

***Orchis purpurea* Huds.**

Lady Orchid

Introduction?

GB & England: Vulnerable

GB Scarce

VC5 Absent; VC6 Lost

A tuberous perennial orchid found on well-drained calcareous soils (usually chalk) in open woodland. A single plant was found in Somerset in 1990 by K.B. Taylor, in Nightingale Valley (ST562731), about 250ft up from the railway, 9ft N of the path. Its identification was confirmed by Dr M.H. Martin and Professor A.J. Willis. The origin of the plant, so far from other native populations, is unknown. It has been suggested that it seeded from plants in cultivation at the nearby University of Bristol Botanic Gardens, but it may have been a deliberate introduction. The plant did not flower after the first year it was found (Green *et al.*, 2000) and was last seen in 1999. This species is now almost completely restricted to sites in Kent, with disjunct populations in Oxfordshire (found in 1961) and at Porton Down in Wiltshire (found in 2006) and former sites in Berkshire (found in 2005, but later dug up) and Herefordshire (only recorded once in 1967). The Somerset site was one of the two most westerly sites of this largely southeastern species.