only saw this species at Wavering Down, where W.F. Miller reported “six or more plants together within the circumference of a foot” on the northern slope in 1890, and at Claverton Down, Bath. Known from near Bath since at least as long ago as 1760, it was still “scattered over several acres of open pasture, thirty or forty plants in some seasons” according to White, who also reported that “the flowering stems are sometimes gathered there for sale in the city”. Last seen at this site by Noel Sandwith in about 1920. The last record for Somerset is a herbarium specimen in **LANC**, collected from a limestone copse in the Cheddar area by E. Hodgson in 1961 (Foley, 1990). This may have been Callow Hill, where a single specimen was seen on a BSBI field meeting in 1959, found by John Hodgson in short limestone turf. *Neotinea ustulata* is now restricted to sites in central and eastern England, apart from one site in Wales. In Somerset, it grew towards the western limit of its distribution in Britain.